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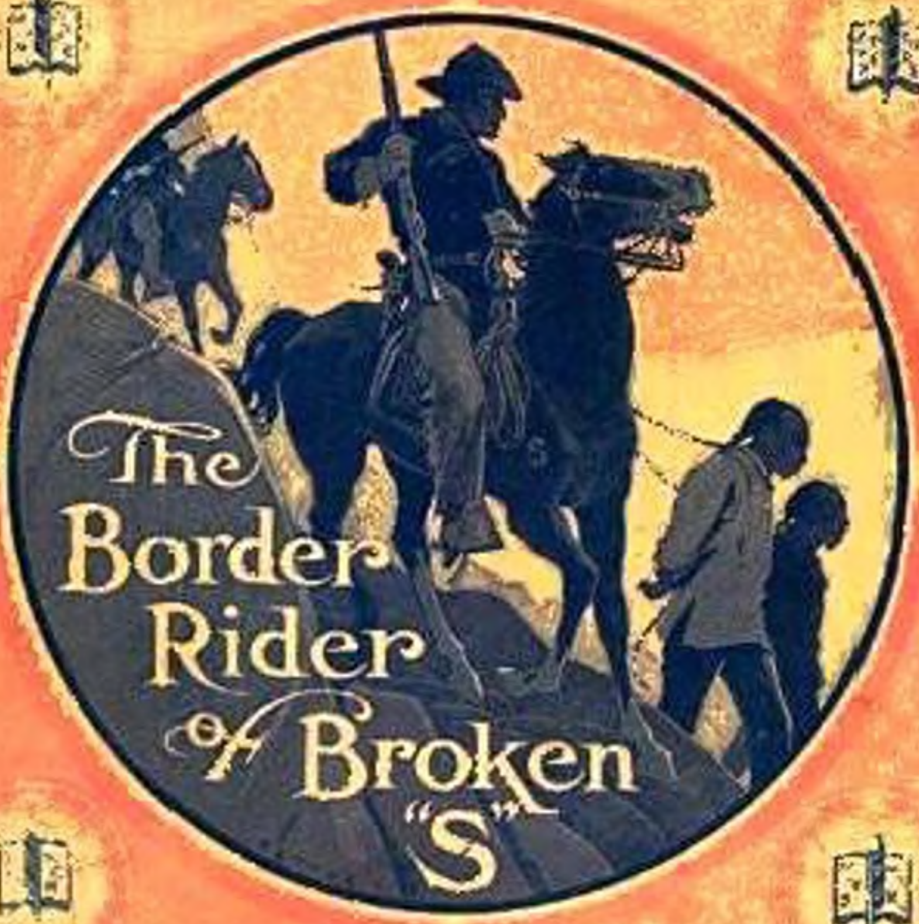

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXIV AUGUST, 1910.

The Border-Rider of Broken-S.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS.

The Story of Some Exciting Happenings that Could Not Have Occurred Were It Not for the Chinese Exclusion Act.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

A CORRAL MYSTERY.

"HOLY smoke! Look at the colonel's horse!"

"By jings! Yes!"

"Plumb rode to death!"

"That's right—murdered! Who done it? Couldn't be the colonel hisself."

"Ah! What yer romancin' about? Did yer ever know Colonel Brand to treat a horse that-away—either his own or anybody's? Besides, that horse ain't been out o' the corral."

Dave Lonergan relieved himself of a snort of derision.

"Ain't been out!" he shouted. "Say, Pete, you're shore powwowin' through yer sombrero. Why, no critter could git to look like that by jest teeterin' around in a corral all night. That there horse must ha' traveled fifty miles at least since sundown—an' over a pesterin' hard trail, too."

As Dave gave his opinion, he hitched up his fringed leather "chaps" at the waist and kicked one of his spurred heels into the dust.

Notwithstanding his positive tone and manner, Dave Lonergan was decidedly puzzled.

He and Pete Gearing had strolled over from the cook-shanty, after a satisfying early breakfast of ham and eggs, soda biscuit, and coffee, prepared to saddle up for the day's work over the several thousand acres that comprised Colonel Edward Brand's cattle-ranch in northwest Montana.

It was as they neared the horse-corral that Pete, who was a little in advance, made his sudden ejaculation.

There was good reason for his expression of horror and astonishment.

Nelson, Colonel Brand's favorite horse, stood inside the high-fenced corral, near the gate, the picture of exhaustion and discouragement.

His ears drooped, his eyes were nearly closed, and his forelegs, usually straight and firmly planted on the ground, were bent dismally at the knees, as if they could hardly bear the weight of the body.

Ugly white streaks ran down over his shoulders and flanks, and the whole of his brown coat, usually so sleek and satiny, was matted with foam and caked with dust.

The saddle and girth had left clearly defined marks, telling plainly enough that the animal had worn the saddle for a long time, and that he had been ridden so hard as to make him wet all over.

To a lover of horses he presented a pitiful spectacle, and both of the rough cowboys who gazed at him now fairly boiled with indignation, and felt their fingers itching to close upon the cruel rascal who had brought Colonel Brand's favorite mount to such a pass.

Pete Gearing examined the padlock on the gate of the enclosure. Then he shook his head meditatively.

"It's locked all right," he murmured. "And the key was hangin' [illegible] this mornin' in the bunk house in the reg'lar place on the wall by the side o' my saddle-h[illegible]! put it there last night, an' I ain't th[illegible]in' any one could get it away wi'out me knowin' it. They'd have ter most crawl over my bunk ter reach it."

"Maybe there's another key," hazarded Dave.

"Maybe. There don't seem no other way ter 'count fer it, though—"

Pete Gearing broke off suddenly and stooped to peer closely into the keyhole of the patent spring padlock.

For a few moments he squinted into the lock, and then, straightening up, stared at his companion with an expression of superstitious misgiving that gave Dave a queer tingling down his spine.

"Don't do that, Pete," pleaded Dave. "Rope them eyes o' your'n back where they belong. You're shore givin' me the willies."

"Well, I has somethin' like 'em myself," admitted Pete. "This here gate hasn't been opened since I locked it last night."

"You don't mean that?"

"I shorely do."

With a loose strand of the barbed-wire which encompassed the corral at two different heights, to reinforce the wooden bars and posts, he dug into the keyhole, and, after a few moments' work, brought forth on the point of the wire a small sliver of wood.

"What's that?" asked Dave wonderingly.

"Jest nach'ally somethin' that had ter be moved afore any one could turn a key in this padlock."

"Well, but—"

"Here's the way it lays," went on Pete Gearing. "I see some dust in the keyhole last night, after the padlock snapped tight shut, and I tried to brush aforesaid dust away with this here splinter. Afore I got through, the wood broke off in the lock, an' was still there till I dug it out jest now, as you see."

"I savvy."

"I reckons you do, Dave, 'cause if yer didn't, it 'ud shore argey that yer understandin' wasn't much—which I'd hate ter think of yer. Now, seein' that no one could have unlocked the gate, I'd like ter figger out how that there horse was got out and in ag'in, an' who done it."

"What's the trouble, boys?"

The question came from a good-looking fellow of twenty-eight or thirty, in the ordinary dress of a cowboy, except that he did not wear "chaps," and who, walking up with the swift, firm step of one in authority, had spoken before he was near enough to see the badly abused horse in the corral.

He was Leonard Dean, foreman of the Broken-S Ranch, and confidential man to Colonel Brand.

"It's the colonel's horse," explained Dave Lonergan.

It was at this instant that Leonard Dean saw the animal, and stepped into the enclosure to examine him at close range, while Dave Lonergan and Pete Gearing waited for the burst of invective which they felt sure would come.

To their surprise, Leonard said nothing while he looked the trembling, exhausted creature over, from nose to tail and back again, two or three times.

But there was an inscrutable frown on the foreman's face, and it certainly seemed as if some one was in for a hauling over the coals that he would remember.

"Who has had this horse out?" he asked at last, in a quiet, menacing tone, which suggested that he was holding back his indignation with difficulty.

"No one," answered Pete.

"That's nonsense. He has been ridden hard all night. Anybody can see that. Who did it?"

"I don't know," declared Pete. "Me an' Dave Lonergan jest come here an' found the horse like you see him. The gate o' the corral is locked when we gets to it, an' there's signs that it wasn't opened none since I shut it last night. That's the queer part o' the biz'ness that has Dave an' me up a tree."

Then Pete Gearing discoursed at length on the wooden plug in the keyhole, and offered several obviously impossible theories as to how the horse could have got out of the corral and back again without being seen, to all of which Leonard Dean paid but languid attention.

"We'll look around inside the corral, and see if there's any place where it might have been broken through," he decided suddenly.

Pete Gearing stopped theorizing, and the three walked around the inside of the corral fence, narrowly inspecting it from tip to bottom, until they arrived at the gate again.

"That fence is as solid as the court-house at Butte," observed Dave Lonergan. "The horse had to go through the gate. There warn't no other way fer him to get out or come in. But, by hokey, it gits me how he done it, seein' that the padlock was on the whole time."

"Poor old fellow!" said Leonard, apostrophizing the horse soothingly, as he patted the damp neck. "You look as if you'd been badly treated by somebody. But blood always tells, and you'll get over it with a good rest."

Perhaps the horse comprehended the words—or at least the accents—for he thrust his nose affectionately against the foreman's chest, and bit playfully at the blue shirt.

"Here comes the colonel!" exclaimed Dave Lonergan, and there was apprehension in his tones.

"Better not let him see the horse, if we can help it," said Dean hastily. "Rub him down and give him some feed. Then wash out his mouth with a little water, but don't let him drink any till he's quite cooled off."

The foreman went hurriedly from the corral to meet Colonel Brand, who was striding across the broad open space from his big, rambling house—as comfortable as any home in the suburbs of a city—where the ranch-owner lived with his daughter, Mary, and two servants.

A handsome, iron-gray man of fifty-three was Colonel Edward Brand—straight, wiry, and soldierly looking. In his long riding-boots on which jingled well-polished spurs, white shirt, black sack-coat, and broad-brimmed, soft, black hat, he was a splendid example of the intelligent Westerner who "does things."

There was an annoyed expression on his face, and Leonard was quite prepared for some sort of complaint, as they met at a little distance from the corral.

"Say, Len, here's more of it," was Colonel Brand's greeting. "Jamieson rode in with the mail from Carlow just now, and there's a letter from Washington telling me that the Chinks are pouring over our border altogether too numerously. I've got to do something to stop it."

"All right, *sheriff*," responded Leonard Dean, with a slight smile.

Colonel Brand's forehead wrinkled in disgust.

"That's right! Rub it in! Don't let me forget I'm sheriff," he growled. "Washington never lets me forget it, either. I'll tell you one thing, though—when my term of office is up, they'll never get me again."

"But you wouldn't care to resign, I suppose?"

The colonel's face hardened. There came a glint into the keen gray eyes, and his teeth snapped together.

"Resign?" he repeated. "Not much! I'll see it through now that I'm in it. They've elected me sheriff of Teton County, and so long as I hold the office I'll keep after these Chinks and the rascals who are running 'em in by the 'underground route,' if I have to neglect all my other business. Resign? Well now, Len, you ought to know me better than that."

"I didn't mean it, colonel, of course. But it's no cinch to be sheriff in a country like this, so near the Canadian line—especially for a busy man."

Colonel Brand was about to reply, when his gaze fell upon his horse, who whinnied as he saw his master approaching.

"Good Lord!" shouted the horrified colonel. "What's the matter with him?"

Pete Gearing and Dave Lonergan had not had time to do anything to remove the evidences of hard travel from the horse, and in a flash his owner was inside the corral, uttering lamentations and threats so loud that everybody belonging to the Broken-S outfit within hearing came running up to see what was the matter.

For five minutes no one could get in a word, but at last the colonel stopped for breath, and to wipe from his cheeks the tears he could not keep back as he contemplated his pet. It was then that Dave Lonergan, who had gone around to the back of the corral outside, suddenly roared, in a tone of frantic excitement:

"Colonel! Come here! Here's the feller that took the horse!"

Leonard Dean was the first to reach the place where Dave stood pointing to the ground behind one of the four large wagons belonging to the Broken-S outfit, but Colonel Brand was close on his heels.

"Where is he?" demanded Leonard.

"Here!"

Lying full length on the ground, face downward, was a Chinaman, in the cheap, loose, blue trousers and blouse that betokened his recent arrival from his own country.

"The yellow thief!" shouted the colonel. "He rode my horse to a standstill, and then sneaked behind this wagon to sleep. Turn him over, Leonard. Let's see what he looks like before we lock him up."

Leonard Dean obeyed. The Chinaman was stone dead!

CHAPTER II.

DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES.

THE dead man proved to be as much of a mystery as the condition of the colonel's horse. No wound or mark of violence was to be found on the corpse, and Leonard Dean—who had studied medicine for a term in an Eastern college—decided that the Chinaman had died through heart-failure. He added:

"No doubt the man had been on the trail for several days through that rough country in the Canadian Rockies, and his heart was not strong enough to stand the strain—"

got as far as the ranch, and then suddenly collapsed."

"But there must have been people with him," said Colonel Brand. "Why didn't they take him along?"

"I reckon a dead Chink ain't no good to nobody," opined Dave Lonergan.

But Pete Gearing did not agree with him. Said he, in a tone of conviction:

"Mos' gin'rally Chinks is pertickler in lookin' arter their dead ones. They sends 'em back to China to be planted, as a rule. Now, here's wheel-tracks what shows they had a wagon, an' they could ha' put him in easy, an' ter me it's plumb queer they didn't do it."

"Say, Len!" called out the colonel, who was bending low over the dusty ground a few rods to the north. "Here's the hoof-marks of Nelson. I can swear to his footprints wherever I see them. They begin and end at the corral, but they keep right with the wheels coming from the Canadian line. What do you make of that?"

"There's only one thing to be made of it, and that is that whoever borrowed Nelson used him to bring Chinamen over the border."

"Yes, I see. The fellow, whoever he was, rode Nelson across the line to where the Canadian agents turned the immigrants over to him in a wagon. When he got back here, he put the horse in the corral, and covered the remainder of the distance in the wagon."

"That's about the way of it, colonel."

"But how did he get the horse from the locked corral, in the first place, without being seen?"

And Colonel Brand shook his head in a way that expressed his complete mystification on that point.

"Moreover, where's the saddle he used?" questioned Dave.

"Carries it with him in the wagon, likely," was Pete's tentative solution.

Colonel Brand straightened up resolutely, and it was in his ordinary firm tone that he spoke next.

"Some of you boys knock a long box together, so that we can bury that Chinaman," he said. "We can't have him lying there."

He beckoned to Leonard, and, as they walked together in the direction of the house, the colonel talked hopefully about the campaign he had resolved to begin against the smugglers that very day.

"It ought to be easy," he said. "The Chinks are coming in the usual way, by Kootenai Pass and through Milk River That we know."

"Yes, we know how they come, all right. The question is, how are we going to stop them?"

"We've got to get the Northwest Mounted to help on the other side of the line, and our own border-riders on this. If we could only get hold of that half-breed, Cheng Low! He's at the bottom of all this mischief."

"You never saw him, did you, colonel?"

"No, and if I did, it wouldn't help me much, I guess. Chinamen are all so much alike. This fellow, Cheng Low, had a white mother, though, and may be different from the average Chink."

"Very likely, I should say."

"Well, be ready to ride away at sundown, Len."

"All right."

"We'll take Dave Lonergan, Pete Gearing, and Jamieson. Five of us ought to be able to block the game of one half-breed Chinaman, and— Well, what do you want?"

A middle-sized man, who might have been any age between twenty and fifty, and whose yellow face, slant-eyes, and coarse black hair told of the Mongolian blood in him—albeit he wore no queue and was dressed in American clothing—had accidentally jostled Colonel Brand in his haste to get past.

"I beg your pardon, colonel."

As the Chinaman said this in good English, he bowed apologetically—almost abjectly.

"What do you want?" repeated Colonel Brand sharply.

"I heard that a man—a stranger—had been found dead over here, and I thought I might be of some use," was the answer, uttered with the meekness, real or assumed, of the average Asiatic coolie.

"That's so. I guess you can. Look through his clothes and see whether there's anything that will tell who he is."

"Yes, colonel."

The Chinaman glided away toward the spot where his dead compatriot lay, with Dave and Pete still looking down at the corpse thoughtfully.

"There's one of the few Chinks you can trust," remarked Colonel Brand to Leonard, as he looked after the Chinaman. "But, then, he's Americanized, and that makes all the difference. He speaks good English, and calls himself John Williams. I kicked some when Mary brought him with her from Denver, to be our cook, the last time she was there on a visit. But she believes in great possibilities for the Chinese race, and she wanted this chap. So I gave in, and he's

such a good cook and so docile that I'm obliged to take off my hat to the girl and confess she knows more about hiring kitchen help than I do. What do you think about that, Len?"

But there was no answer, and, as the colonel turned to see why, he discovered that he was alone.

"Confound that Leonard! Where is he?"

Then he saw something that made him smile indulgently, as he muttered:

"It's all right. There's my ranking officer. He had to go to her."

A young girl of about twenty—bare-headed, with a big fluff of light-brown hair tossing carelessly in the morning breeze—whose pink cheeks and springy step spoke eloquently of the advantages of outdoor life, had come over to see what the excitement was about at the horse-corral, and Leonard was telling her.

The girl was the colonel's only daughter, Mary.

"So the horse was ridden hard in the night without any one knowing who did it?" she was saying musingly.

"That's it, exactly," replied Leonard, gazing admiringly at the delicate contour of the rounded cheeks and dimpled chin.

"But surely there must be some clue?"

"No; there's none, so far as I know."

"And, of course, father blames some of those poor Chinese who want to participate in the blessings of this great country of ours, and whom that selfish government at Washington is always trying to keep out."

The indignation that flushed her cheeks made her look prettier than ever, Leonard Dean thought, as he replied:

"There is no other supposition possible, that I can see."

For a few moments she remained silent, knitting her brows thoughtfully. Then she broke out in a sudden tempest, as her father strolled up:

"I don't care! I hope it *was* the Chinamen. They wouldn't do things of this kind if they weren't always being driven and chased, as if they were—pirates."

Mary Brand was some little time finding this last powerful word, but she pounced upon it joyfully when it did come to her.

"There you are again, Mary," laughed the colonel good-humoredly. "You are always preaching in behalf of your dear Chinamen."

"They are not my 'dear' Chinamen," she answered stiffly. "But they *are* human beings, like ourselves."

"Yes, and while your father, as sheriff, is doing his best to see that they don't get into the United States by way of Montana, you are helping to operate the 'underground' for them. I hope you won't be tempted some night to ride over to the border, to take an active part in the work. What a dreadful thing it would be if I found that, in the line of my duty, I had to arrest and clap handcuffs on my own daughter!"

"I wouldn't mind that," she rejoined. "Those who associate themselves with an unpopular cause must not have any fear of martyrdom."

She made this pronunciamento with the air of a saint about to be led to the stake, and while her father only laughed amusedly, Leonard Dean knew that she meant just what she said.

"The man's pockets are empty, colonel."

It was John Williams who spoke, and he had slipped up so quietly that Colonel Brand did not know he was there till he heard his voice. He gave a nervous start.

"Confound you! Why didn't you say you were at my elbow?" he grumbled illogically. "Did you search all his clothes?"

"Yes, sir. There is nothing about him to tell what or who he is."

"Artful scoundrels—those smugglers," growled the colonel. "Smart enough always not to leave evidence behind them, even when they emigrate to the other world."

"I beg your pardon. What did you say, colonel?" asked John Williams.

"I wasn't speaking to you," was the testy reply. "Are those men getting ready to bury that fellow?"

"Yes, colonel. But I was going to mention a strange thing," said Williams. "The dead man's hair is all short. He has no queue, and never has had one, I should say."

The colonel looked at him keenly and penetratingly.

"That's queer, in a Chink just arrived in the country."

"Yes; so it strikes me. Then there's something else I want to tell you. I found this near the corral gate. It may have belonged to the dead man—and it may not."

John Williams held up a crumpled sheet of rice-paper, on which were three vertical rows of Chinese characters, in very black ink.

"What does it say?" asked the colonel, taking the paper and frowning at the writing he could not understand. "You can read this stuff, I suppose?"

"Yes, colonel. It says: 'In case of accident to me, notify Hip Sing. I am Cheng Low.'"

"That means some member of the Hip Sing tong is to be called in," volunteered Mary.

"Are you quite sure that's what it says, Williams?" demanded Colonel Brand, with a look that seemed to penetrate the very being of the gentle-mannered cook.

"Yes, colonel, quite sure. Here it is. Begins here, and—"

He was pointing to one of the upright lines of black symbols, his long, thin forefinger traveling slowly downward, when the ranch-owner interrupted:

"He has no queue, you say?"

"None at all. I noticed that as soon as I pulled off his hat, which was tied down on his head."

"H'm! Len!"

"Yes, colonel."

"There's no doubt that this fellow who chose my ranch to drop dead on is Cheng Low. He was taking some of those contraband Chinks away from the border when his heart suddenly gave out. As soon as the other fellows saw he was dead, they grabbed all his money and papers and left him. He must just have returned my horse to the corral when he dropped this paper. Then he went a few steps farther and died."

Colonel Brand said this as if he saw it all—a habit he had when following a line of deduction which flowed smoothly along—while John Williams stood before him, with downcast eyes, humbly waiting for additional orders.

"It seems quite possible," assented Leonard Dean.

"Possible? It's *so*. Don't you see it is?" insisted the colonel violently. "His hair is short, without a queue, and here's his own writing to provide for the disposition of his body in case of sudden death—and in his business, with border riders ready to put a rifle-bullet into him on sight, he stood a good chance of dying at any moment, even leaving his weak heart out of the calculation. I'm glad to know we've got rid of Cheng Low, anyhow. He won't abuse my horse again."

"Do you want me for anything else, colonel?" came quietly from the cook at this moment.

"No," snapped Colonel Brand. "Get over to your kitchen."

The Chinaman turned away without a word and pattered toward the rear of the house. He had not shown any resentment at his curt dismissal, and there was a strange smile on his yellow face as he thrust a hand in front of his waistcoat and pulled partly out a long, braided pigtail of coarse black hair which evidently had been slashed off close to the head of its former owner.

CHAPTER III.

BOOTS AND SADDLES.

WHATEVER might be the significance of the pigtail John Williams carried to the house inside his waistcoat, certain it is that it made no difference in the manner of his performing his regular duties in Colonel Brand's kitchen. He worked among his pots and pans with his usual soberness, serving a good luncheon about noon, and a better dinner in the evening, without exchanging a dozen words with Bertha Krantz, his fellow servant, all day. She was used to John Williams's taciturnity, however. It suited her; she was not much of a talker herself.

"See that the horse is locked up safely before you go to bed to-night, Mary," admonished the colonel, as they sat at dinner. "We shall start in less than an hour, and I don't suppose you'll see me before sunrise."

The girl looked at her father seriously—almost rebukingly.

"I wish you weren't going," she said.

"Why? Not afraid of being in the house alone with Bertha, are you? You'll have plenty of protection. There are the men in the bunk-house, close by, who would hear the first outcry you might make, and—"

"Nonsense, dad. You know I didn't mean that. I can handle a gun, and I'd like to see the man who could scare me. But I think it is a sin for you to interfere with those who have as much right to be in one part of the world as another."

"Meaning Chinamen?"

"Yes, the Chinamen who want to live in America, and who are always so quiet, industrious, and well-behaved when they are here."

A sound like a suppressed chuckle behind Colonel Brand made him swing around angrily. But the face of John Williams, on his way to the kitchen with a dish in his hand, wore a look of funereal solemnity.

"That fellow agrees with you, anyhow," remarked the colonel as the cook disappeared. "I saw you talking to him yesterday for rather a long time. Was it altogether about what he was to cook for dinner?"

Mary turned her frank, open gaze full upon her father, as she replied:

"We were talking about the immigration of the Chinese. Williams is a very intelligent

man, and he sees the injustice of our exclusion laws."

"Naturally, being a Chinaman."

"He was born in New York, and his mother was an American," rejoined Mary. "She married a Chinese merchant in New York—"

"Sold opium, didn't he?"

"I don't know whether he did or not, but he was very much respected."

"Who told you so?"

"Why, Williams."

"Then, of course it was so," laughed the colonel, adding gravely: "I wish you would not discuss such matters with him. He is a splendid cook, and I should like him to stay with us. But, if he doesn't keep his anti-exclusion sentiments to himself, why, as sheriff of this county, I shall have to—"

But just then John Williams came in again, and the subject was dropped.

Dinner over, the colonel, with Mary, went over to the corral, where five horses were saddled and equipped for a night's work in the hills. Nelson (named for General Nelson A. Miles), who had been so badly used the night before, was not one of them, of course. He was comfortably munching hay in a retired corner.

Colonel Brand looked at the horses, observed that it was a clear night, and then, as the foreman remarked that they might as well start, said abruptly, in the manner of one who had just reached a conclusion after considerable cogitation:

"Len, I guess you'd better not go."

"Very well, colonel," assented Leonard Dean, without evincing the slightest surprise. "I think myself it would be better for me to remain here and watch things. We oughtn't both to be away at one time."

Colonel Brand slapped his foreman on the shoulder approvingly.

"I thought you'd understand. If any one tries to get at our horses again, you'll know what to do."

"I certainly will, colonel."

So only Dave Lonergan, Pete Gearing, and Sam Jamieson accompanied Colonel Brand as he dashed away straight for the bridge which spanned a branch of the Milk River, two miles off. The colonel's land lay on both sides of the stream, the Canadian line being twenty miles north of the home ranch.

"Keep a sharp lookout, all of you," he directed, as, after their twenty-mile gallop over the rolling plain, the four pulled up near one of the stone posts—technically, "surveyors' monuments"—which, ten miles apart, mark the division of Montana from the Northwest Territory of Canada. "What do you see, Jamieson?"

"There's some one coming through that ravine," was the quiet reply.

Jamieson pointed toward a spur of the Milk River Ridge on the left, and at once all three of his companions knew there was a horseman sitting motionless against the towering granite wall.

A city-bred man might not have seen this man and horse at that distance, in the thick gloom, but these rangers of mountain and plain were not to be deceived by the flickering shadows, bewildering as they might have been to unaccustomed eyes.

"Lieutenant Dingwall, by Jove!" exclaimed Colonel Brand.

Then he put a hand to the side of his mouth and uttered a peculiar sharp cry that carried easily to the watching horseman.

Instantly the latter rode out of the ravine toward them, his uniform showing him to be an officer of the famous Royal Northwest Mounted Police of the Dominion. As he came up, he and Colonel Brand saluted each other, military fashion.

"What's doing, lieutenant?" asked the colonel.

"A gang is coming through Kootenai. I got it by heliograph from our men at the other side of the Divide an hour before sunset."

"Don't know what they look like, I suppose?"

"No, and if Cheng Low is handling the outfit, it isn't easy to guess."

"I don't think Cheng Low is with them," said the colonel quietly.

Before Lieutenant Dingwall could ask why there was a yell from Pete Gearing, who had ridden by himself toward the ravine from which the lieutenant had emerged, and instantly the others spurred their horses in his direction.

"There they are now, by jings!" shouted Dave Lonergan, in a fever of excitement.

"Get around to the right and head them off!" was Colonel Brand's quick command. "We'll arrest the whole yellow-skinned party."

"That's the move, colonel," laughed Lieutenant Dingwall. "They're on your side of the line. They're yours."

"Yes, and I want 'em," was the colonel's pithy rejoinder.

It was a lively chase.

In the moonlight they saw five men on horseback, in the garb of cowboys, rush out

from the shadow of the rocks and gallop at full sped southward, straight for the river on the other side of which lay Colonel Brand's ranch.

Four of the five betrayed themselves as imitation cattlemen by the awkward way they rode, as if their saddles did not fit them. Their shoulders were hunched up, and each clung to his pommel with the grip of desperation, and seemed in danger of pitching off at every jump of the horse.

"Look at them Chinks, Pete!" yelled Dave Lonergan, "holdin' on like cats to the top rail of a corral fence. Arter 'em! Don't let 'em git away!"

There could be no doubt that at least four of the fugitives were Chinamen, even though their yellow features could not be distinguished in the uncertain moonlight, and despite the fact that their broad-brimmed soft hats—banged into various odd shapes, in cowboy style—high boots, flannel shirts, and handkerchiefs loosely knotted at the th[illegible] were all those of cattlemen.

The pigtails of the four awkward riders were rolled up and hidden under their hats, but the fifth man, who managed his horse with the easy grace of an experienced ranger, allowed his long queue to float freely and ostentatiously in the breeze.

"Get that fellow with the pigtail, even if we lose the others!" shouted Colonel Brand. "He's the leader. I can see that!"

"He shorely is," assented Pete Gearing. "An' a purty nifty-lookin' Chink at that."

The Chinamen were well mounted, and all their horses, with the possible exception of that ridden by the man with the pigtail, seemed fresh. Those of the colonel and his followers, however, having done more than twenty miles already, were decidedly lacking in steam.

Under the circumstances, it is not strange that the colonel soon began to fear the chase would be a futile one, after all.

"Shall we shoot?" demanded Dave eagerly.

"No. They are too far away."

"I could git within range if I pushed my horse hard fer fifteen minutes. He's shorely a willin' critter. Then I'd put a bullet into that gent with the pigtail an' send him over on his head with a whirl, or my name ain't Lonergan."

But Colonel Brand shook his head, and Dave knew it would be useless to argue.

"Well, colonel," observed Lieutenant Dingwall, who was riding close to the sheriff, "they're in your territory, and I daren't go any farther over the border, or I'll find myself in trouble at headquarters."

"You're right, lieutenant," responded the colonel. "Thank you for what you've done. Good night."

"Good night, colonel. I hope you'll get your men. I'll let you know if I hear of another raid to come off."

"Thanks!"

Men of action in sparsely settled regions, especially soldiers, do not spend much time in formal farewells, and Lieutenant Dingwall turned and rode back toward the border without another word.

Colonel Brand and his men kept on steadily after the Chinamen, but the latter drew away from them by degrees, and it was not long before, led by the man with the flying pigtail, they gave their pursuers the slip.

Whether they had gone onward, or had doubled and found concealment in the rough ground of the Milk River Ridge, which was so important a part of the "underground route," the colonel did not know, and, as there was no way just then of finding out, there was nothing for it but to give it up for that time, at least.

The sun was well up over the eastern hills when Colonel Brand and his three followers, tired and disappointed, came in sight of the home ranch.

"There seems to be something doing in the corral," said Lonergan.

The colonel spurred on his jaded horse, and reached the enclosure ahead of the others. Then, through his clenched teeth, came an oath, not loud, but deeply in earnest.

Another of his horses had been stolen and overridden!

It stood near the gate, wet, shivering, and worn out, just as Nelson had been the night before.

"That there horse has had to swim the river," was Dave Lonergan's positive opinion.

And the others agreed with him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COOK'S SECRET.

"WHERE'S Dean?"

Careful examination had convinced the colonel that the horse had not only been ridden to the limit of endurance, but had also been over his head in water.

Leonard Dean, coming from the bunkhouse as his name was called, hurried over to the corral. He found Colonel Brand stamping up and down in a fury.

"Hallo, Len! What do you think of this? By all the gods—"

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing much," returned the colonel, with a savage laugh. "Only another horse spoiled by some person unknown—a Chink, of course. No other kind of man would do it. When did you go to bed?" he added, turning around abruptly to face Leonard.

"Not an hour ago," was the answer. "As you were away, I stayed up all night."

"I needn't ask whether you saw or heard any strangers about the corral, because, of course, you'd have challenged them."

"Why, of course I would. But I didn't see anybody. If any outsider took this horse, he managed it in a mighty slick way."

"All the same, he *did* manage it," grumbled the colonel.

Then solemnly: "I tell you what it is, Len. It's bad enough for the Chinks to come tumbling over the border at will, defying the whole United States government. But when they steal my horses right under my nose to do it with, there's going to be a strict investigation and hard knocks for somebody, as sure as I'm a living man."

Leonard Dean waited a few moments for the colonel to cool down before he ventured to ask:

"How about your trail to the border-line? Did you see anything of the men you expected to come through Kootenai Pass?"

"Yes, we saw them. But that was all the good it did. Lieutenant Dingwall was there, and gave me some help. But the yellow rascals had a fellow with them who was crafty enough to have been Cheng Low himself, only that we know he is dead."

"That sport gallyhootin' ahead of us the other side of the river this mornin' had a pigtail, colonel," Dave Lonergan reminded him. "Cheng Low's hair is short. We all knows that."

The colonel rubbed the side of his nose nervously, a habit he had when perplexed.

"That's so, Dave. I was thinking perhaps we were mistaken as to the identity of the Chink we found dead behind the wagon, and that Cheng Low might be alive, after all; but the pigtail spoils that theory. You know, Len, this—this—renegade, like the yellow rascals he was helping over the line, was rigged out as a cow-puncher, and the queer thing about it all was that, though we could all see he was a white man, from the way he sat his horse, yet he was the only one who showed a queue."

"And the other four were Chinamen?"

"Beyond question. I'll tell you how it was."

The colonel gave a detailed narrative of all that had happened, finishing with the disappearance of the pig-tailed man and the four Chinamen with him.

"You don't know which way they went?" asked Leonard thoughtfully.

"I believed at first they had sneaked into the Milk River Ridge. But finding this horse here makes me think they may have got past and gone to meet the 'underground road' agents somewhere along the railroad. However, I'm going to bed now. But I'll be after them again to-night."

It may be explained here that the colonel, in speaking of the "underground road," merely meant the surreptitious bringing of Chinamen into the United States across the Canadian boundary-line, and did not imply that they came through a tunnel. The expression "underground road" was in common use during the Civil War, applied to the helping of Southern negroes into Northern States where slavery did not exist.

The colonel found a comfortable breakfast ready for him as he reached his dining-room, with Mary, in her fresh morning frock, ready to pour out his coffee, and John Williams, the meek-faced cook, waiting to bring the ham and eggs from the kitchen.

"You didn't catch any of the men you were hunting, did you?" asked Mary, when her father had fairly begun his meal.

He frowned, and sawed savagely at his slice of ham—which latter proceeding surely was unnecessary.

"No, we didn't get 'em—but we will," growled the colonel.

"Did you see them?"

"Yes, and we'd have caught them but for a cunning rascal who pretended to be a Chinaman by wearing a false pigtail. It must have been false if he was a white man. As for those Chinks— Well, what are *you* gaping at?"

He had broken off to address this personal query to John Williams, who had paused on his pattering way out of the room to look curiously at the colonel, and had unconsciously faced him across the table to do it.

"Nothing, colonel," purred the cook meekly, and skimmed away to his own domain among the pots and pans.

"Inquisitive, like all his race," observed the colonel, going on leisurely with his breakfast.

"He's interested in Chinese immigration, and has very intelligent views on the subject."

said Mary quietly, as she poured a cup of coffee for her father.

"Yes? Well, I wish you wouldn't discuss the question with him more than you can help. Never mind about his intelligence. The fellow hasn't nerve enough to take any active part in the 'underground' work, or I might suspect him. Then I should have to lose a good cook and fire him. One rebel in the house is enough."

He smiled affectionately at his daughter, but Mary looked grave. She generally did when this topic came up.

Neither of them could see the door communicating with the kitchen from where they sat, or they might have been aware of a pair of beady black eyes in a flat yellow face regarding Colonel Brand intently and with anything but good-will.

Could the colonel have been mistaken in his estimate of John Williams's nerve. It did seem so, for the beady eyes in the flat yellow face, looking at him through the half-open door, certainly were those of the low-voiced Chinese cook, who did his work so faithfully and always was so respectful and promptly obedient.

Bertha Krantz, the housemaid, was busy in the up-stairs rooms at this time in the morning, so the kitchen was left entirely to John Williams, and he was resting for a few minutes, now that the colonel had everything he would be likely to want for breakfast.

John Williams "rested" at first by peering cautiously through the doorway of the dining-room to satisfy himself that neither the colonel nor Mary Brand were likely to come into the kitchen. Then he tiptoed to another door which led to the fenced yard which surrounded the house, and into which nobody was supposed to come unless he had business to transact. Here the Chinaman seated himself on the door-sill, his back to the kitchen.

The enclosure had a winding carriage-drive, flower-beds, and a few young fruit trees; for Colonel Brand was very fond of his daughter, and, since she consented to live out here on the ranch, far away from towns and their pleasures, he desired to make her home as attractive as possible.

Sitting on this door-sill, which was at the back of the house, John Williams looked across the yard at the solid log cabin, two stories high, where, on the lower floor, carefully wrapped in canvas, stood the automobile which the colonel had bought for Mary two or three months before.

Above, reached by a perpendicular ladder against the wall, through a square hole, was a room where the cook slept. The sloping roof and walls were unlined, and the rough logs were just as they had been left by the ax when the place was built.

It was not a sumptuous bedchamber, but the crevices between the logs of the walls and roof had been made air-tight with mortar, and the one window, facing the east, allowed the room to be flooded with light every morning as soon as the sun began to rise.

John Williams continued to sit on the sill, ruminating. A casual observer might have supposed him half asleep, but he was not. On the contrary, he was very wide-awake. But, how meek he seemed!

"There goes the colonel to bed," he muttered inaudibly. "I'm glad his room is on the other side of the house."

"Don't have me disturbed till late in the afternoon, Mary," came gustily in the colonel's big voice from the dining-room.

"Very well, father," responded the clear accents of his daughter.

"Smart man, that colonel," was John Williams's mental comment. "He knows a good cook when he sees one. Knows some other things, too. But—not everything."

The thin line of John Williams's lips tightened and lengthened until it looked like an angry purple scar across the saffron visage. Perhaps this was a smile. If it was, it did not involve the small, oblique eyes, for they remained half closed, with a glittering point under the very center of each lid, which gave them a sinister aspect, to say the least.

A door slammed in the dining-room, and heavy boots clumped up the varnished hardwood stairs, while John Williams sat still, listening and following the sounds of Colonel Brand's retreat to his distant sleeping-apartment.

"He's safe now. I'm not afraid of anybody else."

The purple scar deepened, as with smooth, catlike steps, as noiseless as if he had worn the thick felt-soled slippers affected by his people, the cook slipped across the twenty-yard space that separated him from the log house at which he had been staring, and went inside, carefully barring the door.

A chuckle parted the thin lips. Things seemed to be going his way. He was perfectly serious, however, when he climbed the steep ladder against the wall and in a few seconds stood in his bedroom above.

He cautiously let down a ponderous trap-door over the square opening, and, swinging around, held up a forefinger as a warning that there must be no noise.

For John Williams was not alone.

Squatting on the floor, in such a position that the light from the window struck full upon their faces, were four men in the full regalia of cowboys, but unmistakably Chinamen, for all that.

CHAPTER V.

A GIRL AT THE WHEEL.

THERE was nothing evil in the aspect of the four Chinamen. They seemed bewildered and anxious, as well as uncomfortable in their American clothes, but that was all. No one would have called them desperadoes. John Williams grinned as he hurriedly looked them over.

Then, in the Cantonese dialect—for none of the strangers understood English—he told them to keep very quiet and he would bring them something to eat.

This promise met with general favor, and one of the four ventured the reminder that they had had no food since the day before, adding that chicken was something they all liked.

"I will bring you what I can. When you have eaten it, you may rest a little while, but you must not smoke. Soon we will send you on to a man at the railroad, and he will take you where you will be safe."

With another admonition to be very quiet, he left them, to go back to the kitchen for such fragmentary food as he could lay his hands on.

Hardly had he reached the bottom of the ladder when one of the Chinamen uttered a low ejaculation, and, raising the lid of a trunk upon which his elbow had rested, drew forth something that caused his little black eyes to glitter fiercely, the while he muttered a few strange words which sounded like malactions.

The "something" in his clawlike fingers as the braided queue of coarse black hair which John Williams had carried inside the front of his waistcoat when he sneaked back from the corral on the morning the dead Chinaman had been found behind the wagon.

The trunk from which the unpleasant-looking pigtail had just been removed was the property of John Williams, and, as the lock had been broken off long ago, it could not be securely fastened.

There is a great deal of curiosity in the Mongolian character, and the lid of the trunk had been pushed up less than ten minutes after the imitation cattlemen had been led into this retreat and left to themselves early in the morning.

"Sun Pi" was the scowling Chinaman, looking queer in his cowboy habiliments, who now held the queue in his grasp, alternately pressing it to his forehead and breast, with a convulsive clenching of his fingers. The others regarded him sympathetically, but in silence, until in a low, mournful tone, he wailed:

"Sun Wah was my brother! Sun Wah is dead!"

"Sun Wah is dead!" echoed the others in a low, dismal chorus.

Sun Pi held the queue aloft, and waved it three times.

"This was taken from Sun Wah! It is my brother!" he chanted.

"What is the proof?" sang the chorus. "Do you know it is Sun Wah?"

"Here is the proof. It comes from Sun Wah's ancestors, who are mine. See!"

From the large tuft of wiry hair Sun Pi picked out with his long finger-nails a small bronze button, on which were engraved some Chinese characters. The button was secured to the braid of hair, a few inches from the tuft which had been fastened to the head by a thin silver chain. The whole combination of button and chain had been artfully concealed in the queue.

The button was an amulet such as many Chinamen wear, something which often is handed down from generation to generation, increasing in value because of the veneration with which all people of that race regard everything that once belonged to their ancestors.

Sun Pi's brother had been in a party of immigrants preceding him in the march into the United States. That Sun Wah was dead was proved conclusively, because he never would have parted with his precious queue so long as he could have raised his hand in its defense.

What object John Williams had had in removing it from the head of the dead man—if he did remove it—was locked in that astute personage's own bosom.

One of the Chinamen lifted his elbow warningly as he caught the sound of the cook's soft footsteps below, and Sun Pi hastily hid the queue in his clothing. When John Williams's head came through the trap-hole in the floor, all four Chinamen were motionless, in the same position as when he had left them. But Sun Pi still scowled.

They fell upon the chicken and other food with ravenous appetites, drinking water after-

ward with as much apparent satisfaction as if it had been the tea which doubtless they longed for.

Meanwhile, the cook went down the ladder and ran Mary Brand's automobile out of its corner with an ease that suggested he was a competent chauffeur, as well as an expert in the culinary line.

He looked the machine over, and made sure there was plenty of gasoline in the tank. He saw also that it was properly oiled up, and in every way fit for use. Then he went to the foot of the ladder and softly called to the men above to come down.

Deftly he packed the four Chinamen into the bottom of the car in an incredibly small space, considering everything. He finished the job by covering them with a buffalo robe with studied carelessness, so that the robe appeared to be merely thrown into the rear seat for use if it should be needed. The whole proceeding was a work of art in its way.

"Don't move, any of you," he commanded softly.

There was no response from the half-smothered Chinamen; but if John Williams could have seen the murderous expression on Sun Pi's face, as he fumbled inside the front of his flannel shirt for the queue which had belonged to his brother, and for whose death he was firmly convinced the cook was responsible, the latter might not have been so satisfied in mind.

He strolled casually out of the building, with an elaborate air of just happening to be there, and pattered across to the kitchen.

Mary Brand, with her hat and cloak on, was waiting for him.

"All ready?" she asked briefly.

"Yes, but don't lose any time in getting away."

"There is no danger of their being seen, is there?"

"Not if you are careful. I have covered them over, but if any suspicious person should come poking about the car, he might see that there is some one under the robe."

"There is not likely to be anybody," she replied. "I don't encourage the men to examine my car at any time. I hope I shall find the agent waiting for me in the cañon."

"He'll be there. It's Merriton. You can always depend on him. All you have to do is to pass the men over to him, and he'll take them in his wagon by a roundabout route to Carlow Station, and get them aboard the east-bound train. After that they will be safe. There'll be people to look after them on the train."

"Well, I'll go," said the girl, who seemed tired of all this explanation. "I know the road to the cañon, and it is a rough one. It will take me an hour and a half, at least, to cover the fifteen miles. I hope I sha'n't have a breakdown."

"No fear of that. The car is in splendid shape. I have just looked it over."

John Williams's demeanor was as meek as ever, and the purple scar showed only when he was not talking and the thin lips were pressed together. But, although his tones were soft and palavering, and he addressed Mary Brand in the respectful manner customary with him, there was a subtle suggestion in his manner that he appreciated the fact of her sympathy with Chinese immigrants having forced her to make him in a sense her partner and confidant.

The girl herself felt this, and she did not like it. But, as she had said to her father at the corral the day before, the devotee of an unpopular cause must not fear martyrdom. And to be in a secret with her father's cook certainly was martyrdom of a kind.

"I think it would be better for you to run the car out without my help," he added respectfully. "We don't know who may be watching. The machine is all ready to start."

"Yes; you're right," she answered.

He watched her slyly through the kitchen window as she walked over to the automobile, and, after a passing glance at the buffalo robe, under which she knew were huddled the four Chinamen, she took her seat in front.

She had run the car as far as the gateway when she heard her father calling her:

"Wait, Mary!"

"Yes, father."

She stopped obediently and looked upward.

Colonel Brand was leaning out of his bedroom window in his shirt-sleeves, gazing straight down at the buffalo robe in the motor-car.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

She tried to smile unconcernedly as she replied:

"Just for a spin. It's a beautiful morning, and I think I shall greatly enjoy the fresh air."

"I'm sure you'll enjoy it. So shall I," was his unexpected rejoinder. "I can't sleep any longer. Just wait while I slip on my coat, and I'll come down and go with you. There's plenty of room for me to stretch out comfortably in the back of the car, and I can wrap myself up in the buffalo robe and perhaps get a nap."

He moved away from the window, and Mary's hands, grasping the steering-wheel, turned deathly cold.

CHAPTER VI.

IN A DARK ATTIC.

MARY looked around her wildly for some means of preventing what seemed the inevitable discovery of the Chinamen.

Then she caught sight of John Williams, who had followed the automobile to the corner, and had seen and heard the colonel at the window.

"What shall I do?" she whispered.

"Run the car back into the shed, quick!" replied Williams. "Then the men can get away."

"I haven't time."

"You *must* have time."

"I'll try, but my father is coming right down," she protested.

"It's your only chance."

This seemed to be the simple truth, and the girl, with a dexterous twist of the wheel and some backing and filling, turned the machine around.

And just then Colonel Brand stepped out of the kitchen-door, immediately in her path.

"Quick! The front door!" hissed Williams.

Colonel Brand saw him standing near the automobile, but did not attach any importance to the fact. The cook was often in the yard in the course of his professional duties.

"Here you are, Mary!" called out the colonel cheerily.

But, instead of stopping for him, and seeing she could not get to the shed, she whirled the machine up to the front door of the house, leaving him standing alone.

John Williams had darted into his kitchen, nd was hurrying through the house.

"What's the matter, Mary?" shouted the nystified colonel. "Did the car get away from you?"

He couldn't hear what she replied, so, with a playful shake of his head at his daughter, he walked slowly after her.

At this moment the front door opened a little way, and the voice of John Williams reached the Chinaman under the buffalo robe, as he called to them in their own tongue:

"Jump out and run into the house! This way! Hurry!"

The four Chinamen tumbled out of the automobile in a struggling heap, and made for the steps. John Williams was holding the door wide open, but keeping well inside, so that he should not be seen by the colonel, while he continued to urge the men to hurry.

They had reached the top of the steps when one of them, tripping in his haste, fell flat, with his three comrades in a scrambling heap atop of him.

Williams swore at them in Chinese, and they were on their feet at once, but—too late!

Colonel Brand had come around the corner, and before they could hide themselves in the house he had seen and recognized them as the four Chinamen who had got away from him on the plain the night before.

He had only a glimpse of them before they bolted out of sight, and the door closed with a bang. The colonel had not seen John Williams at all.

For at least half a minute the ranch-owner was so staggered by the unexpected appearance of these Chinamen, and their making free with his house, that he could only stand still and gasp in mingled indignation and astonishment.

Then, as he partly recovered himself, he blurted out, in the full compass of his deep bass voice: "If this isn't the limit!"

Leaping up three steps at a time, he flung himself at the door.

Grasping the handle, he gave it a fierce wrench, but a bolt had been shot into its socket, and the door did not yield in the least.

He looked at the down-stairs windows, but they were all shuttered, and could not be opened from without. The colonel knew that, because he had secured them himself.

After trying each window, in the forlorn hope that he might be able to force one of them, and finding them all impregnable, he hurled his knee and shoulder against the door with all the impetus he could muster.

But he might as well have spared himself the exertion. The door, like the windows, was made to resist outside attack, for it was a wild country around the Broken-S Ranch, and the residence of the sheriff might have to fulfil the purpose of a fortress, as well as a home, on occasion.

Frantic with rage, the colonel rushed away to the back of the house, only to find the kitchen-door locked and bolted.

"Here! You, Williams! John! Bertha! Somebody! Open this door!" he yelled.

He shook it, and tried with all his might to break it open, but it was solidly built, like all the others belonging to the house; and, do what he would, he could not budge it.

The colonel kicked and raved and

thumped, shouting alternately for his cook and for Bertha Krantz, and was just going away to climb the porch, in the hope of getting in by the second-story windows, when the kitchen-door gently opened, and the face of John Williams, wearing an almost angelic look of meekness, appeared.

The colonel surged into the kitchen, thrusting the cook aside with so much suddenness as almost to knock him down.

"Where are they?" he shouted. "Where are those yellow rascals?"

John Williams looked at him in surprise.

"I beg your pardon, colonel," he said softly. "What—"

"Why didn't you open the door?" roared his master. "And where are those men?"

"I didn't hear you. I was in the cellar, getting some potatoes, and I haven't seen any men."

John Williams said this so smoothly, and with such an air of honesty, that Colonel Brand could not but believe him, although it seemed hardly possible that anybody in the house, even down in the cellar, could have failed to hear the fearful din at both the front and back doors.

"Come with me," said the colonel abruptly, as he ran through the dining-room and up the stairs.

He passed Bertha Krantz, plastered against the wall, petrified with terror, and plunged hurriedly into each room on the second floor without finding anybody. He searched the third floor, with the same barren result.

Nothing now remained but the attic—except the cellar, and John Williams had reported nobody there. By the way, where *was* Williams?

"Williams! John! John!" called the colonel. "Confound the fellow! I thought he was following me up-stairs."

But there was no time to think about Williams just now, and Colonel Brand ran up to the attic, with its sloping roof and the smell of fresh pine that most attics have. It was all in darkness, for the small windows were all closely shuttered, and the colonel had to grope his way along as well as he could without using his eyes.

He was feeling about for the door of the front room, near the head of the staircase, when somebody brushed past him. Instinctively he grabbed at the person, whoever it might be. As he did so he staggered under a tremendous blow on the head from some heavy weapon.

Fortunately for the colonel the slouch-hat he wore was of thick felt, and, moreover, it was well padded inside. But for this protection he must have been knocked senseless.

He closed with the unseen man, and wrenched from his hand a big revolver, which exploded in the process. By the flash of powder he saw the face of the fellow he had seized. It was one of the four Chinamen.

"I knew it!" he shouted. "The same crowd! Well, this is where you get all that is coming to you!"

Infuriated by the blow on his head, and boiling with indignation at the thought that the men who had slipped through his fingers should dare to come to his house, Colonel Brand laid about him with his fists at random in the dark.

Standing at the top of the staircase, he found that his foes were all trying to get down, and, therefore, that the tide of battle flowed directly toward him; so he followed the good old Donnybrook Fair plan of hitting every head that came his way.

He dashed his fists rapidly into three countenances, one after the other, and then, as he heard the voice of John Williams in the darkness shouting some unintelligible battle-cry—which was assurance that the cook was close at hand and, of course, fighting on his behalf—he redoubled his endeavors to lay low all four of the Chinamen."

"Don't let 'em get down the stairs!" shouted the colonel. "Light a match, and I'll make the whole gang prisoners right here."

That was all he had a chance to say, for at that instant one of the unseen men gave vent to a guttural oath in his own tongue, which was followed by a gasping cry of pain from John Williams and the sound of somebody falling heavily down the stairs.

Simultaneously the colonel's hat was knocked off, and another pistol-barrel descended upon his unprotected head. This time he was stretched completely senseless.

CHAPTER VII.

SUN PI'S MARK.

MARY BRAND had left her automobile and found her way into the house by the kitchen-door just in time to hear the pistol-shot whose flash enabled her father to see the man who had first struck him.

The report was muffled by distance and the intervening doors, but Mary knew what it was, although she could not tell where the shot had been fired.

All she was sure of was that the China-

men she had been trying to help were somewhere in the house, fighting with her father. The pistol she had just heard might have ended his life, for all she knew.

As she reached the dining-room she caught the sound of the front door opening, and got to the hall just in time to see three of the cowboy-Chinamen jump into the automobile—one in front and two behind—the man in the driver's seat starting the machine with a jerk and darting away at almost full speed.

"There'll soon be a smash-up, I'm afraid," she said to herself. "He doesn't know how to drive, and it is sure to get away from him."

She wondered afterward how she could have been so cool about it, but just then she was more concerned about her father than anything else, and she ran up the stairs with hardly a second thought for the Chinamen and her motor-car.

"Hallo, Mary! Where are those Chinks?"

It was her father's voice, and it betokened anger. Evidently he was not injured, and the girl muttered a fervent "Thank Heaven!"

"They have just gone out, father," she replied. "In my motor-car."

"What?" thundered the colonel. "Your motor-car? Why, durn their yellow hides and pigtails! I'll—"

Mary had reached the second floor, and the colonel came down the upper staircase out of the gloom above, shaking his fist and swearing frightfully under his breath.

"Do you mean to say they've had the insolence to steal your car, after breaking into my house, and—"

A loud groan up-stairs in the darkness made him stop.

"Good Heavens! There's some one hurt up there!" he cried. "Get me a candle out my room."

"It must be one of those Chinese. Only ee of them were in the automobile, and I saw four come into the house just before you ran after them."

"That's so. Get me that candle. Where's that Bertha? Never mind. The candle's on the dresser, near the door."

Mary soon got the candle, wondering meanwhile whether it was one of her protégés they had heard groaning in the attic.

The girl had almost resolved to confess everything to her father, but she thought it would be as well to see who was hurt before saying anything about her part in the adventure.

The colonel, carrying the candle in one hand, while he involuntarily pressed the other upon a rather large bump on his head, went up the stairs and looked carefully about the spacious landing on which the battle had taken place.

All he found here was his hat and the six-shooter he had snatched from his first assailant.

Another groan sounded somewhere near, although he saw no one.

"It's in the front room," said the colonel. "Stay here, Mary," he added in a whisper. "That fellow may shoot."

Colonel Brand realized fully the danger of carrying a lighted candle into a dark room where a treacherous foe might be lying in wait for him. But he was a brave man, and he never let personal peril stand in his way when he had something to do that must be done.

So he walked boldly, but cautiously, forward, shading the candle-flame with his hand as he peered into the gloom beyond.

"Why doesn't he groan again, so that I can tell where he is?" grumbled the colonel. "By George! Here he is!"

He had stumbled over somebody in the middle of the floor.

"What's the matter with you?" growled the colonel as he lowered his candle, bringing into its light a wobegone individual with a handkerchief pressed against one cheek.

It was John Williams, pale and weak.

"I'm sorry, colonel," he said, "but I didn't know what I was doing after I got this."

"This" was a deep gash across his cheek-bone, which looked as if it might have been made with a carving-knife.

"Who gave you that?" asked the colonel in a sympathetic tone. "One of those Chinks, of course. I hope you laid him out in return. Did you? One of them didn't get away. He must be in the house somewhere."

John Williams leaped to his feet, seeming to recover his strength all at once; and if ever there was mortal terror in a man's face, it showed in his yellow countenance then.

"Where is he?" he gasped. "Not up here?"

"I don't think so; but three of them got away in Miss Brand's motor, and we don't know what's become of the fourth. What's that in your hand?"

The cook hastily thrust his hand behind him. Then he felt it would be useless to try to hide what he had, and he held up in the light of the candle the queue that had belonged to the dead Chinaman, Sun Wah!

"Capital! Fine!" shouted the colonel. "You slashed off his pigtail in the fight, eh? Well, I only wish you'd cut off his head with it. Are you able to help me investigate the attic? Strong enough, after your scrap?"

"Certainly, colonel," answered Williams, but with some reluctance, "I'll look through the place with you. Then I should like to go over to my room and get a clean handkerchief for my face. It's stopped bleeding."

"I hope you're not much hurt," put in Mary, who had followed her father.

"No, I am all right now, thank you. I was a little dizzy at first."

He spoke with his customary placidity and smiled humbly, as if pleased at her interest in him. Then, as the colonel turned his back, his expression became one of anxiety—a look the girl returned.

"Come on, Williams. We'll look at that other room together. Mary, you stay on the landing," directed the colonel, and John Williams had no opportunity to say anything to Mary just then.

They searched the whole attic carefully, but no one could they find; and finally they were obliged to believe that, wherever the missing Chinaman might be, he certainly was not up there.

"You don't know whether the fellow we are looking for is the one who gave you that decoration across your cheek or not, Williams?" remarked the colonel, as they prepared to go down to the lower part of the house.

"I think he is the man," said the cook quietly, as the purple scar formed by his thin lips darkened.

Colonel Brand, Mary, and the cook descended the staircase together, examining thoroughly every room on their way. Then, after visiting the cellar—where they found Bertha Krantz hiding behind the potato-barrels, frightened into a condition of blithering idiocy—they went out to the front porch.

There stood Dave Lonergan, looking in through the open doorway, as if trying to make up his mind to enter.

"Well, Dave, seen anything of a Chinaman?" asked the colonel quickly.

"I seen three of 'em, pullin' their freight in Miss Brand's buzz-wagon," answered Dave. "And—"

"I know all about *them*," interrupted the colonel in an impatient tone. "But there's another one we've lost. You only saw three in the auto, didn't you?"

"Yes. They was bumpin' along past the corral, with one o' them Chinks handlin' the wheel an' levers."

"Which way were they going?" queried Mary eagerly.

"South."

"Ah!" breathed the girl, exchanging a swift look with John Williams—a look of satisfaction.

"As they went swingin' about from side to side, racin' along lickety-split an' lookin' as if they might turn over any minute," continued Dave, "Leonard Dean chucks a saddle on that yaller pinto horse—you know him, colonel; he's shorely a traveler—an' gits arter the Chinks, with all straps a flyin' an' in a cloud o' dust."

"Len'll bring them back," said the colonel in a tone of conviction.

"Likely," assented Dave. "But that ain't all of it."

"It isn't? Then, why the blazes don't you spit it out?" shouted the colonel impatiently.

"All right, colonel. What I was goin' to say was that another Chink—I reckon he's the one you lost—got into the corral while we was all lookin' arter Leonard, an' sneaked off with the next best horse we had, an' he's purty nigh as swift as the pinto. This Chink I mentions was half a mile away on the other side o' the corral afore we knowed he'd started."

The expression of relief that passed over the visage of John Williams would surely have attracted the attention of the colonel if he had been looking his way. But he wasn't.

At the conclusion of Dave Lonergan's narration, he ripped out one of the choicest invectives in his rather extensive repertoire, and started for the corral with long strides that everybody knew meant sharp action of some kind.

CHAPTER VIII.

HEARD IN THE CAÑON.

As Colonel Brand marched away, he called to Dave Lonergan over his shoulder, without looking around:

"Bring my saddle, and tell Gearing and Jamieson to come."

"All right, colonel," responded Dave cheerfully, for he knew what the order meant, and it pleased him.

"They're going after those men in the car. I hope there won't be another fight," whispered Mary to John Williams. "Why can't

my father let them go? We can get the car back again. They won't use it farther than the cañon. Merriton will meet them there and take them on in a wagon."

"From the way that car was rocking when they left here, I doubt whether they'll ever get to the cañon," said John Williams indifferently.

Mary did not reply, but with a thoughtful face went indoors, while the cook pattered over to his bedroom to doctor his wounded cheek.

Meanwhile, Colonel Brand was in the corral with Lonergan, Gearing, and Jamieson, who were saddling up four of the best horses that were left. Then, without going back to speak to his daughter, the colonel, with his men, dashed away after the motor-car, whose broad wheels had left a trail in the dust that, in the parlance of the plains, was a howler.

"They're going straight for the railroad, near Carlow," observed the colonel, when they had followed the track a few miles.

"No; they allers meet some one in that cañon 'way this side o' the railroad," corrected Jamieson briefly.

Jamieson was of a taciturn disposition, so, having said this much, he became silent again, sitting bolt upright in his saddle and scowling between his horse's ears. Conversation ceased all around.

For nearly two hours they rode on, zigzagging over the broken country, as they followed the devious trail of the motor-car. Nothing had been seen either of the machine or of Leonard Dean.

As for Sun Pi, the colonel did not even know he was anywhere in the neighborhood, although Dave Lonergan had seen him depart on one of the colonel's horses. Wherever the Chinaman might be now, he was keeping well under cover.

"That there trail is sure wabbling," remarked Pete Gearing, ten minutes later.

"That's whatever," assented Lonergan.

"I reckon the Chink at the wheel doesn't know much about steering a car," said the colonel. "He seems to have lost control of it here."

It did seem so, for the wheel-tracks turned sharply to the right, and at last swung around completely, showing that the car was heading due north, and therefore going back in the general direction of the ranch.

Whether Leonard Dean had followed it could not be determined, for so many cattle had been over the trail, with cowboys riding backward and forward, that it was all a hopeless muddle.

"I'm glad those Chinks have got turned around," observed the colonel, as he halted to consider the situation.

"Yes, we'll drive 'em back over the Canadian line ag'in, an' they'll be jest where they started," said Lonergan.

"Before we can drive them back, I've got to get another horse. This one is going lame. Must have hit a stone."

As the colonel thus drew attention to his mount, the others saw that he was limping badly.

"We can swing off to the corral," suggested Jamieson.

The way back to the ranch was shorter than the one by which they had come, but the limping horse made them travel slowly, so that it was more than two hours before they turned into the corral, where the three cowboys shifted the saddles to fresh animals, while the colonel went over to his house.

He found only Bertha Krantz, who served him with the hasty meal he asked for, after telling him that she did not know where the cook was, but that she thought he was in his bedroom, fixing up his face.

"Where's Miss Mary?" inquired the colonel, with his mouth full.

But Bertha did not know that, either, and the colonel asked no more questions.

The sun was going down when the four men rode away from the corral, this time heading for the bridge which spanned Milk River. They could not find the trail of the car until they reached the bridge, and then it was Dave Lonergan who picked it up.

"Here's wide wheel-marks," he shouted gleefully. "Them Chinks must have been a long way 'round afore they got here, or we'd shorely have seen the dint they made in the earth sooner. Howsumever, here's their trail now, plain as a fresh brand on a yearlin' heifer."

"That's right, Dave," said the colonel in a pleased tone. "We'll get them, after all."

"I dunno 'bout that," growled the pessimistic Jamieson. "Them Chinks is pow'ful cunnin'."

"Maybe they is," put in Pete Gearing. "But we's some crafty likewise. We ought to be a match fer them heathen, anyhow."

The trail led to the left now, and soon the four men were in a jumble of towering rocks and deep gorges, which were not easy even for the hardy and sure-footed Western ponies, and must have been very difficult indeed for a wheeled vehicle.

Nevertheless, by the light of the slowly rising moon, the motor-car trail was plain,

and the way the machine had been guided around immense boulders and made to avoid the many awkward chasms, indicated that the Chinaman at the wheel was becoming more skilful than he had been several hours before.

"Wow!" suddenly shouted Dave Lonergan, as the party rode out of a ravine and were about to ascend rather a steep incline. "Look up there—on that ridge!"

"By Jove! It's our motor!" yelled the colonel. "Come on, boys! We've got 'em now!"

The car stood out clear and distinct in the white moonlight on the summit of a high rock, as if waiting to take a headlong plunge into the abyss ahead of it.

For a few minutes it was as motionless as the mighty crags and peaks around it. Then, as the colonel roared a stentorian "Stop!" the machine suddenly sprang into life, turned, and, running off from the edge of the precipice, disappeared from view.

"Good Lord! Has it got away?" cried the colonel excitedly.

"Not much it ain't," said Jamieson coolly. "I knows this here place like a book. We'll jest ride around the hill and strike the trail 'way up the mountainside over the cañon."

"Jamieson's shore the gent what knows," declared Lonergan. "There ain't no other way 'cept that there he mentions."

The horses were accustomed to climbing in the mountains, so that there was no hesitation on the part of any of them.

In and out of the deep shadows where the moonlight was cut off abruptly at intervals by bulging crags and overhanging reefs went the wiry little beasts, treading at the extreme verge of the narrow path, so as to avoid any protruding rock which might catch their sides if they moved close to the wall.

Occasionally they stumbled slightly, and at such times they often kicked over the precipice some big stone, which went hurtling down into the awful depth whose bottom was hidden in blackness, two thousand feet and more below.

Still the horses kept on, their riders motionless in the saddle, and always going up, up!

They had lost the trail of the motor-car long ago, but Jamieson was sure they would find it again, and Colonel Brand was quite willing to take the word of his follower.

At last, as they went around a sharp corner, where the path was so narrow that the horses could hardly squeeze past, the colonel, who was a little in advance of the others, gave the quick command:

"Halt!"

Across the fifty-foot cañon, and on a five-foot-wide ledge very much like their own, but a little higher up, stood the motor-car they had been for hours trying to catch.

The machine was in shadow, so that the colonel could not make out its occupants quite clearly, but there was no mistake about its being the car the Chinamen had taken away from the ranch.

It had stopped short when the colonel shouted "Halt!"

"Stay there till I get over to you," he called out, as he waved his riding-whip.

"How are we going to do it?" ventured Lonergan incredulously.

"Don't you worry, Lonergan," growled Jamieson. "We can ride around about a mile and git right in front of 'em."

The car began to move again.

"Stop, I tell you!" bellowed the colonel, "or, as sure as you sit there, I'll shoot you all down—one by one!"

"What's the good o' talkin' United States ter them, colonel?" came from the disgusted Dave. "They's all Chinks. They don't know what you're handin' 'em. Why don't you throw yer gun on 'em. A shot will talk to 'em plainer than anythin', an' it's what you might call plumb direct language, too."

"I don't know but what you're right," replied the colonel.

The car was moving at a pretty fair speed now, in spite of the momentary danger of a plunge over the precipice. Evidently it was the intention of the driver to get away, if possible.

Colonel Brand drew his Colt's .45 from its holster, leveled it carefully so that the bullet would go over the heads of the men in the car, and pulled the trigger.

As the report reverberated thunderously in the confined space of the cañon, and echoed and reechoed from the surrounding heights, a loud scream mingled with the sound, and the car shot swiftly ahead.

It was the scream of a woman!

CHAPTER IX.

ON DIZZY HEIGHTS.

"COLONEL!" yelled Dave Lonergan. "It's Miss Mary!"

Colonel Brand did not reply. He had recognized his daughter's voice, and was trying to tell himself what it could mean.

He had supposed Mary safe at home—asleep in her bedroom at that hour. Yet here she was screaming at a shot from her father's

pistol, in the fastnesses of the Milk River Ridge, as she whirled along a mountainside in her motor, with three or four rascally Chinese coolies! It was horrible—unbelievable!

"I see," he muttered half to himself. "When the car turned around, fifteen miles south of the ranch, and went back, the Chinks were in trouble as they neared the corral, and they got Mary to come and help them. They could not run the car, and she, without thinking what an awful thing she was doing, got in to do it for them."

Sam Jamieson nodded assentingly, as he grunted:

"That's the answer, colonel. Then, when Miss Mary was in the car, she seen they couldn't make it through to the railroad, where the Chinks would have been picked up by some o' the sports what runs this here 'underground road,' an' she jedged the only play was to get them back over the boundary into Alberta, an' wait for another chance some other night, an'—"

"Come on, men! The car's getting away from us," interrupted the colonel.

Narrow as was the shelf of rock that formed their road, his impatience would not permit Colonel Brand to walk his horse, while the motor-car, with his daughter at the wheel, was spinning along at a reckless speed on a ledge even narrower than his own, on the other side of the two-thousand-foot cañon.

So he galloped ahead without regard to danger. His three men, not to be outdone by their leader, urged their horses into a gallop also, and kept close behind him.

The risk was frightful, both for the car and for the horsemen.

Colonel Brand was perfectly aware that the misstep of a horse when galloping along on such a place as this could mean only the death of both horse and rider.

But this knowledge did not trouble him. His mind was on the racing car across the chasm, on a path where the slightest swerve would mean a horrible catastrophe, and with nothing but the coolness and skill of a young girl to keep it straight.

There was a difference in the route to be taken by the motor-car and Colonel Brand's party.

While the ledge on which the horsemen were hurrying along in single file sloped downward by comparatively slow degrees, the motor-car kept an almost perfectly horizontal course, until, at some distance ahead, it dipped abruptly, coming out in a ravine at right angles to the cañon. From this there was a straight road to the Canadian line.

"Say, colonel, I reckon you knows there's two ways for that there car to git away from us, don't you?"

"Are there?"

"Shorely. The contraption can come down the hill to the middle of the gulch yonder, in which case we's due to meet it at the bottom if we hikes along purty fast; or it can swing off through a cut afore it gits to the lower level, an' take a chance o' making the edge o' the ridge by crossin' a gol-fired narrer bridge o' rock what only a few gents knows about."

The colonel made no comment on this bit of information, but he urged his horse along a little faster, always with an eye turned toward the motor-car darting in and out of the shadows on the opposite side of the cañon.

It was apparent that his shot had frightened the Chinamen, and that they preferred to take the chance of being dashed to death by plunging over the precipice, rather than to fall into the hands of the dreaded American sheriff.

What Mary thought of it all the colonel could not tell. He made out her slight figure in the front seat, as she bent low over the steering-wheel, and he would have given everything he had in the world to be with her in the car at that moment.

She made a picturesque, as well as a pathetic, figure. Her hat had blown away, and her loose hair, tumbling about her face and over her shoulders, gave her a fanciful resemblance to Diana in the chase. At least, that is what Leonard Dean doubtless would have thought if he had seen her.

Her father's ideas were more prosaic; he was only weighing her chances of getting to the end of the dangerous journey before she broke her neck.

In the back of the car were huddled several men. He could not see how many, although their frequent yelps of terror as the car whirled closer than usual to the brink suggested that there were at least a dozen.

Suddenly, the path on which the colonel and his companions rode swept around to the left, through a narrow defile, so that a high rock interposed between them and the cañon proper.

For ten minutes the car was out of sight. When the colonel rode out again he was well on his way down the incline, and he looked upward quickly.

He did not see the car at first. Then he made it out, several hundred yards behind, and much higher than the spot he and his men had now reached.

"What have they stopped for?" he exclaimed to no one in particular.

"Broken down, I reckon," answered Dave Lonergan.

"I can't see whether they are getting out or not," went on the colonel. "If the car can't go any farther, we shall have to ride up there and take our men."

"An' if they git too fresh, we'll chuck 'em over into the cañon," added Pete Gearing.

"Not none whatever, Pete," corrected Lonergan. "What we aims ter do is ter git Miss Mary away safe first. Arter that, I don't care what becomes o' the Chinks. Ain't that right, colonel?"

"Let's hurry and get there," was all Colonel Brand said.

"We can go through that hollow over there, and then up the hill on that side," put in Jamieson.

Colonel Brand led the way down the incline, winding in and out, and anxiously watching the still motionless motor-car, far above.

He had made up his mind that Mary, in her enthusiastic desire to help the Chinamen, would spare no pains to get them to safety across the boundary, now that they had failed to make connections with the "underground" agents, and he was resolved that she should not go any farther if he could help it.

"The girl means well, but she does not understand; that's all," he said to himself. "She thinks these miserable Chinks ought to be allowed to come in, and that they'll be grateful to her. Well, I know them better than she does. The idea of her being with a gang of these fellows alone, in the middle of the night, in a lonely place like this. Why, it's horrible!"

"Colonel!" shouted Pete Gearing.

"Hallo?"

"Look over there!"

"Great Cæsar! There's another of them!" came from the colonel. "Ride hard, boys!"

He turned his horse to the right as he reached the bottom of the long incline down which they had been riding, and galloped at full speed along the nearly dry bed of the stream that trickled through the cañon.

Two men on horseback, not far away, were hurrying toward the ravine, which was his own objective point. One of them was a Chinaman, as could be seen by the pigtail which streamed out behind him from beneath his slouch-hat.

"That's one of the four Chinks we've been chasing for twenty-four hours, Dave," said the colonel.

"Shore! Fixed up to look like a cattle gent," responded Lonergan.

"I'll bet he's the one you lost at the house," suggested Pete Gearing.

"That's so. We was shy a Chink, wasn't we?"

"Well, we'll round up the whole crowd now," declared Colonel Brand through his set teeth.

"An' turn 'em over ter the Canadian police," advised Jamieson.

"Yes, if they'll take them off my hands," assented the colonel. "If they won't, I'll put the yellow rascals in jail for a while, to teach them they can't fool with Uncle Sam, and then kick them over the border, clear through Kootenai Pass into British Columbia."

"Who's the other fellow with that there Chinaman?" growled Jamieson.

At that moment the companion of the Chinaman turned in his saddle, and the moonlight, shining full in his face, enabled the keen-visioned colonel to recognize him.

"It's Len Dean!" he cried gleefully. "He's got that Chink a prisoner. That's fine. Hurry, boys!"

"Why don't he give us the long yell, if it's Dean?" said Dave Lonergan, in a hurt tone.

"'Cause he can't see us. That's why, Dave," rejoined Pete Gearing. "We're in deep shadow, while he's in the light."

Since this evidently was the true explanation, Lonergan did not say any more, and they all rode as fast as they could to head off the Chinaman, who seemed to be trying hard to get away from Leonard Dean.

"There comes the car, colonel!" suddenly called out Pete Gearing.

As the colonel looked upward he could just make out the machine in the deep shadows of the rough wall, running swiftly along the edge of the eight-foot-wide shelf, far, far above.

"Them wheels is shore close to the edge o' the trail," observed Dave Lonergan.

"She'll swing in directly," added Jamieson, in a tone of superior knowledge. "The way ter the ravine lies just back o' where you see that there p'int o' rock bulging out from the wall. Savvy?"

He pointed to a projection which the motor-car would have to pass, which would crowd it out to the very brink of the precipice. It would require careful driving to get by it in safety.

"I see," murmured the colonel, so anxious that he did not know he had spoken.

The car was just about to pass the bulging rock.

Then—it all happened in an instant!

The car suddenly upheaved in front, swayed from side to side, and slipping over the edge, dived straight down to the bottom of the cañon.

CHAPTER X.

VENGEANCE.

THE cry of agony from the lips of Colonel Brand almost drowned the crash of the car as it struck the jagged rocks at the bottom of the gulch.

It had fallen in such a way that it was hidden by a bend of the towering wall, but the fact that not a human sound was heard told the colonel what to expect. Evidently everybody in the machine had been killed outright.

"I'll have to go and see," he groaned, as, with his three companions following him in silence, he galloped to the bend and flung himself to the ground by the side of the shattered motor-car.

It was such a complete wreck that he was able to take it all in at a glance, and in an instant he saw that there were no human beings among the bent and twisted fragments.

The car had been empty when it toppled over the precipice!

The revulsion of feeling as he realized that his daughter had not been hurled to a horrible death overwhelmed him. He dropped upon a boulder, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed.

For a few seconds they let him alone. Then Jamieson touched him gently on the shoulder.

"Say, colonel," he said, "them Chinks is pilin' over each other down the hill inter the ravine, an' they's goin' ter git plumb away if we don't swing a rope arter 'em almighty sudden."

"An' there's Miss Mary!" cried Dave excitedly.

"Shore! She's tangled up in the middle o' that bunch o' Chinks, an' they look as if they aimed ter 'lope with her," added Pete Gearing."

"That's whatever. They've got horses, too. Say, boys, this here is where we has to swing a wide lariat," was Lonergan's battle-cry, as he went forward on the jump.

The colonel was in his saddle again, and, merely waving his hand for the others to keep with him, he made for the ravine.

There was a huddle of rocks guarding the entrance to the gorge, and it was with some difficulty that the four ranchmen guided their horses over and among them.

"Look at that!" yelled the colonel furiously. "Those look like my horses the rascals have. You can see that, Dave, can't you?"

"Which I shorely does see it," was Lonergan's prompt reply, and the others said they saw it, too.

The colonel's eyes were fixed on three horses, each with a halter, but no saddle, upon which the Chinamen were climbing, with the assistance of Leonard Dean.

"What's Len putting them on the horses for?" demanded the colonel.

"It's all a riddle ter me," admitted Jamieson.

"There's Mary helping one of those slant-eyed devils to get on a horse," went on the colonel. Then, dashing forward, shaking his fist at the Chinamen, he thundered: "Stop there, or I'll kill the whole crowd. Mary! Mary! wait till I come!"

It was not till then that the girl, as well as the Chinamen and Dean, had seemed to perceive the colonel and his men among the rocks.

To his astonishment, instead of hurrying toward him pell-mell, Mary only redoubled her efforts to get the Chinamen mounted.

In another moment three of them were astride the unsaddled horses and racing down the hollow in the direction of the Canadian border.

"Say, this here's the most nervy proposition I ever fell ag'in'," declared Dave Lonergan. "Come on, boys!"

He, Pete Gearing, and Jamieson, all spurred their horses after the flying Chinamen, taking no heed of Leonard Dean holding by the elbow the man who had seemed to be his prisoner, and who was none other than Sun Pi.

As the colonel looked at his foreman and the Chinaman who had decorated the cheek of John Williams with his knife, a light broke over him. He leaped from his horse and, putting his arm protectingly about his daughter, he demanded of Leonard Dean, in a voice conveying suspicion and indignation:

"Len, what does all this mean?"

Leonard was about to make some reply, when Sun Pi, with a sudden movement, tore himself away from the foreman's hold, darted behind a huge boulder on his left, and dragged into the moonlight a meek-faced man, with the mark of a long, unhealed knife-cut on his cheek. His thin lips were so tightened that they looked like a straight purple scar.

"Hallo, John Williams? I thought you were at home."

It was the colonel who cried this, in a tone of astonishment.

"No, colonel," faltered Williams, humble, as usual; but with a deadly glitter in his beady eyes for Sun Pi, as he vainly endeavored to throw off the latter's clutch on his shoulder. "I came here with Miss Mary."

The colonel started, and his hand went involuntarily to the butt of the six-shooter under his coat.

"Oh, you did, you yellow scoundrel?" he hissed. "So it's you who have been leading my daughter into mischief with these Chinks, and I never suspected you. I suppose you stood in with that fellow, Cheng Low, who was killed or died at my place, eh?"

The purple scar opened slightly as the cook replied, in his meek, palavering way:

"Cheng Low is a man I always have stood in with. In fact, I don't mind saying, now that I'm cornered, that *I am Cheng Low.*"

The man whom they had all known as John Williams seemed to be enjoying the sensation he had created, and for the moment forgot the frowning Sun Pi, who still held him.

He was brought back with a jerk, when Sun Pi, with a few words in his own tongue, which only his prisoner understood, snatched from the latter's clothing the severed pigtail he had recognized as belonging to his brother, and waved it above his head.

"What's he say, Len? Do you know any Chink talk?"

"Not a word, colonel."

"And it'd be no use asking either of these yellow scoundrels. They'd only lie about it."

"Look, father! They're going to fight!" screamed Mary.

Before Colonel Brand or Leonard Dean could interfere, Sun Pi drew a long knife from somewhere in his raiment, and, with a volume of Cantonese, amid which the name "Sun Wah" could be distinguished, he drove the knife to the hilt into Cheng Low's breast.

So sudden and fierce had been the blow, that the erstwhile cook did not even utter a groan as he fell flat upon his back. The light of the moon, just emerging from the edge of a fleecy cloud, shone upon his face flickeringly, so that the purple scar seemed to curl into a sneering smile as it slowly parted in two thin lines.

Sun Pi gave only a glance at the man he had killed. Then, satisfied that he had effectually avenged his brother, he ran to the horse he had ridden, standing patiently a few yards away.

"Stop that Chink, Len!" shouted the colonel. "That was a cold-blooded murder! Hold him!"

As Dean did not move, the colonel pointed his pistol at Sun Pi's head with a stern command of "Halt!"

The Chinaman understood the tone, if not the word, and he halted.

"I thought that would bring him up," remarked the colonel grimly.

Slowly the Chinaman looked from the face of Colonel Brand to that of Leonard Dean. Then, pressing his brother's queue to his forehead with his left hand, he suddenly raised his right, still holding the reeking knife, and drove the blade deep into his own heart. Like his late victim, he died without a groan.

"Chink vengeance, eh?" muttered Colonel Brand. "Well, I'm glad he ended it as he did. It'll save the sheriff trouble."

"Father, isn't it horrible? What dreadful creatures these Chinese are!" said Mary, in low, trembling tones, and clung to her father's arm.

"I'm glad you're finding that out," was his response, as he drew her closer to him. "Here come the boys back again, and, by Jove, they've got the Chinks with them."

"Say, colonel!" yelled Dave Lonergan, as he and his comrades, with the three Chinamen, came up the ravine. "These are our horses."

"Just what I suspected. But how do you know?"

"Why, there's a broken 'S' on each one of them," was Lonergan's reply.

It was true. On each horse was an "S" broken in the middle, the brand of Colonel Brand's cattle-ranch.

"Well, boys, you know the rule for horse-stealers," said the colonel.

"Shore!" growled Jamieson. "A rope and a tree-limb."

"Yes. Well, we won't go as far as that, because I am an officer of the law. But I reckon we'll make these Chinks answer for the horses after I get them to jail."

"Wait a minute, colonel," interposed Leonard Dean. "Right is right, and I'm going to tell you something."

"Speak quick, then, Len. We want to be getting back home some time."

"Shall I tell him, Mary?" asked Leonard.

The girl nodded, as she shrank appealingly closer to her father's side.

"What's all this?" spluttered the colonel.

"Only that it was I who got those horses for the Chinamen," said Leonard firmly.

"You?" bellowed the colonel, and everybody except Mary looked at the young foreman in astonishment.

"Yes, colonel, I did it, and, what's more, I'm the man who has been riding the horses at night, and bringing them back in the morning, all worn out," replied Leonard.

In his fury, the colonel raised his riding-whip as if he would beat the foreman to the earth, but Mary ran between them.

"Don't do that, father. It was all my fault," she pleaded. "Leonard did it for me. He is as much opposed to Chinamen coming into the country as you are. But—for my sake, he has been helping to get them in, and he had to have horses. You know, Leonard and I—"

"Well?" roared the colonel, although every one who knew him could have told that he was nothing like so angry as he had been a few moments before.

"Leonard and I—" she stammered. Then, turning to the foreman, she said: "You tell him, Len."

"Well, colonel, the fact is, I intended to ask you for Mary in a day or two, and she was willing to promise that she would not have anything more to do with bringing in Chinese immigrants if you thought you could accept me as a son-in-law."

The colonel did not answer immediately. He had to go behind the rocks by himself and swear for five minutes. When he came back, Leonard and Mary looked at his face and knew that they were forgiven about the horses, at all events.

"Get those Chinks back to Canada," he ordered shortly. "I am not going to bother with them."

So the three Chinamen were led through Milk River Ridge to the Canadian line by Dave Lonergan, Pete Gearing, and Sam Jamieson, who handed them over to Lieutenant Dingwall, the latter undertaking that they would never come back.

Mary Brand kept her word about Chinamen, and never had anything more to do with them, either by the "underground route," or any other.

One of Colonel Brand's wedding presents for his daughter was a new motor-car of the latest model, to take the place of the machine that had run away when she and the Chinamen had got out of it on the precipice on finding the machine had passed beyond their control.

THE END.

Twelve Good Hens and True.

BY ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS.

A Venture in Eggs Wherein Overzeal Led to Deplorable Consequences.

"HENRY," Mrs. Rider announced one evening upon his return from the office, "I have finally decided to rent the Collingwood cottage for the summer months."

"Yes, my dear," he dutifully answered. "I think that would be very nice. Of course, it will make about two hours' ride to and from the office, but I suppose if we arise about six we can overcome that disadvantage."

Mrs. Rider nodded and sat down at the table.

"That is mainly why I want to go into the country," she went on. "Early rising and plenty of fresh air will be very beneficial to you, Henry. Besides, the cottage is a mile from the station, and that will mean a brisk little walk after breakfast."

"Quite so, my dear," came the obedient response from the male member of the household.

"And also, Henry," the wife resumed, pouring out the tea and passing the cup over, "also, I have decided upon a few—a few select chickens."

"On what?"

"I said, chickens. I believe we need fresh eggs for our breakfast, and I'm tired of paying sixty cents a dozen for cold-storage products. Eggs from our own hens will be a godsend."

"But, my dear, we know nothing in the world about hens," Rider protested mildly. "You know, the raising of chickens is a science. We can't—"

"Henry Rider, I don't wonder we haven't

a better position in the world than we now occupy. It is always can't, can't, can't, with you. I maintain it is quite possible for us to keep a few fowls for our immediate needs. During the past week I have been reading some excellent literature on chicken culture, and I feel competent to assume full charge of a small pen."

Henry shrugged his shoulders, sank down a bit in his chair, and stolidly sipped his tea. Twenty years of married life had made him painfully conscious of the danger-line. When Mrs. Rider determined upon a thing, she generally gained it one way or another.

And so, within a week they finally established themselves in the Collingwood cottage. It was an eight-room affair, with water in the well, oil-lamps, no bath-tub, a man-of-all-work, and no maid.

When things were running smoothly, and Henry was beginning to find his way to and from the station without a guide, Mrs. Rider started the man-of-all-work erecting a hennery. It was in the rear of the grounds.

On Sunday, Henry donned his old clothes and laboriously painted it, stretched the wire for a runway, put up the roosts, hauled straw for the nests, put a lock on the door, and handed the key to the madam, who looked on and handed out advice. The thing was ready and waiting for the occupants.

That evening after supper, as Henry slunk over to the Morris chair for a smoke and a glance at the papers, Mrs. Rider interrupted.

"Henry," she began, "I want you to stop on your way to the office in the morning and procure some hens. There's a farmhouse just beyond the station where the hired man said you could buy them. We'll start with a dozen. On your way home in the evening you can stop and get them."

"What kind shall I get?" he asked absently.

"Kind?" She frowned for the first time. "Why, I don't know—just some good laying hens."

"I know, my dear," he argued, "but what breed? Plymouth Rocks, Buff Cochins, Leghorns, Brahmas—"

"Perhaps it would be better to get a dozen assorted," she ventured.

"Very well."

"And I think it would be best for you to retire early, instead of rummaging through that old newspaper. I've set the clock for five. That'll give you time to attend to my business, and yet reach the office by nine."

The following morning, according to the routine laid out for him, Henry found the big farmhouse about two miles the other side of the station, left the order for a dozen assorted fowls, and after getting lost several times, falling into ditches and climbing a multitude of fences, he finally caught a train and got into town by noon.

That evening he had to leave the office at four, and two hours later arrived at the farmhouse, where he found the hens carefully boxed and awaiting him. There was no wagon, and no chance of getting one, so he shouldered his burden and trudged homeward.

Somehow, he could not keep to the right road, and more than once found himself floundering through marshes. In one field a bull chased him. The box fell, broke open, and he spent an hour running down the birds that escaped.

When he finally did reach home, Mrs. Rider met him at the gate with a storm in her eyes.

"It's a big wonder you couldn't have made better time, Henry Rider," she snapped. "And your clothes are a perfect sight! And you are holding that coop on a tilt—and I wouldn't be surprised but those poor, dumb fowls are in perfect agony. You men are so thoughtless."

Whatever Henry said was to himself, and it was long after dark before the hens were safely cooped up and the door locked.

Before he left for town in the morning, the wife had him out in the yard spading up the ground in order that the chickens might have a place in which to scratch. Also, he carried out several pails of ashes, filled the drinking cups, and did other little jobs which Mrs. Rider could not trust to the hired man.

The fowls certainly did look nice in their assorted tints, and soon they fell to clucking and scratching as if they had been in the place all their lives.

"There will be no greater enjoyment for me than to gather the eggs every evening," Mrs. Rider announced. "And to-morrow morning we shall have three soft-boiled apiece."

It was upon Henry's lips to inform her that hens did not always mean eggs, but he thought better of it, and kept silent.

It was that same evening, when he returned home after his mile tramp through the dust, that the bomb fell. He found his wife in tears.

"What is it, my dear?" he inquired in alarm, conjuring up all the bad news he could readily think of. "Has something happened? Is your mother sick—"

"Henry," she choked, "we didn't get one egg to-day. Not a solitary *one!*"

He mumbled something beneath his breath; to the wife he said: "Well, that is to be expected, my dear. Sometimes—"

"Henry"—Mrs. Rider's eyes snapped ominously—"did that farmer guarantee those fowls?"

"I told him to pick out the twelve best assorted layers he had," he defended himself hurriedly.

"Then he has swindled us," she took him up grimly.

"We must wait a few days, my dear," he protested. "Maybe they are frightened—and—and a little strange. In a few days the newness will wear off and they'll get down to business."

The few days passed. The newness might have worn off, but somehow the fowls neglected business. Then the food was changed. Every book on chicken culture was carefully, feverishly, gone over.

Meanwhile the hens ate, scratched from dawn to dusk, basked in the sun, and bathed themselves in the ashes. But they forgot their usefulness.

"Henry," Mrs. Rider broke out one evening, a week later, "if those hens disappoint me another night you'll have to return them and get another dozen!"

Henry's heart gave a big throb and promptly sank like a bit of lead in a pail of water.

"But, my dear," he began, recollecting the adventures of his previous journey, "if you will only wait another week or so—"

"To-morrow night," she interrupted firmly. "If they disappoint me then—back they go. Why, that farmer ought to be arrested. It's an outrage to treat us in this manner just because we are city folks."

When Henry Rider came home that next evening—a bit earlier than usual—he slipped in the back way and stopped at the coop before entering the house. He found his wife putting on her sun-bonnet, preparing to make the daily pilgrimage to the hen-sheds.

Henry smiled, and went over to wash himself. Five minutes later, Mrs. Rider tramped back into the kitchen, her face wreathed in smiles. She opened her apron. A dozen spotless eggs met the husband's admiring gaze.

"There," she exclaimed, "aren't they beautiful? At last our flock has started laying, and we need never fear of being out of good fresh eggs. I can scarcely wait for breakfast-time to try them."

The following morning at table she went into raptures over the delicious treat.

"Do you know, Henry," she broke out, "we've missed some of the greatest pleasures in life. There could be nothing more appetizing, more healthful, than newly laid eggs. They are nature's own treasures, which even the most lowly may possess."

The next evening Mrs. Rider came into the kitchen with twelve more eggs, and her enthusiasm was boundless.

"Think, Henry," she broke forth, "think of our deluded friends in the city paying sixty cents for cold-storage eggs! Isn't it absurd?"

Henry Rider said nothing, which, with him, was always the most diplomatic thing to do.

For a week matters ran on well-oiled wheels. Every night brought forth the usual quota of twelve eggs. Mrs. Rider wore an air of perfect and absolute contentment.

"And you maintained it took a great deal of science and care to get eggs, Henry," she remonstrated. "I knew what I was talking about, and you didn't. Patience and firmness are the principal requirements. Those are woman's strong points, always!"

One morning at breakfast she insisted upon her husband eating another egg.

"I've had four, my dear," he argued. "And, besides, I'm not feeling overly well."

"Not feeling well? Why, Henry! And in this glorious country air, with all the sunshine and flowers, and these delicious, health-giving eggs! I can see a marked improvement in your appearance. As for myself—I've never enjoyed better health."

No more mention was made concerning the chickens and their daily duties until, one night, long after the Rider family had retired, Henry abruptly awoke, to find his wife sitting up in bed and shaking him by the arm. His first thought was that the house was afire—or that the madam had heard burglars.

"What—what—is the matter?" he gasped.

"Henry," she exclaimed. "It all came to me of a sudden. We've been getting twelve eggs a day, and—two of our chickens died last week. How could ten hens lay twelve eggs?"

"My dear," he retorted quickly, "it's their family pride. Some of the hens are doing double duty in noble remembrance of the departed sisters."

"Henry Rider!" she exclaimed frigidly. But Henry had slipped down between the covers and was already beginning to snore.

Peace might have reigned the length of the summer had not Mr. Rider been suddenly called out of town on business. When he had been away from home three days he received a telegram from his wife. In fear and trembling he opened it. It contained but one line:

MR. H. RIDER, HOTEL GREEN:
Chickens have laid no eggs for three days.
MARY.

With an exclamation, Henry crumpled the yellow slip in his fingers and dashed for the telegraph-office. Here he sent a message to Simmons, the baggage-master of the country station, with whom he had become well acquainted:

W. SIMMONS, NORTHPORT, LONG ISLAND:
Get a dozen fresh eggs every day and smuggle them into my hen-house. Don't let my wife catch you. Will square things on my return.
H. RIDER.

Henry Rider, now that things were running evenly, remained away from his country home and his wife and the faithful ten hens for two weeks. At the end of that time he got back to the city, settled the details of his business trip at the office, attended to some correspondence, took the suburban train, and alighted at the station.

A few words with Simmons, and he learned that the telegram had been received and the order obeyed. He slipped a five-dollar note into the baggage-master's palm and hurried homeward. He met Mrs. Rider in the kitchen-door.

"Well, my dear," he announced, smiling. "I'm back again, and mighty glad to be with you and—"

"Come with me into the house, Henry," his wife interrupted.

He caught at his breath, but with assumed indifference followed her inside. On the kitchen-table he beheld a pyramid of eggs—hundreds of them, so it seemed to his staring eyes.

"Why—why—my dear," he began huskily, "our hens certainly behaved nobly, didn't they? All these eggs in two weeks? Why, who would ever have believed—"

"Will you please explain this bill, Henry Rider?" his wife broke out evenly, thrusting before his gaze a statement from a produce-dealer in the city for fifteen dozen eggs at sixty cents the dozen.

"It—why—my dear—" he choked.

"Please do not attempt to clear yourself. I went down to see this firm, and they said you bought a dozen eggs every evening and took them home with you!"

"There's—some mistake here—" he began once more, conscious that his knees were bending very near to each other. "Of course there must be some mistake, my dear—" he grasped at the last remaining straw. "I have been out of town for the past two weeks. I could not have played this trick during that time."

"No?" Mrs. Rider's mouth tightened. "The day after I sent you that telegram some one broke into the coop and stole every hen. And yet every night for two weeks I found a dozen eggs in the nests. I intend telling mother the whole of this most shameful affair!"

WHITHER?

WHITHER is gone the wisdom and the power
The ancient sages scattered with the notes
Of thought-suggesting lyres? The music floats
In the void air; e'en at this breathing-hour,
In every cell and every blooming bower
The sweetness of old lays is hovering still:
But the strong soul, the self-constraining will,
The rugged root that bare the winsome flower
Is weak and withered. Were we like the Fays
That sweetly nestle in the foxglove bells,
Or lurk and murmur in the rose-lipped shells
Which Neptune to the earth for quit-rent pays,
Then might our pretty, modern Philomels
Sustain our spirits with their roundelays.

Hartley Coleridge.

DEVIL'S OWN ISLAND.

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN,

Author of "His Risen Past," "Ways to Wealth," "His Stolen Fortune," etc.

What Came of a Semistranding In Bangkok, Followed by the Victim's Shipping Himself Aboard a Vessel Where He Wasn't Wanted.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.

BURNHAM kicked another mangy dog out of his path.

The first mangy dog Burnham had found, on his way from the steamship dock to the agency, he had dodged. The second he jumped over. The third trotted along before him, stopping every few feet for Burnham to step on, until that gentleman lost his temper with mangy dogs in general, and kicked this particular one.

He was not quite calmed down when the fourth—the one we begin with—lay across the steps of the English agency.

Where was he?

Oh, I forgot. You haven't been there. You don't know the place where there are three mangy dogs to every one of the two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants.

Well, it is Bangkok, the capital of the Kingdom of Siam, famous in history as having produced a remarkable pair of twins, also somewhat known as having white elephants within its rather circumscribed borders.

The white elephants, by the way, are on Siam's flags. But that is no part of the story.

Bob Burnham, when this fourth mangy dog was disposed of, mounted the six steps of the agency, and then looked around the street he had just left. A gust of hot wind, laden with enough dust and dirt and bacilli to send a man to the hospital for a short life-term, swept over him.

"Of all the God-forsaken, dirty, miserable holes!" he exclaimed as he tried to expel the grit from between his teeth. "I don't wonder they offer a man some inducements to stay here."

The firm of Howard & Sons had offered Burnham inducements to go to Bangkok and stay there two years.

In the first place, they had promised to multiply his salary of twelve hundred a year by exactly five. In the second place, they had paid his expenses, first-class, from Lowell, Massachusetts, to Queenstown, with enough extra money to see London and Paris—and make a showing. More money had been ready at Genoa to send him on—still first-class, on the North German Lloyd steamers, where first-class cabins belong to the nobility and nabobs in general.

One special inducement they had emphasized. It was the great advantages, climatic and otherwise, that Bangkok offered over every other spot on earth. Burnham, having some slight religious inclinations, had been a little afraid he would not want to go to heaven after seeing the place.

All the way out, whenever the attacks of homesickness grew too acute, Burnham had repeated to himself those wonderful descriptions of tropical beauty.

When the sordid rattle of Port Saïd had outraged all his sense of decency, when the really beautiful Penang and Singapore had failed to make him quite resigned to the loss of Lowell's chimneys, he had comforted himself with the thought that Bangkok was a city for which men sighed ever after on once seeing its grandeurs.

And now he looked across the reeking gutter at the well-nigh impassable street. On the other side was a squalid market where the little, yellow natives squatted and chatted and relieved one another's person of vermin.

Mangy water-buffaloes were dragging rude carts of disgusting vegetables. And, over all, in and out among the dirty people, between the wheels of the dirty carts, pawing the dirty eatables, were the dogs, more insufferably filthy than everything else.

There came to his mind the picture of a clean little home on the outskirts of the New England town he had left. Six o'clock of a summer evening—his invalid father sitting on the porch with sister Martha reading to him, and mother shelling a mess of green peas for his supper—at this last touch he

gulped down a big swear-word with which he was tempted to relieve his feelings.

But the neat little cottage was mortgaged. The ten thousand dollars he thought he would be able to save would more than put his family beyond any danger of want, and the position he would have on his return would put him—

"Well, I've got to do it," he muttered through set teeth. "So here goes. There's a neat thousand of back pay waiting for me here. Maybe that will make things a little more tolerable."

A Hindu member of the army of His Majesty Edward VII saluted with dignity as he passed. Burnham drew his letter of introduction from the pocket of his khaki suit and handed it to the native in uniform before the inside door of the agency building.

In another moment he was standing in the presence of the white-clad figure of Mr. Walpole Hardman, the head of the Bangkok branch of the great English house of Black & Co.

"Ah, so you are Mr. Burnham?" the Briton drawled. "Do you know, I hardly expected to see you here. Ah, beg pardon, Mr. Burnham, won't you sit down?"

"You hardly expected to see me?" Burnham asked in surprise as he took the chair to which the other pointed. "Why, you got the word from Howard & Sons, didn't you?"

He had a couple of hundred dollars of his own savings with him, so the thought of delay was not as alarming as it might have been.

The Englishman gazed at Burnham absently for a few moments. The American fidgeted in his chair.

"Ah, yes—yes—I beg pardon. Yes, I got the letter and instructions from Howard & Sons. Why, don't you know, it came about a month ago," Mr. Hardman spoke deliberately—very deliberately.

"But you didn't expect me to get here quite so soon, eh?" Burnham asked with a smile of relief. "Well, you see, we wild and woolly Americans are great hustlers."

He had not been abroad long enough to cease that boasting which tries the nerves of our foreign cousins so severely.

"Ah, yes, awful hustlers, as you call it. Jolly lively place it must be in America. Do you know, I've sometimes thought I'd almost like to go see America."

Burnham was on the point of insinuating that the visit might be educational, but stopped himself in time. Instead, he dropped an interrogative, "Yes?"

"Yes, really," the head of the agency continued drawling. "You know, I rather have a fancy for seeing queer places. I've been about all over the world, don't you know, but just never quite managed to get across to the States."

Burnham hardly knew whether to be amused at the fellow's ignorance or indignant at his effrontery. He reflected that a word from him would do this man's firm out of nearly a hundred thousand dollars annually, and concluded he could afford to be amused at the conception of the world which regarded America as of so little consequence.

"And what do you intend to do with yourself here?" the Englishman asked suddenly. "I shall be very happy to handle anything you may be going into, don't you know?"

"Why, I thought the letters were to tell you that. I'm here to buy dyes. That's what Howard & Sons sent me for."

"Oh, ah, yes—by Jove, I do remember the letters said that. And for whom are you going to buy now? That is—er—I suppose you don't mind telling me, if I'm to act as your shipping agent."

"For whom am I going to buy now?" Burnham repeated half angrily. "Why, for Howard & Sons—Howard & Sons, of Lowell, Massachusetts, United States, America—manufacturers of cotton stuffs. Who the dickens did you suppose I was going to buy them for? Myself?

"And now, I'd like to draw the amount of my salary standing here—or part of it. I want you to give me some sort of money-order that I can send home, for—let's see—I guess about eight hundred dollars—a hundred and sixty pounds."

"Ah—your salary—it's beastly unfortunate, don't you know—but the letters I got—ah, said the money would be forwarded, don't you know?"

"And it hasn't got here yet?"

"I suppose they did not send it."

"Didn't send it? Of course they sent it. When does the next mail get here? When did they say they were going to forward it?"

"Ah—they didn't say exactly—there's a mail due next Thursday by the Caledonian. But I rather thought they must have held it back because they foresaw, don't you know?"

"Foresaw what? Good Lord, what's the matter, anyhow?"

"Oh, ah—I beg pardon, Mr. Burnham—I—er—yes, really, I quite forgot you hadn't seen the papers.

"What papers? What are you talking about?"

"Why, the newspapers, to be sure. I'll get you those that came to-day, and last fortnight's bunch."

He half rose from his easy position in his pivot-chair, then stopped and rang for the servant.

"But what have the newspapers to do with my salary?"

"Why, didn't you really know? Your firm—Howard & Sons, of Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of America—went into the hands of the receivers just—ah, let me see—yes, yes—just ten days ago."

CHAPTER II.

A FREIGHT-STEAMER IN PORT.

For about five minutes Bob Burnham said not a word.

When you come to think of it, there isn't much to say that is really worth saying when you find yourself in a place like Bangkok, with just about the whole world between you and home—and two hundred dollars to your name, with second-class fare around two hundred and fifty or more—and out of a job.

On first blush one might think that the situation called for a strong string of blue expletives. But a second thought would readily convince any one that the English language is quite void of words that would approach adequacy for such an occasion.

At last, however, Burnham did manage to come to sufficiently to inquire rather faintly: "What am I going to do?"

The brilliant Briton looked a bit worried.

"Why, ah—really—I beg pardon—but—I—don't quite believe I know." Then as the servant appeared with an armload of English newspapers, and a few of the little sheets published at the seaports of Asia, his blank face brightened into a distant resemblance to intelligence. "Ah, now we have it!" he exclaimed.

Burnham thought the man had actually evolved an idea.

"Here," the Englishman continued, "are the papers. They'll tell you all about it, don't you know?"

"Oh, yes;" Burnham's temper at last got busy. "I know all that from what you've said. What I want to know is what I'm to do now."

"Ah, yes, yes—I really hadn't thought of that. Why, yes—by Jove—what are you going to do now? Why—er, why don't you go back to the States?"

"I haven't money enough to pay my fare."

Burnham fairly shouted the words as though the man before him were in some way responsible for his predicament and must get him out of it. The manager of the Bangkok branch of Black & Co. looked almost nervous.

"Ah!—" he recovered himself and his deliberate manner—"I should rather fancy that's a jolly bad position to be in. Now, wouldn't you?"

Burnham looked the mixture of the anguish and disgust he felt. He was again at a loss for words. Suddenly the Briton moved uneasily in his chair.

"I'm awfully sorry, don't you know—but I'm bally busy to-day. And, oh, by Jove—I have it! Why don't you go see your American consul?"

Burnham almost dropped in his tracks. He was so astonished that the man before him should actually have offered a helpful suggestion that it took him several seconds to remember to say: "Thank you."

Mr. Walpole Hardman looked very much pleased with the originality of his idea.

"Never mind about returning those bally papers, old chap—I've read 'em already," he said in a final burst of generosity.

Burnham had heard of consuls and their utility. Bangkok not being over fussy about passports and that sort of thing, he had not thought of the only other American in the town. He speedily presented himself before the office-door of the bamboo palace in which the consul had established himself.

From a native servant he gained the information that the consul was not in. By some questioning, he brought out the fact that the consul had a son who *was* in. He found the son in the office doing the business for his father. The young man had already read Burnham's card.

He arose and extended a fairly bronzed paw.

"Sorry to see you, old man," he grinned. "I was afraid you 'd turn up here as soon as you heard the news. Oh, I'm deuced glad to look at another American in the place, only I know the fix you're in."

"Do you?" Burnham said unhappily.

"You bet I do. I've been in this rank hole about as long as I can stand it, and dad pays me pretty well for doing his work. But it doesn't strain my imagination to picture how I'd feel if I was stranded here. And, I might as well tell you the worst right off; we haven't any money on hand to help you out."

Burnham stared blankly. He hadn't

asked for money, didn't even know any one ever got money from a consulate. But the fact that money was the first thing this young man mentioned made him feel that this was the usual way for a stranded American to get helped home, and that it was not open to him.

"Fact," the acting consul went on. "We used up all our spare change getting a fellow back who turned so homesick on the first glimpse of the place that he wouldn't stay to earn his first week's pay."

"I've got two hundred dollars," Burnham finally suggested.

The other's face brightened instantly.

"Oh, well, you're all right then. What did you come here for?"

"But two hundred dollars—"

"Will pay your fare third-class to San Francisco and leave you enough to get across to Lowell."

Burnham did not feel tremendously pleased. He had once visited the third-class portion of the steamer he had come out on. The place had presented an assortment of Chinamen, Arabs, Hindus, and white men worse than these—a picture that did not appeal.

"But, two hundred dollars will do better than that for you. A freight-steamer would take you first-class for a hundred and fifty or less—and it's better than any second-class passage on a real liner."

"A freight-steamer? Great Scott! Why didn't I think of that myself?" Burnham jumped off his chair and danced a breakdown on the mahogany floor. "And I'll get back to Lowell, Massachusetts—and—and—hooray!

"Yes, of course, I'll be stony broke," he went on, "but I ought to be able to get a job after the position I got with Howard & Sons. I'll take my chances, once I get back to God's country. Hooray!"

The consul's son looked at the other American almost enviously.

"I guess you weren't much stuck on the prospects in this lovely country," he grinned.

"When does the next American-bound freight-boat clear?" Burnham asked after another attempt at a jig.

The working representative of the American government in Siam's capital consulted a few papers on a file at his elbow.

"There doesn't seem to be anything doing before the last of next month," he remarked cheerfully, as though a matter of six weeks in Bangkok were of little consequence.

Burnham stopped dancing.

"Six weeks?" he cried in tones of despair. "Nothing doing for six weeks?"

His face drew longer and longer. He walked over to the window of the room and looked out on a back view of the same market that had disgusted him from the steps of the English agency.

The other side of the broad room looked over the harbor and the Gulf of Siam. He crossed and stood staring with longing eyes at the blue water and the clumsy junks and the few steamers that were loading up for various destinations.

Suddenly a question burst from his lips.

"What's that steamer over there flying the Stars and Stripes?"

"Which? the Isabella?" the other American responded without rising from his chair. "The Isabella's the only American vessel about just now."

Burnham had, by this time, made some comparisons of the Isabella's size with that of one or two other ships near her.

"Philippine trade, eh?" he asked, the enthusiasm gone from his voice.

"No, she goes straight to San Francisco," the consul's son replied in as uninterested a tone as though that fact could not have any possible bearing on the matter in hand.

"Good Heavens, man," Burnham shouted, jumping up as though he had experienced a shock of several hundred volts. "When does she sail?"

"Wednesday," came back in the same imperturbable tone.

"Wednesday?" Burnham added another jump that made the consular typewriter rattle. "I thought you said there was nothing sailing for six weeks."

"I said there was nothing doing in the way of passage on a freight-steamer before that. The Isabella doesn't count."

"What do you mean? Why doesn't the Isabella count?"

"She doesn't carry passengers."

"Why not? I guess her captain would be as willing to make a hundred and fifty as any other, wouldn't he?"

"I don't know. You might try him. But, before you go, I'll say for your encouragement that I'd rather trust the devil to pilot me to heaven than try to sail anywhere in a ship with Captain Brindle."

Burnham hesitated.

"What's the matter with him?"

"Well, he has a bad reputation. More complaints come from his Chinamen than from all the other crews I have anything to do with. The tales of his cruelties would

make your hair stand. They would land him in jail for life, if they didn't hang him—if only we could prove them."

"But—the other white officers? He must have some."

"He has—the most reliable bunch of devilish rogues you ever saw. He never changes his officers. He changes crews every voyage."

"Looks as though he'd treat a white man all right."

"Does it? Well, I've looked that up a little, too. It looks a bit queer to me that the four times in that ship's recorded history when she took on a strange white man for any reason whatever—that white man managed to die between the port of his embarkation and the next port where the Isabella landed. Of course, they're all reported as very natural deaths. But I'd almost rather stay here for life than sail away on the Isabella."

Burnham remained a few moments in thought.

"The next boat, you say, will not be leaving for six weeks?" he half mused, half inquired again.

Then suddenly he picked up his helmet and started for the door.

"What," asked the son of the consul, "going so soon? Why don't you stay a while?"

Burnham turned about and held out his hand.

"I'll probably see you again, Mr.—"

"Jackson," supplied the other. "And, now?"

"I'm going out to see the captain of the Isabella."

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN BRINDLE AND A VISION.

FULLY a dozen sampan coolies pressed forward about Burnham as he reached the wharf, all eager to row him in their boats to some place in the harbor. As he could not conveniently occupy more than one of the sampans, he selected the strongest-looking Chinaman of the bunch.

He had visited enough Asiatic ports on his way out to know that some bargaining must be done before the start.

"How much," he asked, "to take me steamboat Isabella?"

Instantly the coolie's face fell.

"My no sabey," he smiled mechanically with that grin that must have been responsible for the designating of Chinamen as "Celestials." "This man—him take you." He thrust another coolie forward toward Burnham.

The other coolie shook his head as soon as the American had stated the name of the steamer. "My no sabey," he smiled winningly.

Burnham approached a third and a fourth. He went through the whole dozen. At the end he had been rewarded with a dozen lovable smiles, accompanied with solemn shakings of the head and the invariable: "My no sabey."

He began to understand that the fellows had some objection to approaching the freight-steamer Isabella. None of them even waited to hear what price he might be willing to offer.

There was another wharf, however, and he walked along the dirty road that led to it. Again he was approached by a group of sampan coolies. Five minutes after his arrival he had received another bunch of smiles and witnessed more failures of comprehension when he mentioned the name of the Isabella.

But here he tried the experiment of shouting an offer for the trip. He kept on with his bidding for some time before he got the slightest show of interest.

When he had offered a sum about equivalent to two American dollars, he realized that he was up against an impromptu combination in restraint of trade. He turned to walk away, as though he would go no higher.

Then one brawny Chinaman stepped after him. He was the only one who stirred.

"You pay fi' yen—my takee."

And so, having agreed to pay two dollars and a half for a five-cent boat-ride, Burnham found himself being slowly sculled toward the stern from which floated the Stars and Stripes. There were three or four huge hulks of lighters alongside, unloading, and it was evident that some native coolies were not afraid to approach the Isabella.

The American wondered, though, why so many Siamese soldiers were aboard these lighters. He reflected that they might have come to compel the labor of the coolies or to protect them from injury. Later he inclined to the latter reason for their presence.

As the sampan swung about the stern, and the port side of the Isabella showed no sign of an accommodation ladder, he shouted: "Ahoy, aboard the Isabella."

A sickly-looking Chinese steward appeared at the rail.

"Where's the accommodation ladder?" Burnham inquired. "I want to see Captain Brindle."

"No got accom'dation ladda'. You come topside lope ladda'. My callee cap'n," the steward responded, and disappeared.

The rope ladder hung over the side forward of the waist of the ship. At Burnham's command the sampan man rowed him beneath it. Then the American climbed upward fairly nimbly for an amateur.

The ship's rail was one of the solid variety called bulwarks, not the net fence with which top decks of passenger-steamers are provided. Burnham did not have any chance to prepare his mind for the meeting that awaited him until his head was above the rail proper.

And then, within arm's reach, he looked into the ugliest human countenance he had ever seen.

An unkempt shock of red hair and whiskers completely surrounded a face so red it was nearly purple. Thick red lips protruded from beneath the heavy red mustache. A long beak of a red nose stood out between one red-lidded eye and a red hole where its mate had originally been.

Apparently, the captain of the Isabella had striven to heighten his natural or alcoholic redness by a red handkerchief tied about his neck, a soiled scarlet cap on his head, and a red undershirt worn outside.

Burnham raised himself by another round of the ladder and noted that Captain Brindle's red feet stuck out bare beneath the frayed ends of his trousers.

"Well, what the Hades do you want?" was the gentle greeting with which the ship's master opened fire.

So surprised was Burnham with what he saw and heard that he was half-tempted to back down the ladder without another word. The thought of six weeks in Bangkok gave him renewed courage. He climbed over the bulwark, forced an affable smile, and held out his hand.

"Is this Captain Brindle?" he asked with his best drawing-room manner.

The captain did not extend his hand. If he saw the smile it was while looking at the air over Burnham's head. The single eye seemed to avoid Burnham's face with wonderful skill.

"What d'ye want?" Captain Brindle roared again. "Can't you tell?"

A glow of warmth began to spread itself across the back of Burnham's neck, but he still kept the business smile on his face.

"I want," he replied with more calmness than he felt, "to arrange with you for passage to San Francisco."

If he had asked the captain of the Isabella for a gift of three or four thousand dollars, he would not have been greatly astonished, considering the man's appearance, at the explosion which followed the announcement of his desire.

The most of Captain Brindle's bellowings consisted of the most lurid profanity Bob Burnham had ever heard. In occasional interstices between strings of oaths was couched the information that the Isabella was not a passenger-steamer. Some vividly punctuated questions were added as to the number of kinds of qualified fool a son of a sea-cook had to be to imagine that he, Captain Brindle, wanted a double-qualified loafer triply qualifiedly loading around his decks.

Under the spell of the captain's eloquence Burnham grew so calm that, when the ship's master ended with a highly-spiced request to clear the deck of his blankety-blanked carcass, the homesick young man had deduced that such a bark must be worse than any possible bite, and quietly asked the captain how much he wanted for the trip.

At this exhibition of nerve Captain Brindle grew as nearly amused as he was probably capable of getting. His next reply was quite free from profane illumination. It needed none.

"One million dollars. If you've got it, you can have the ship, load, and crew and all. If you haven't, get out, and do it quick."

A grim sort of ugly smile had made the captain's features a little uglier, if possible, than before. His hand rather gently patted the hilt of a wicked-looking knife in his belt. Burnham concluded he really was not wanted and that it might not be wise to urge his presence further.

He raised his eyes to look into the captain's, and show that brutal specimen that he was not afraid, before he turned on his heel to clamber down by the way he had come.

And then, over the shoulder of the wretched master of the Isabella, he caught sight of a vision that turned his head completely. Half-way down its deck, just outside the shadow of the passageway under the bridge, with the tropical sun making every outline stand out in the splendor of its beauty, clad in a perfectly-fitting gown of dazzling white, stood a girl whom Burnham instantly decided to be the most wonderful he had ever seen.

Perhaps her hair was the "beautiful golden brown" and her cheeks the rich olive

hue he afterward painted in his memory-pictures. At the time he failed to notice any of her features after one glance into her eyes.

These were unquestionably of that ideal violet hue artists always rave about. And they were turned full upon him, revealing, in their liquid depths, sorrow such as no young lady of her apparent years should have known anything about.

Right here, please, let me pause to state that, back of the Burnham old New England ancestry, there was a still older ancestry that was too humble to be recorded on the pages of the history of Ireland. There was still quite enough of the Celtic tincture in his blood so that, when he beheld a lovely maiden in distress—well, in this instance, he was ready to take passage on the Isabella had she been booked for a much warmer place than Bangkok.

Then he suddenly came back to earth as Captain Brindle took a threatening step toward him. More for the purpose of gaining a few seconds longer in which to gaze at the vision beyond, Burnham stammered something to the effect that he was prepared to pay a hundred and fifty dollars for his passage.

The captain stepped a little closer.

"Two hundred," Burnham urged desperately.

Then, before he could realize what had happened, he found himself struggling to reach the surface of the Gulf of Siam after an entirely unpremeditated plunge over the rail of the Isabella.

CHAPTER IV.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL.

WHEN he finally managed to reach the surface, Burnham looked up through his water-logged eyes, and was about to shake his fist in definace and rage at the man who had tried to kill him. He spared himself the effort when he saw no sign of any one looking over the rail.

Then, as his eyes cleared, he caught sight of the girl looking down upon him as though really worried about his fate, and he waved his hand quite cheerfully, as if to indicate that he was entirely accustomed to such dives. He almost forgot to keep up his efforts at swimming when he saw that she waved back.

It was only when she had disappeared that he looked for somebody to pull him out of the warm bath. He observed that all the soldiers and the coolies on the nearest lighter were standing or working with their backs toward him. His sampan coolie had vanished, boat and all.

He shouted at the men on the lighter for aid. They went on with their work and their guarding of the peace as though nothing had happened. Concluding that he could look for no assistance there, he swam toward the stern of the Isabella.

He had almost made up his mind that he would have to chance sharks and his strength on a swim for shore or the next vessel, when he saw the Chinaman who had rowed him out huddling close under the overhang of the steamer's stern. As he came close to the little boat, he swallowed the wrath he was about to vent on the man. The horrible fear showing under the coolie's yellow skin was truly pitiful.

Without a word, the Celestial reached out a bare arm and lifted Burnham into the sampan. The fellow's teeth were chattering with sheer fright. But, without allowing the long oars to rattle in their sockets or splash in the water, he started to row swiftly in line with the Isabella's stern, nor did he turn toward shore until he had put a good three hundred yards between him and the ship.

The tropical sun had half dried Burnham's clothes by the time he reached the wharf. He had not taken his baggage from the dock, nor found himself a room that morning, so there was no chance for him to change his wet raiment. Still very moist, he returned to the American consulate.

He had been away about an hour and three-quarters.

"Well," the consul's son greeted him, "you returned quickly. Did you have an interview with Captain Brindle?"

"Yes, and a ducking. He threw me overboard. I want to get him for it, too."

"He did? Phe-e-ew. He's getting a bit bold. If we can prove this— Who saw it?"

"Why, all the crew that were on deck. Three or four of those devilish officers, I think."

"Nobody else?" Jackson's face had fallen. "Did any of those soldiers on the lighters see it?"

"I don't know. They all assiduously turned their backs when I shouted for help."

"And your sampan man? He'd make a fair witness. They all fear Brindle more than they fear their ugly wooden devils."

"He was hiding under the stern of the steamer. I thought he had gone ashore and left me to my fate."

"And nobody saw it—besides those you mention?"

Burnham hesitated. A slight flush came over his features.

"Ye—yes, but I don't want to drag her into it."

"Who's that? Oh, did you see Brindle's daughter? They say she's a—"

Jackson paused. There was that in Burnham's eye which spoke of evil times for the man who should mention the lady of the Isabella in even commonplace terms.

"But you'll never get her into it, anyhow," Jackson went on. "Old Brindle would see to that, even if the lady should be willing to testify against her father. I don't see as there is anything you can do about it."

"About what?"

Burnham was only interested in prosecuting the Isabella's captain for the sake of assisting the girl. The appealing look in her eyes as he first saw them had convinced him that she was an unwilling prisoner aboard the Isabella. He had thought that the arrest of the ship's master might help toward her release.

"Why, about getting damages out of old Brindle," Jackson replied.

Burnham said, "Oh."

"And now," Jackson began again, "the best thing for you to do is to get your things up here. I'll take the responsibility for dad. I know he'll be as glad as I am to have an American around for a few weeks. You must be our guest."

"Thank you. I don't know of any place I'd rather stay. It's more than kind of you to offer. But, I'm sorry—"

"Got your rooms engaged elsewhere? We'll soon fix that up."

"No; I might be glad to stay till Wednesday, if it's no inconvenience."

"And what are you going to do after Wednesday?"

"I'm going to sail on the Isabella for San Francisco."

"What?"

"Yes, if I have to go stowed in the hold."

For a few moments the two men looked at each other in silence. Jackson's expression was simply that of puzzled wonder, Burnham's mostly grim determination. But there was enough of something else in his eyes to make the other see just what was up.

At length Jackson spoke.

"It's no use, old man. You'd starve, or smother to death. And, what good do you hope to do?"

Burnham simply repeated, "I'm going."

Jackson seemed to pull himself together for argument.

"Why, Mr. Burnham, it's madness. A stowaway is in bad from the start. The old murderer would have every opportunity to throw you over. There'd be nothing to show that you ever sailed. You'd be up against the whole crew. Let me tell you some more about that ship.

"Of course, it's only suspicion. I didn't want to say anything about it, because we have to be careful. But—well, everybody knows that Brindle's father was hung for piracy in the wild days forty years ago. And there is a good deal of talk about some pretty shady things that have happened since his death. Nothing doing lately, of course.

"But, twenty years ago, when international affairs were not as well organized in Pacific waters as they are now—some Chinese junks disappeared rather mysteriously. And one yellow-skin got away and told wild tales in Hawaii about an attack by a nameless ship that answered the Isabella's description mighty well. And—"

"No use, Mr. Jackson; I'm going. The girl—"

"Has gone to your head, eh? Well, then—"

"You might as well tell me what kind of stuff I can best pack myself in."

"Oh, you can do better than that. Old Brindle is always after new Chinks for his crew."

"Just the thing—that is, if I can disguise myself successfully."

"I'll dye you up, all right. But, good Heavens!"

"What?"

"I was just thinking that, two hours ago, you weren't willing to travel third-class, and now you're ready to share the Isabella's forecastle with a bunch of dopy Chinamen."

"Yep!" Burnham grinned cheerfully. And then the two of them went to work.

Three days later Captain Brindle, of the steamship Isabella, was grinning malevolently at a new, green member of his wobegone crew. The new member spoke rather good pidgin-English, after the days and nights of study with Jackson. If his skin had been white, his other features would have enabled him to pass for a pretty well-bred American.

The other members of the crew regarded him none too favorably, in view of the fact that he hailed from one of the southern provinces and could speak no word of the language of Shanghai, whence they had come. Perhaps they would have appreciated him

more had they known that his oil-cloth bag contained two very modern automatic pistols, and that an inside pocket held a document giving its owner power to act as a secret-service man for the United States Marine Board.

This last had cost some cabling on Jackson's part. He thought it might assist Burnham by giving weight to any testimony he should offer with regard to the conduct of the officers of the Isabella.

His belongings were in a big box in the hold, addressed to Robert Burnham, San Francisco, California, U. S. A. None guessed that Wing Fong, the new crew-boy, had any connection with the box.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE THE MAST AND ELSEWHERE.

FOR a green Chinaman, Wing Fong learned rapidly. There was something compelling about the belaying-pin in the hands of the first mate, and the way that gentleman used it, that inspired one to put forth his best efforts. It had only been a well-directed kick from the second mate that had assisted Burnham to understanding of his duties in connection with getting the anchor up.

When the Isabella was under way and clear of the harbor, he did not wait to be shown how to join the other six Chinamen in scraping the paint from the walls of the iron-clad cabin under the bridge.

He was still jabbing the scraper into the hard, thick coating, though his fingers trembled and his arms ached, when four bells rang for the second time that afternoon. All hands ceased labor. The steward had already set the table on the deck for the officers' supper. The members of the crew ambled wearily toward the forecastle for their "chow."

With an appetite which could have done justice to a ten-dollar *table d'hôte*, Burnham joined the others—until he reached the door of the forecastle. Then he paused. The cook had just set the dinner in the middle of the floor below. It occupied a huge kettle, around which wooden plates, that showed previous usage, but no previous washing, were arranged. And a pair of chop-sticks lay beside each plate.

The predicament into which the chop-stick problem put him was not as bad for Burnham as it might have been. The sight of the unsavory mess in the kettle had taken away his appetite. He halted and let the rest pass. Then he walked to the rail and looked at the porpoises floundering about the bow of the vessel.

Suddenly his attention was aroused by a shriek from the vicinity of the officer's cabin in the waist of the ship. He turned about in time to see the captain arise from the table with soup streaming from his red hair and beard.

From the lips of the master of the Isabella spluttered a stream of profanity. He hurled a plate at the swiftly retreating steward who had spilled the soup. It missed its mark, and broke in fragments on the side of the galley.

Dissatisfied with his aim, Captain Brindle swore more violently, and started with a handspike after the fleeing Chinaman. A sharp cry, "Halt!" snapped from the lips of the mate.

The steward turned and faced four big, ugly pistols in the hands of various members of the crew. The captain, his face purple with murderous rage, the handspike held aloft, drew nearer.

Only for an instant did the terrified Celestial face the approaching avenger. In that instant Burnham saw a picture of inexpressible dread such as he was likely never to forget. Then, regardless of the revolvers or the danger of the rapidly revolving screw, the hapless steward leaped to the rail. Instantly the four pistols spoke. Captain Brindle hurled the handspike after the limp figure that plunged lifeless into the surging water.

The new member of the Isabella's crew had gained an idea of discipline as administered aboard that ship.

As he swayed against the rail, half sick with horror at the murder, he became aware that the captain's profanity was being directed at his own person. For a moment he could not summon strength to obey the embellished, "Come here, you blankety-blank land-lubber!"

A tumbler thrown by one of the mates to attract his attention splintered about his feet and he started.

"Now, blank, blank you, see if you can get me some soup without pouring it all over me!" the captain snarled.

It was Wing Fong's appointment to the office of saloon steward on the steamship Isabella.

In spite of the manner in which his predecessor had just lost his life, Burnham concluded he was glad of the change in his own

station. If he knew little of the duties of a steward, he knew less of the work of a sailor. And, in the close conversation of the table, he was apt to learn more of the officers and of Miss Brindle than elsewhere.

Of this latter advantage in his new position he became rather doubtful as he discovered that the captain's daughter did not appear among the hard visages at the table. But, after he had got the officers through their repast without further incident than having a plate thrown at his head for passing dessert to the wrong side of the second mate, he was ordered to serve Miss Brindle's supper in the little dining-saloon.

As he carried the soup from the cook's galley, he took careful note of the whereabouts of all the officers. Having made sure that none of them was within ear-shot of the saloon, he entered, trying to decide whether to make himself known immediately or await further developments.

The girl sat alone at the end of the table. She did not look up as he entered. He noticed that the ends of her drooping eyelashes were wet with tears. That ended his hesitation.

"Miss Brindle," he half whispered as he placed the plate before her.

She turned a startled glance toward him.

"My name is Robert Burnham," he told her. "I've come to help you out of this, if I can."

"John," she replied, as though addressing a Chinaman whose name she did not know, "you no talkee allee time you bring chow."

She looked full in his face as she spoke. Had he been an overloquacious Chinaman who was annoying her, her reproof would have been exactly the same in tone and manner. Burnham was so astonished that he overturned a little butter-plate upon the table-cloth.

As he went out, he could see no sign of any one near enough to have made conversation dangerous. He was puzzled.

That the girl was an unwilling passenger on the Isabella, and that she would hail with joy any chance of deliverance, were things he had not dreamed of doubting. And now, after he had taken his life in his hands and surrendered every comfort to gain an opportunity to help her, she turned aside his first word of encouragement with the sort of rebuke an impertinent servant would deserve.

He served the rest of the meal in silence. Perhaps he was trying to calculate how many different kinds of fool he had made of himself.

For a while he tried to comfort himself that his rebuke had been delivered in pidgin-English. Her use of this lingo, when she knew he could understand her speech perfectly, seemed to point to a possible fear of being spied upon.

Yet, as he thought this out, he concluded that Miss Brindle had only wished to avoid witnessing another killing that evening. Well enough he believed now that, were his identity even suspected by the members of the crew, his life would be forfeited in an hour.

At the end of the meal he ate what remained, standing at the door of the cook's galley. He used his fingers for knife and fork, or chop-sticks. He had just finished, and was making his way to the bow, when he saw what extinguished his last spark of hope with regard to Miss Brindle.

She and the mate were walking up and down the forward deck, arm in arm, chatting as merrily as though aboard the yacht of a millionaire. The first mate was much younger than the other officers, as Burnham had noticed already.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOST ISLAND.

FOR seven days the Isabella sailed through calm waters. The ocean and the smoothly working machinery seemed the only unruffled things about her.

From the stoke-hole there issued frequent yells that told of some poor fellow there being disciplined by one of the engineers. The deck was often spotted with the blood of one of the sailors who had received a beating for incurring the displeasure of an officer. And, in the late-hour revels with which each day was closed, the officers quarreled among themselves almost to the point of shedding blood.

Somewhere about two o'clock every morning Burnham crept wearily to the forecastle, and, in the foul air of that dismal hole, wondered how he had lived through the day. Almost every hour of the first three brought him to the verge of selling his life at the price of a few shots with his automatic pistol. He steeled himself against uttering the fierce words that rose to give away his identity.

He learned, when kicked, or struck with chinaware, to howl dismal syllables supposed to be Chinese wails. It seemed to please the officers to make the crew howl, and, if the howling was loud enough, they desisted more promptly from their cruelties.

By the fourth day, however, Burnham had settled into the desperate apathy which seemed to characterize all the members of the ship's company. At first he had taken an occasional surreptitious peep at the little clockwork log on the after-rail, and had been pleased to note that the ship was making the remarkable speed of eighteen knots an hour. By now, however, he had lost the last glimmer of expectation of reaching America.

If he had hoped against hope that the captain's daughter would offer some explanation for her indifference to his efforts on her behalf, he speedily ceased to do so. She continued to give him occasional orders in pidgin-English.

By no look or word did she display the slightest interest in his existence. Yet every sight of her beautiful countenance aroused his love to flame that burned rather than warmed.

She was an unfathomable mystery to him. In every accent and move a gentlewoman, she could yet smile and laugh merrily with the young mate who outdid his seniors in coarseness and bloodthirstiness and ribaldry.

Burnham had found her in tears that first evening. Alone she seemed to wear a look of unspeakable sadness, if not of utter despair. Yet she plainly wished no assistance from the one person who might have afforded her any.

He grew to hate the officers of the Isabella, not as he hated them on that first night when his mind surged with thoughts of the vengeance he would wreak at the end of the voyage, but rather as the rest of the crew hated them—dully, sullenly, hopelessly. He expected that they would kill him sooner or later, and dreaded each day as likely to be his last. But his dread lost its keenness. He sometimes wondered why he waited for them to end his misery.

This wonder grew day by day, and on that seventh morning it had taken hold of him in a new form. He resolved to get his pistols into action, at whatever cost to himself. He calculated that the automatic arms would shoot twice to each shot of the single weapons of the officers. By waiting till they had reached their usual drunken condition a little after midnight he would be able to surprise them.

He did not doubt that they would get him in the end, but hoped that he could kill at least four out of the seven, and make it impossible to run the Isabella as they had run her. He picked the first mate and the captain for his initial victims. With the pistol in his right hand he would shoot the young villain who seemed so attentive to Miss Brindle. After he had put a bullet into each of those two, he would fight with the rest as long as he could raise a hand or pull a trigger.

All that day he was especially careful in the performance of his tasks. With more than his usual caution he avoided arousing anger against himself. He did not want his plan to fail through a premature necessity.

He had carefully cleaned his pistols as he lay in his bunk with his face to the wall. It was evidence of the apathetic state into which he had fallen that he felt no particular regret for his own fate. His one interest lay in seeing how many of the officers of the Isabella he could kill before he himself was slain.

Only that evening, as he brought the dessert to the captain's daughter, did the realization that he would probably never see her face again give him a pang of regret. He was almost desperate enough for a moment to attempt to bid her farewell. If she would only say one word of appreciation he felt he could die more easily.

Then suddenly she spoke to him.

"Wing Fong," she said, "I'm still velly hungry. You bring egg. Boil him soft in shell—sabey?"

Burnham's Chinese slippers pattered softly across the deck to the galley, and, after three minutes' delay, back again. He set the egg in a cup before her.

She picked it up, and seemed more inclined to toy with it than to eat it. At last she held it in the fingers of her left hand, and lifted her knife to break the shell. Then she stopped, and placed it back in its cup.

"Here, Wing Fong," she said to Burnham, who had crossed to the opposite side of the table and stood with the elaborately "buttons" manner he had tried to assume, "you breakee."

As he was about to remove the egg and cup to a safe distance from her gown, she astonished him by whispering:

"Stand here to do it. I want to tell you something. Your identity is suspected," she went on. "I heard them talking about you this evening at supper. They intend to do away with you. If possible, they will put you ashore on a desert island. Otherwise, they will simply kill you on some pretext."

In his amazement Burnham forgot the egg in his hand.

"For Heaven's sake, cut that egg!" she reminded him.

"But why don't they kill me anyhow?" he inquired as his knife slit half through the shell.

"Because," she still whispered, "they are

a little fearful that Jackson, of the Bangkok consulate, has put a secret-service man after them. They would rather have you desert the ship where you would never be heard of again. Your death might be too carefully investigated."

"And where do they intend to put me?" I asked.

"They will probably drop you on one of the Marshall Islands, unless—"

"But the Marshall Islands are nearly a thousand miles out of our course."

"Oh, no, they are not. Don't you know where we are?"

"I suppose we are sailing up the China Sea."

"What a sailor you are! We are now directly north of New Guinea and a few miles south of the most southerly of the Carolines. We sailed through the Celebes Sea between Mindanao and Borneo three and a half days ago."

"An unusual course, isn't it?"

"Yes—the Isabella always takes it, though. You see, it was just about here that Isla de Diabolo went under thirty-five years ago. I am afraid my father is a little bit crazy about that island, as well as some other things. He imagines it is going to come up again some time.

"It was used by the crew of the Isabella for depositing valuables in the days when the ship was in somewhat illegitimate business, I fear. I heard my father suggest putting you ashore on the vanished island. He grew so angry with the others for laughing at him that I was afraid he would kill you on next sight."

Burnham himself could not help smiling at the idea of the sunken island reappearing. In a moment he grew sober again, and inquired:

"But can't I help you in any way?"

"Only by not adding to the number of those whose death I have unintentionally caused. I wanted to tell you that I am going to help you by accidentally shoving a box of provisions into the water where they will be apt to drift toward whatever shore you are placed upon. Don't let them get away from you. There might be a chance of your being rescued—only a little chance. I want to give you all I can—and thank you for what you have risked and given up for me."

The one thought that arose in Burnham's mind was that the girl really cared what became of him; that she appreciated what he had done and tried to do for her. All the longing he had sought to quench sprang into life at the look she gave him as she spoke the final words. He forgot danger, forgot the hopelessness of his situation, and began pouring forth words of ardent love. The girl raised a protesting hand, whispering entreaties to stop; but he heeded none of them.

And then a sudden look of terror flashed into her face. She began some hasty words of command in the pidgin-English she had used so long in addressing him. It was too late.

Burnham turned to see what had frightened the girl. A hard fist caught him under his jaw. Before he could disentangle himself from the heavy furniture into which he reeled backward, the young mate was sitting upon him as he sprawled helplessly upon the floor.

With one iron hand the powerful villain held the steward by the throat, while with the other he snatched the automatic pistols from beneath Burnham's loose Chinese coat.

"Now, you spy, I guess we've got you!" he snarled, then shouted aloud: "Bring the irons!"

But his command was never obeyed. With a crash like a hundred broadsides of artillery, a great flare of flame shot up before the ship, throwing a glare of light within the saloon that caused the lamps to fade as did the faces of those within.

Instantly the Isabella began to tremble and rock from stem to stern. With a roar of profane triumph the captain's voice arose above the mighty sound.

"The island—the island! It's coming back to me! All hands on deck!"

(To be continued.)

HEARTSEASE.

THERE is a flower I wish to wear,
But not until first worn by you—
Heartsease—of all earth's flowers most rare;
Bring it; and bring enough for two.

Walter Savage Landor.

The Industrious Tommy Brown.

BY GEORGE FOXHALL.

The Marvelous Change Wrought in the Disposition of the "Idle Rich," with the Drawback that Served as the Accompaniment Thereto.

TOMMY BROWN was the laziest man in New York, not counting Jim Petersen and Billy Parker. The three roomed together and were known among their friends as "The Loafers."

"What do you think, fellows?" asked Tommy, framing his big, broad figure in the dining-room doorway as his two room-mates were lounging through breakfast one morning.

"Too early," said Petersen.

"Spring it," added Parker, not troubling to look up from his paper.

Tommy waited a minute to get the proper amount of suspense. None developed. Then, in the tone of a parish clerk reading responses, he announced:

"I've got a job."

"You've—got—a—job!" exclaimed two utterly astonished young men. "What on earth for?"

"I don't know," said Tommy, evidently rather ashamed of himself. "I just took it because it was offered to me, I suppose."

"That's a poor excuse," commented Petersen, disgustedly. "We'd all have been directoring, or vice-presidenting, or secretarying long ago if there had been any justification in that. You know you don't need the money, and perhaps somebody else does. That's how I look at those things."

"Money! I never thought of that. Of course, I'm not going to work for money."

"No, of course not. What are you going to work for?"

Tommy waved his hand and looked up at the ceiling.

"Fame!" he said. "Immortal fame!"

"Huh. What's the job, Tommy?" asked Parker.

"You'd never guess," said Tommy.

"I'm never going to try, little one. It's your move."

"You lazy beggar," Tommy reproached from the pinnacle of his newly confessed industry. "I'm going to be private secretary to Professor Herman Fillmore, the scientist."

"Well, by the sacred tadpole! A *private secretary*, and to Fillmore of all people! You must be joking, or else you're dippy."

"I am serious, and I am sane. Nevertheless, I do not expect to work very hard. Fillmore told me I need work only when I felt like it.

"I was at the Weatherbys for dinner last night. Fillmore was there. He's a very magnetic fellow. He told me confidentially that he had made the greatest discovery of the century, and when he said I had exactly the qualifications he had been looking for in a private secretary, to assist him in perfecting his ideas, I fell for him at once.

"Nobody ever told me I had any qualifications for anything before. He says he thinks I can help him better than any man he knows. I tell you, Thomas Nathaniel Brown has never been appreciated until now.

"I told Alice Weatherby about it, and when I explained that I had to work only when I felt like it she laughed like a kid at a musical comedy."

Parker and Petersen laughed too. It was considerable of a relief to them that Alice Weatherby did not take Tommy and his job too seriously. All three of them had paid more or less indolent court to the young lady for some time, and the two felt that it was just as well that this weird scheme of Tommy's did not give him any extra advantage.

II.

ABOUT the time the three friends were discussing the sudden change in their domestic arrangements, Professor Herman Fillmore was writing in his diary.

"I believe," he wrote, "that I have made one of the greatest discoveries of the age. Perhaps it is the greatest discovery of all time.

"For a number of years I have been convinced that it must be possible to extract radium from sawdust, the ground-up storehouse of the surface sunshine, mixed with petroleum, the concentrated extract of the

earth's interior heat. I have succeeded in that. I have now three ounces of this radium.

"But that is not my great discovery by any means. It is merely incidental. I have discovered that, by charging radium, while in the process of extraction, with highly magnetic waves, that is, magnetizing it, its radio-active energies are tremendously increased and take on a most wonderful quality. Nothing alive that touches it can be lethargic. It is a fountain of tremendous energy, and whatever comes in contact with it forms a circuit by means of the magnetic qualities of the agent, and becomes a medium for conducting the energy given off to the atmosphere.

"The result is, the person is tremendously energized and is incapable of laziness. I am determined to give my discovery the most severe test before I make it public. I have looked about in order to find, if possible, the laziest man in the world, who should have, at the same time, education and refinement.

"I think I have found him in Thomas Nathaniel Brown, a very rich young man who has not done a stroke of work since he left college. He lives with two friends who, I believe, are almost as lazy as he is. I have been so extremely fortunate as to secure his services, by a little judicious flattery, and I expect him in to-day.

"I have mounted a piece of the radium combination in a ring and shall give it to Brown. The back of it will touch his finger. I shall not give it to him for a day or two, because I want to make notes of the change in him. If I am successful with him I shall try it on his friends, and if my discovery works with all three of them, I shall know that I have indeed, at the early age of thirty-six, secured a place second to none in the realm of science. Men will never be lazy in the world again."

The door-bell rang, and the professor laid down his pen and locked up his diary.

"That must be he," he said to himself.

It was, for a minute later Tommy Brown was shown into the study.

Whatever access of energy had prompted Tommy to accept the position of secretary, it was plain that there was little of it left over for the execution of the duties. After greeting the professor he dropped into a big chair and pulled out his cigar-case.

"I suppose we might as well get acquainted a little at first, professor," he said. "May I smoke?"

The professor begged him to make himself at home, but declined to join him in his smoke, at least until after lunch.

For a while they talked on general subjects. Then they talked about matters scientific, and Tommy showed the astonished professor that a man may be perfectly happy and yet possess the most stupendous ignorance of all things that could possibly be classified under the head of science. The professor's enthusiasm over the severity of the test for his discovery grew as the day wore on.

Tommy leaned back and listened respectfully while the professor expounded a theory on the absorption of light rays by dark bodies. Tommy said he guessed he was right, and would the professor take a ride down to Martin's with him, for lunch. The professor would not, so Tommy rang the bell, and when the maid answered he asked her kindly to call a taxicab for him; he would go alone.

"I think I shall like this job, professor," he said. "It seems good to have some interest in life. I'll be back in a little while."

Tommy came back in a couple of hours. The maid said the professor was just having lunch, and would be in the study in a few minutes. When the professor did come, Tommy, wearied of his own company, was fast asleep on the couch.

The professor smiled, but did not awaken him.

In fact, Tommy was so industriously lazy that the professor felt, at the end of the day, that he needed no further evidence of this side of Tommy's character. He had not believed it possible to crowd so many evidences of indolence into only twenty-four hours of existence, and he determined that next day he would make the test.

III.

Tommy arrived about half past eleven.

"I guess the breaking-in day yesterday made me rather tired this morning," he half apologized.

"Oh, don' worry 'bout that," said the professor. "I really didn't expect that we should get down to work for a day or two. Just take your time. Of course, I am anxious that we should get together in working out my discovery as soon as possible, but I have one or two little matters to straighten up first.

"I have just been turning over some old jewelry. Here's a curious ring. What do you think of it?"

"What a peculiar stone!" said Tommy,

holding the little circlet between his thumb and finger. "Very attractive, indeed. I never saw anything like it. It's wonderfully attractive, though I don't quite know the reason why."

"Do you like it so much? Please keep it. I have several exactly similar. I had them all made at once from a substance I discovered."

"Indeed, I'm a thousand times obliged, professor," and Tommy slipped the ring on his finger.

The professor got up suddenly.

"I shall have to leave you for a little while," he said abruptly. "You might take a look over my mail, if you feel like it. Sort out the begging letters and the requests for lectures, and if you come across any proposals of marriage from female cranks, tear them into small bits and throw them into the waste-basket. Some day I shall be old enough to avoid such things, if I don't get married in sheer desperation first."

The professor laughed and went out. Tommy got up and took a couple of turns about the room.

"What the dickens did he want to go out for, when I was just beginning to feel like work?" he ruminated. "Well, I'll go over the mail."

There were about ten letters, and he had slashed through them and read them in about as many minutes. Three of them actually were proposals of marriage from women in various parts of the country.

Professor Fillmore had already achieved considerable fame, and his portrait as the youngest member of the American Academy of Superlative Sciences had been printed far and wide.

Tommy recalled that the professor was really a pretty good-looking fellow. He threw the offerings into the waste-basket, and looked around for more worlds to conquer.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "The boss keeps a mighty untidy place. I guess I'll give it a bit of a fixing."

It *was* a mighty untidy place. The "boss" had carefully attended to that before his secretary arrived. Tommy took his coat off, rummaged in the desk until he found a duster, and set to work.

It took him two good hours of fast and thorough work to put the place ship-shape. It was unaccustomed toil, but it couldn't feeze Tommy.

He suddenly realized that he had been lazy and worthless all his life, and he packed the concentrated essence of twenty-nine years, seven months, twelve days, three hours, and some odd minutes unused industry into the cleaning-up of Professor Herman Fillmore's study.

He rushed down to the kitchen and demanded a pail of water, a window-cloth, and a duster, and while the maid got these for him he lectured her vociferously on the awful condition the study windows were in. Then he risked his life by sticking out his body at a perilous angle from those third-story windows while he scoured them until the panes were loose.

By two o'clock he was through, and somewhat indignant because the study was not larger or had not at least one more window in it.

"There is nothing like work for making a man feel like a man," he muttered.

Then, feeling that this work was hardly the kind usually done by men, he delivered the same sentiment to the maid when he returned the kitchen things, changing the word "man" to "person" in each case. The combination was not a happy one, but Tommy was, and as the maid was a Swede, who did not understand more than ten words of English, nobody was any the worse for it.

When the professor came in at three-thirty, Tommy did not hear him enter. He was, figuratively and almost literally, up to the ears in a book.

The professor coughed, and Tommy looked up.

"I say, professor," he said, "this is mighty interesting. I think, if you don't mind, I'll study up on it. It's Boggles's 'Theory of Cyclonic Phenomena as Related to the Emanations of Radium from the Sahara Desert.' I believe old Boggles is half-way right, don't you know. By the bye, I just did a little tidying up around here. I hope you don't mind. I certainly have enjoyed myself while you've been away. Now, professor, whenever you are at liberty I am anxious to help you with the experiments you mentioned. When can we start?"

"Mr. Brown, you have been helping me with the experiments all day. I am more than delighted with the result."

"But you don't mean to say you wanted me to experiment in cleaning studies or reading up on cyclones?"

"No! You began the experiment when you put that ring on your finger. It is my great discovery. That peculiar stone is the great energy-giver that will revolutionize the labor of the world. Work, in future, will

be a pleasure. Thoroughness will characterize everything, and everybody will have an object in life. Even love-making will be more ardent and sincere.

"This is *the* great discovery; the greatest discovery of the age, and you are the first human being to demonstrate its truth."

Tommy was electrified with the idea. The energy was, of course, still coursing through him and his enthusiasm was boundless.

"Say, professor," he said, after listening with the application of a veteran to the full explanation, and reviewing the diagrams, theories, and calculations, on which the discovery was based, "let me take a couple of those rings home to my room-mates, will you? If they touch them up anything as this one touched me, your reputation will stand forever, even if you never make another demonstration. We were the only three men who had anything on the man who invented sleep. Those two men, at the present moment, haven't got enough energy to sit down without being pushed."

"I shall be delighted to let you have a couple of rings," answered the professor. "All I will ask of you is that you will make notes of your observations regarding the difference in your friends' conduct."

"Done," responded Tommy briskly. "Now, I wonder if you have time to tell me how to answer these letters?"

Tommy did not give his friends the professor's presents until next morning. He had wisely removed his own ring at night, both as a precaution against questionings, and to allow him to get the sleep a healthy and energetic body demands.

As he had foreseen, Parker and Petersen were instantly attracted by the rings. He had gone into their rooms to present them, as, of course, it was certainly long before their rising-hour.

Scarcely had they got the rings on their fingers than they were out of bed and were shouting arguments at each other as to who should use the bath-tub first.

Parker won by virtue of the fact that he had received his ring one minute before Petersen. Petersen compromised with his newly awakened energy by resurrecting an old razor that he had not seen for ages and proceeding vigorously to hack and swear and pull and groan at his very stubbly whiskers, set on a very tender face.

It was years since Petersen had shaved himself, but he resolved to buy a razor that day and renew the pleasure daily with a smaller mixture of pain. He decided that shaving oneself is an important function that should not be left to the insanitary conveniences of a barber's shop.

Tommy watched proceedings as long as his sense of humor could keep in check his own abounding energy. Then, disdaining the elevator, he dashed madly down five flights of steps, raced a block and a half to catch a car, and arrived at the professor's at exactly eight o'clock.

He spent the day until four transcribing the memoranda for the professor's lecture. The latter had gone out a little while before, to the public library.

Tommy suddenly remembered Alice Weatherby. Hum! He had dallied long enough. He would go and call on the lady and say what he wanted to say. As the lady lived only two blocks away, he walked, and very rapidly.

He had almost arrived there when a man hurried around the corner and another man dropped off a street-car. They converged at the steps. Tommy looked up and confronted Parker and Petersen.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he said. "Where are you going?"

It was plain enough where all three were going, and there was an embarrassing deadlock.

"Well, look here," observed Tommy, when they had confessed to the situation, "I was here first. I think you fellows ought to back out and come some other time."

"Nit!" said Parker, and—

"Nit!" added Petersen.

Each of the three knew, from his own motive, what the motive of the others was.

"All right," said Tommy, "do as you like. I'm going to send my card up."

Strong in their newly acquired energy and assertiveness, the others were going to do the same. They were saved from further confusion, however, by the announcement from the maid that Miss Weatherby was not at home.

"Of course!" Tommy explained. "She has heard your beastly, ill-bred discussion on the steps and wouldn't see any one of us."

Then he rushed back to the study to delve into Hobbledy's "Explanation of the Law of Sunshine Showers."

Next day, exactly the same thing happened again, except that Parker had the advantage of the bottom step instead of Tommy. When it happened the third day, there was something uncanny about it. This time Petersen had shaded the others.

"I guess I can explain it," said Tommy;

"it's the rings I gave you. They are energy-producing. Let's go home, and I'll tell you all about it."

They went, and Tommy explained.

"There's one thing I guess the professor hadn't reckoned on," he went on, "and that is, that the magnetic sympathy of these pieces of radium causes them to carry to each other the strongest impulse being given at the moment by the owner." Tommy's scientific education had been rapid but thorough.

"I guess the world would be at loggerheads most of the time if everybody had a piece," he went on. "I'm afraid it will be no go. It's an interesting scientific discovery but— Well, I suppose you fellows had better let me take those rings back to the professor."

But, most emphatically:

"Nit!" said Parker, and—

"Nit!" added Petersen.

"Well," declared Tommy, "I don't see where we'll land. I'll tell you what. We are all about a size, and well-matched; let's fight for it. That is, of course, let's fight for the rings, not for Miss Weatherby. We couldn't bring her into anything like that."

The proposition was hailed gladly and the place of combat was being decided on when their butler came in with the cards of Professor Fillmore and Miss Weatherby.

"I called," explained Miss Weatherby, "because I heard that you boys had all been around to see me on three successive days. I am awfully sorry I was out. Professor Fillmore was kind enough to come with me."

"Yes. I am afraid Brown thought I deserted him a good deal every day, too. You see, gentlemen, Miss Weatherby and I were busy preparing to have our engagement announced; and we want to be married as soon after the pronouncement as possible."

There was, perhaps, something of mischief in the professor's gray eyes as he pulled something from his pocket.

"This," he said, "is the largest piece of magnetized radium in existence. It is important scientifically, but, as I think you have noticed, it has the unique and uncomfortable power of making people so unanimous that they cannot agree."

And solemnly, one by one, three de-energized young men passed their radium rings over to the professor and agreed to be present at the wedding—if it were held late in the day.

A RINGER OF DOOR-BELLS.

BY R. K. THOMPSON.

Author of "When Minutes Were Precious," "Twelve Good Men," etc.

This Is the Year When You Are Told to Watch Out for the Census Man, but This Census-Taker Had Hard Work to Look Out for Himself.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

AN ENGRAVED MEAL-TICKET.

HAVE you ever been hungry? Not normally eager for meal-time, but really starving?

It is a terrible thing when your stomach creases and folds and overlaps upon its emptiness till it ties itself into a knot that tightens and tightens—and hurts.

May you never go through with the experience as I have.

It had been two days since I had tasted food. A ravenous wolf, I walked the streets of the city in which I was stranded without a penny or a friend.

It was cruel, the way my aimless feet kept leading me past restaurant after restaurant. I tried to get out of their vicinity, but the eating-place zone seemed interminable. I was walking in a circle, really.

And how I fought against even glancing at them! My steps lagged by the more pretentious cafés, while my eyes roved over their fronts. But before the cheap lunch-rooms I stopped and looked enviously in at the uncouth diners.

In front of one of these "beaneries" I had paused to tantalize my gnawing vitals with the sight of cooked food separated from me by no more than a quarter-inch of plate-glass.

A man, coming out of the door, stared curiously at me. Flushing, I lifted my eyes to the show-window as though looking for an address. And a gasp of surprise escaped me.

The white-enameled name of the owner of the restaurant was the same as mine—"Evens."

I wondered quizzically whether the proprietor would give me a meal if I told him my name, and that I was starving?

The idea caught hold of me. Evens was not such a common name; there might not be many answering to it in the city. If the owner of this cheap eating-place was human, wouldn't my appeal reach him?

My heart quickened. Desperately I opened the door and stepped inside.

"Mr. Evens," I said to the man whose position behind the cashier's desk marked him as the proprietor, "I'm starving!"

He looked at me out of piggy eyes pouched in a fat, heavily mustached face.

"I'm starving!" I repeated. "Broke, too. My name is Evens, the same as yours. Will you give me a meal—on the strength of that?"

I laid a card on the counter. He heaved his massive body six inches out of his chair, and picked it up in his clumsy, fat fingers.

In silence he read the engraved line upon the pasteboard. Then he looked back at my face without a word.

"Will you — will you stake me to a meal?" I asked, the words tripping over my dry tongue.

He turned his head away.

"Jake!" he shouted. A rat-faced, unkempt waiter shambled up. "Feed this guy —all he can stuff!" he ordered.

"Thank you!" I said fervently. "I—"

"Git busy!" he said out of the corner of his mouth. "You said you was hungry—go an' eat!"

I went. The rat-faced waiter escorted me to a table whose top was bare of cloth, but amply spread with grease-spots. And from that uninviting board I ate a meal the like of which I had never imagined even in dreams before!

Ham and beans, hash, sausages and cabbage, beef stew, bread, steak, and pie. And after that—coffee!

In half an hour I made my way to the cashier's desk again.

"I'm not a pan-handler," I began, "and I want to thank you, Mr. Evens, and say—"

I stopped. The proprietor had fixed me with his eye.

"You're callin' me out o' my name, young feller," he said slowly.

"What—what do you mean?"—blankly.

"I mean my name ain't Evens."

I stared at him. "But—the name on the window—"

"The first two enamel letters is lost off the glass," he explained. "My name's Stevens. It ain't no more 'Evens' than—yours is!"

My jaw dropped. I was staring at him in real earnest this time."

"But my name *is* Evens! It's on the card I gave you—"

"Guess you've made a mistake, friend," he interrupted calmly. "Take a look!"

He tossed the card, face up, in front of me. It read: "B. G. Duncan"!

"Say"—I dragged out of my pocket a handful of loose cards—"I *did* make a mistake. I had that card—from a man who promised me a job—in with these you can see are all mine: Fred S. Evens. Look!

"If I hadn't pawned my card-case, I wouldn't be carrying these cards loose. This wouldn't have happened—"

"All right," he said placidly. "It's nothin' to lose your goat over."

"But—you staked me to a meal when I asked you to do it because our names were the same—and they weren't! You knew it—great Scott, you didn't even think mine was what I said—yet you fed me free! Why?"

The fat man grinned.

"Well," he answered, "I never heard the beat of the way you come in here. Bold as brass, askin' me to hand you out a meal because you said you had the same name as mine. The darned gall of the thing made me fall fer you, that's all."

"You're a white man!" I exclaimed impulsively. "Shake!"

Then I let go his flabby hand.

"I'm coming in here some day," I promised, "to pay back what you've loaned me this afternoon—and it's only a loan, mind."

I stepped toward the door.

"Say!"

The fat man's lazy drawl recalled me.

"Kin you read an' write?"

"If I haven't forgotten since last month," I answered, smiling. "I graduated from college then."

"You said the card you gave me by mistake was from a guy that was goin' to give you a job?" he asked. "I take it you didn't connect, eh?"

"No," I agreed. "I wasn't wanted—by him, nor any of the hundred or so employers I've tried since."

"Just out o' college, you say? How'd you git down an' out?"

"It isn't a long story," I replied. "When I graduated my father gave me a thousand dollars in cash and turned me out to make my way in the world. I came to this city, and had my pocket picked of every cent the first week. Since then I've been living on what I could pawn my belongings for—till two days ago, when I hocked my gold-trimmed card-case, the last thing I had."

"Now, you're too proud to squeal to the old man about the poor start you've made—is that it?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, determinedly snapping out the word.

"You need a job bad, do you?"

"If I don't get one before to-morrow," I smiled ruefully, "I'll have to get a meal again in a restaurant run by somebody that *is* a namesake."

"I can put you on to a soft thing," he said slowly, "if you want me to."

"If I want—" I stopped, moved beyond words. "Tell me," I quavered, "is there any chance to get work here as a waiter, a dishwasher, a potato-peeler, or—anything?"

"No," he said, "there ain't. But there's a chance of me gettin' you somethin' better'n that to do. I pull a pretty strong stroke in ward politics, and maybe I can git you a job takin' the census."

"Doing—what?"

"Takin' the census. Ringin' door-bells, askin' folks questions about how old they is, black or white, an' so on, an' settin' the answers down in a little blank book.

"It's census-takin' time just now. They're short of men, too, though it's a two-weeks' job, an' the pay's around sixty dollars. Does it appeal to you?"

Sixty dollars! For two weeks' work!

"What—what do I have to do to get the job?" I faltered eagerly.

My benefactor slid gruntingly down out of his chair.

"Just come around the corner with me," he answered. "That's all. I can fix it so's they'll start you right out on a district. Come ahead!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST DOOR-BELL.

STEVENS, the restaurant-owner, hadn't boasted vainly when he told me he had political "pull."

Due to his influence, it was only an hour after my introduction to the census chief before I had been assigned to a territory of five residential blocks.

I was put through only a cursory examination to test my ability. Then came my instructions—few in number, easy to memorize—and I was sent out on my district.

"You won't be paid till the end of your work in two weeks," said my new-found friend when we were outside. "An' if it's worryin' you to think where you're goin' to eat an' sleep in the meantime, you can have two meals a day in my place. The waiters have a back room off the kitchen to sleep in; there's an extra bed there that you can use."

"Say, you're more than kind to me!" I told him feelingly. "But I can't take your charity—"

"Who said anything about charity? I'll collect your board-bill when you get paid for this job. I'm makin' a reg'lar customer of you fer two weeks—a good one, too, to judge by the way you ate to-day!"

"How do you know you can trust me to settle when I get my pay?"

"I *ain't* trustin' you! I got you this job; you can't get your money for it without me—see? There's no chance of your gettin' away with nothin' on me, sonny!"

"Well—I can't tell you how obliged I am to you, just the same!" I called after him as he reentered his eating-place.

And I meant it, too. He had fed me when I was hungry. Given me a job when I needed work. And now he was going to board and lodge me for two weeks on credit.

Truly, this man I had never set eyes on before that day had played the part of Good Samaritan most nobly!

Well—some day, I made up my mind, I'd be able to pay him back for it all!

And now I set about my new task—ringing door-bells.

I had walked rapidly up-town, and reached the first street bounding the neighborhood whose inhabitants I was to investigate.

I mounted the steps of a corner flat-house and rang the first bell my hand encountered in the vestibule.

It was not without a little nervousness that I waited for the street-door to "click." It was a queer errand I had set out upon.

A stranger among strangers, I was to poke my nose into other people's business, literally!

The door opened. And I stepped inside the hall and walked back to the ground-floor apartment that was to receive my first call.

I rang the private door-bell, and waited for admittance—to be granted me by a woman, I imagined, since it was midafternoon.

Swift steps within sounded. Then deep breathing as somebody fumbled with the fastening of the door.

The next instant it was flung open in my face. And I staggered back.

Not with surprise because I was not confronted by a woman as I had supposed. But with horror, because of the weird sight presented by the tall, bearded stranger before me.

He was in his shirt-sleeves. A pair of eye-glasses, strung to a thick, black cord, were set with slovenly lack of precision on his large, pointed nose. A thin, drooped-end mustache of black—coal-black, like his tousled hair—added a final touch of saturnity to his countenance.

But it was not at his face that I trained my horrified eyes. They were riveted to his shirt-front. For, from collar to waist, *it was covered with blood!*

Aghast, I stared at the hideous picture the man made—wild-eyed and gory, panting heavily, as he stood framed in the doorway.

Wordless, for five seconds that seemed to me magnified to minutes, he returned my stare.

And then—

"So you've come?" he said. "At last—you have come!"

He was a madman. A maniac—and a bloody one!

His words broke the spell his awful appearance had put upon me. I felt the strength coming back into my sagging knees. I stood free of the wall against which I had been weakly leaning.

I was going to get out of—

Suddenly, too suddenly for me to anticipate the move, the man lunged at me. He caught a handful of my coat in a grip which I struggled against in vain. And he pulled me inside the flat with him.

Locking the door, he dropped the key in his pocket. Then he released me.

"Come!" he said. "Come and see the work—see what I have done!"

I shuddered as he moved past me, and the sight of the blood on his shirt stunned my mind by its connection with his words. Without a single look behind him he walked rapidly away from the private hall.

I watched him go. And then I sprang to the door.

No—he had locked it securely. I could not escape.

I was alone in this flat with a maniac. Alone with him and—his victim!

To get away—that was my one thought!

I did not stop to reason by what insane prompting the man had addressed those first words to me: "You have come at last!"

Time enough to think of such things later, when I had escaped the great danger which I felt menaced me every minute that I was in this house.

I *must* escape. But how?

This was a ground-floor flat, I remembered. Perhaps the windows at its front, in the opposite direction to which the madman had gone, would permit my exit.

I dashed the few steps up the hall and through a bedroom which separated me from the parlor. My hands tore aside a window-curtain with trembling haste. The sash was locked.

The work of a minute, though, would suffice to free the catch. Then I could easily jump the distance to the street—

With a half-choked cry of alarm, I felt myself torn away from the still unopened window.

I was in the clutch of the madman—he had slipped, unheard, into the parlor after me, crossing the floor to leap upon my back.

"You would escape, eh?"

The words hissed hotly in my face as I turned to grapple with him.

Locked in each other's arms, we reeled unsteadily across the floor, body flattened to body in a desperate struggle.

The madman's strength was beyond belief. Crushed in his sinewy arms, I felt my ribs crack and bend, the breath all but leave my body, my bloodshot eyes straining out of my head.

Even my strong physique, trained by four years' work on crew and college athletic field, was puny as a babe's compared to his maniac power.

I felt myself weakening—giving ground perceptibly before his fierce onslaught.

"You will not leave here!" panted my antagonist, forcing me backward across the room. "You will stay—they shall find *you* here, not me, when they come to discover what I have done!"

My scalp rose at his words.

My terror at what he planned lent me a force almost comparable with that which insanity gave him. In the end, perhaps, I might have been victor—

But my foot tripped at the fireplace. Pulling his crushing weight down upon me in my arms, I fell.

There was a blinding shower of light before my eyes as my head met a jutting edge of woodwork at the mantel's base.

"They will find you here, not me, when they come!" I heard him jeer, and then—I knew no more.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER OF THEM.

A CLOCK above me chimed. One—two—three—four—five. I opened my eyes. It was still broad daylight.

Five o'clock—it must be the same afternoon, and only an hour since I had been felled senseless by the lunatic occupant of that flat.

His last words came back to me: "They will find you here, not me, when they come!"

How my head ached! Throbbing, throbbing—the way the congested blood thundered in my ears was driving me mad, mad!

Suddenly I sat up on the floor. It was not only the beating of the pulses in my head that I heard.

Somebody was knocking at the door. The insistent hammering at its panels threw me into a panic. The police!—they had come!

I scrambled dizzily to my feet. I must get away before they found me here, in the eyes of circumstantial evidence—a murderer!

I was alone—alone in this house with the butchered body of the maniac's victim. But suddenly I calmed. What had I to fear? I was innocent—I could prove it.

I would go at once and open the door. I staggered forward, and then I stopped. I *couldn't* open it.

The door was locked—the madman had fastened it securely, I now remembered, and put the key in his pocket!

What could I do?

I was saved the necessity of uselessly speculating on the problem, for, under my eyes, the door suddenly flew open.

I had forgotten that, to go out, my assailant had necessarily unlocked the door. Behind him he had left it unlocked. Whoever had been knocking had finally tried the knob—and entered without hindrance.

In a flash, I understood the manner of the caller's sudden appearance through the flat's only entrance. And in the next second he had bounded toward me.

"Dr. Drew—where is he?"

He barked this question at me.

I stared at him. A spruce, undersized man of youthful age—laboring, I saw, under intense excitement, as he sternly awaited my answer.

"Where is he?" he snapped again, impatient at my silence.

"He is not here," I answered. "If you mean the tenant of this flat, he has gone."

He jumped toward me.

"Gone?" he cried. "*Gone?*"

In silence we stood face to face for a second. Then he whirled on his heel.

"You lie!" he threw back at me over his shoulder. He is here—you have him a prisoner in this house!"

He went down the hall. I sank against the wall, suddenly weak and sick—unable to take advantage of my moment to escape.

I heard the stranger rushing from one end of the flat to the other, opening and shutting unseen doors as he went, crying the name, "Dr. Drew!"

Then he stood before me once more.

"He is not here! He is gone—gone!" He was raving mad, gesticulating frenziedly. "You have done away with him! You, you! Oh, you shall pay for this! You shall be made to suffer! You, and the whole world as well, shall suffer through his loss!"

"Stop!" I cried, and took a step forward.

"Do you know that this man you are accusing me of having done away with has just assaulted me, in this apartment, into which he dragged me unwillingly?"

"If he did," blazed the stranger, "you were the only one of his enemies he was able to beat down before your companions—the members of your cursed society who came to take him away—made his capture! I am glad he bested one of you, at least!"

"You are, are you?" I cried wrathfully. "And do you know what this man you are looking for has done?"

"I have seen the body," he answered coldly.

The fellow's seeming indifference stunned me.

"Your friend," I said slowly, "this 'Dr. Drew,' is a murderer!"

"That is what you say!" he sneered. "I know that is the name you and your devilish society makes use of!"

"I don't know what you mean when you talk about the 'society'," I flashed back. "But, if it's civilized, twentieth-century society you refer to—'murderer' is the name we use for a blood-stained maniac!"

"'Maniac'!" he mocked. "That is another favorite word of your associates!"

"What do you call a man," I demanded, "who invites another to witness 'the work

he has done,' as the tenant of this flat invited me to do? A man who, after dragging me in here, refused to let me go, and beat me unconscious, with the cry, 'When they come to find what I have done, they will find *you* here, and not me'—"

I broke off suddenly. A sound to freeze the marrow in the bones of a man had interrupted me. It was the wail of some stricken soul, moaning in mortal agony.

There could be only one explanation of the outcry. The lunatic who had just gone had bungled his work—his victim was not quite dead.

"You hear that!" I half whispered to the man before me.

Without a word, he turned and walked away from me in the direction of the pitiable moaning.

A door closed behind him as he went down the hall.

Not a minute passed—and then the wailing rose to one awful, nerve-destroying shriek, and suddenly all was still.

The stranger appeared before me again.

I finished him!" he said coolly, turning down his coat-sleeve.

But not before I had seen one of his cuffs. And on it was a stain of blood.

Once more I was alone with a murderer.

A mad one, too, I decided at sight of a malevolent gleam which now lighted his eyes. Watching my face intently, his slender body settled into a crouch.

"He said he would leave you here," he began, "to be found instead of him when they discovered what he had done?"

He took a stealthy, pantherish step toward me.

"A good idea!" he cackled insanely. "A good idea, indeed!"

I saw his muscles bunching beneath his clothes as he made ready to spring at me, his hands opening and closing convulsively at his sides.

"That's what I will do!" he gibbered. "Yes—I will leave you here now when the dead body is discovered—"

A wave of revulsion swept over me, shaking me in a huge shiver from head to feet.

Enough of this madman, in this madhouse! I was revolted, shocked, and sickened beyond another minute's endurance.

With a cry, I threw myself forward at the fellow. My fist struck squarely in his face, the blow slamming him back from the door against the wall.

Then I tore open the portal and plunged out into the ground-floor hall of the building. I started toward the street door—and then leaped back.

A man was coming up the steps. And the man was a policeman.

CHAPTER IV.

IN HOT WATER.

I REGAINED my self-possession in an instant. It was not away from the policeman, but toward him, I should go. It was my duty to tell him what I knew—

At that minute the door I had just left flew open.

When I jumped back at sight of the officer of the law, I had put this door between me and the street entrance. And now the man I had slugged out of my way bounded out—straight into the arms of the bluecoat.

"Officer," he cried, "a man you ought to arrest has just got away from me in this house!"

Fright gripped me. He was still bent on carrying out the purpose of his accomplice, Dr. Drew—to fasten the latter's guilt, as well as his own, upon me.

"Escaped—when?" asked the patrolman.

"Just now—not a minute ago."

"I didn't see any one come out of this buildin'," the other retorted. "An' no more did I see anybody runnin' away in the street as I come up."

"Then, he didn't go outside, but ran up the stairs."

"That's it," cried my traducer—"the stairs! He's gone up toward the roof!"

"When did ye say he got away from ye?"

"Not two seconds ago."

"Then, he didn't use the stairs. I had me eyes on them as I came up the stoop—through the glass in this vestibule door ye can see plain enough—an' I'll take oath no one was on them."

By this time I had backed away down the hall till my heels met an obstruction. It was the rear wall, and in it was a cellar door, whose knob rattled into my hands behind me.

"What's that?" the policeman cried.

The man before him—whose body all along had shielded me from the officer's sight—wheeled around on me.

And there, twenty yards down the hall, I stood revealed to them both.

That was the time for me to come forward and denounce my false accuser for the villain that he was. It was *his* arrest the policeman should make, not mine.

And I should have gone forward and said so. But I didn't.

Haven't I said that I was frightened when that stranger first met the minion of the law and showed his unabated purpose to brand me with the guilt of himself and his friend?

Well—now I was scared worse. The prospect of becoming the prisoner of that policeman threw me into a sudden, unreasoning panic.

I jerked open the cellar door behind me, and tumbled down the black stairs pell-mell.

"After him—there's your man!" I heard my unknown enemy shout.

I reached the bottom of the stairs—how, in safety, I don't know — and dashed straight ahead through the shadowy cellar. Behind me I heard the clattering pursuit of the officer and the other fellow.

I had no idea of where I was going. The dumb-waiter shaft—it was before me. The waiter itself was at the bottom, the collapsible middle shelf up, and room for me thus made ready within.

In a trice I was huddled in the boxlike car. From the direction in which I had come I heard the fall of a heavy body and a wrathful curse. One of my pursuers had met with an accident.

I heard the other stop.

Now was my chance to get out of sight. I reached out my hands, caught the rope, and began to pull myself up.

Up, up the shaft in the waiter I went. Down below I caught the fast-fading mutter of voices as their owners searched the empty cellar for me.

Suddenly the voices stopped. In the silence the creak of the ascending car in which I knelt, and the slap-slap of its rope against the wall of the shaft, sounded plainly. And the next instant brought the noise of hurrying feet my way.

My searchers had ensnared me into disclosing my hiding-place. There was no need of quiet on my part now.

Like mad I pulled myself upward.

The rope stopped in my hands. Two pairs of them against my one had hold of it, instantly checking my flight.

I was caught—between cellar and roof, in a miserable trap of my own making!

With all my strength I tried to pull the rope out of the opposing grip. It was no use; two pulling down against one up—and that one without a place to get purchase for a decent tug—could have but one outcome.

I began to descend in the car, slowly but surely. I lurched forward against the wall of the shaft with one shoulder, striving to brace my body for a pull—

And the dumb-waiter door, against which I had thrown my weight unawares, caved in before me.

On all fours, I sprawled into the middle of a kitchen floor!

I picked myself up, bruised and shaken. Instantly I shut the tin door through which I had so suddenly come—thus casting to my pursuers no light, literally, on how I had eluded them.

Then I turned to face whoever occupied the kitchen.

It was empty.

Was the flat deserted? The next minute I knew that I was in no such luck.

The front door at the other end of the apartment opened and an Irish girl's voice, addressing a caller sounded:

"Oh—it's the janitor! Come in, Mr. Blake, sor!"

"Yer mistress sent fer me!" said a man's gruff voice. "I'll go down to the kitchen. In me dirty workin' clo'es, I'd muss up her parlor somethin' awful."

They were coming toward me—I must hide!

But how could I get out of sight? The kitchen's one door opened on the hall. I would be seen, if I stepped out there.

I must hide somewhere in the kitchen. But *where?*

The laundry-tub! It was my only chance of concealment. I leaped across the floor, lifted the oilcloth-covered board on top, and scrambled in. The cover closed noiselessly over me as the servant-girl and her companion entered the room.

"Yer mistress told me to telephone the station-house a half hour ago—" began the janitor.

"Mr. Blake!" interrupted a lady's voice. "Did you phone for a policeman, as I asked you to?"

"I did, ma'am. They told me a patrolman would be right over. Why he don't get here is more 'n I know!"

"Oh—if they would only hurry and send him!" cried the lady. "This suspense while little Mignon may be—be dead, for all I know, is driving me frantic!"

"Try to calm yourse'f, now—"

A ring at the front door-bell cut him off.

"There's the cop now!" exclaimed the janitor.

I heard the servant leave to open the door. Then a bass voice sounded—chilling my blood.

It was the policeman from whom I had just escaped!

He had trailed me here—seen me leave the dumb-waiter at this floor—and was going to take me prisoner.

"Sorry to keep ye waitin', lady," were his first words, "but I been after the man I think's wanted by you people. The message to the station-house said that you'd lost—"

"My little Mignon!" cried the mistress of the house excitedly. "My precious Mignon, my little, darling baby—"

"Yes," broke in the policeman, cutting her distressful wail short with a hardened lack of sympathy in his voice. "That's what was reported to us. Well—I think I come pretty near to capturin' the kidnaper right at the entrance of this buildn'. A man, comin' out of the ground-floor flat, told me he was the guy who'd stole—"

"Not my precious baby!" broke in the woman wildly. "My darling—has she been hurt? Tell me?"

"You'd better prepare for the worst, lady!" said the officer slowly. "The man from the first floor flat told me that the feller I chased had just come out of that apartment, where he killed your—Mignon!"

Good Heaven! This crime—worse, even, than I had imagined—had been charged to me by Dr. Drew's friend to save that first madman from its consequences!

I was wanted by this policeman, who stood not three yards from me now, for murder. And worse—I was in the very apartment from which the victim of this ghastly perpetration had been taken!

An icy perspiration would have bathed me at the harrowing situation, if it had not been for one thing.

In my hasty entrance into this laundry-tub, my clothes had struck against one of the faucets, loosening the cock.

And now a stream of boiling water was flowing in around me!

CHAPTER V.

I RING ANOTHER DOOR-BELL.

COULD a worse situation be conceived?

Here I was, hidden in the same room with a policeman ready to arrest me on the charge of a hideous murder. And now it seemed that my hiding-place was to become untenable in only a very few moments!

I could not turn off the hot water. My body was wedged too tightly in the tub for me to reach the open faucet without shifting my position. And, if I did that, I would probably disturb the board covering me. That would instantly attract the attention of some one of the four people in the room. And I would be dragged from concealment—to meet what fate?

One that held as much horror for me in the contemplation as being boiled alive, at any rate.

I set my teeth and trusted to the thickness of my clothing to keep my body from blistering. For a little while, anyway—till the quartet in the kitchen moved to another room—I might be able to stand it.

But what was the policeman saying?

"This feller I want, got away from me just now, down in the cellar. He pulled himself up in the dumb-waiter."

I strained my ears to catch every word.

"Me an' the man that put me onto him heard him goin' up the shaft. We grabbed the rope an' stopped him before he got far. But a dumb-waiter door openin' into a kitchen somewhere in this house must have been unlatched in front of him and he stepped out into some apartment in the buildin'."

I heard the janitor gasp:

"Well, by gee—!"

"Wait, now!" ordered the officer. "Don't you women pull no faintin' fits. But—the man came into this flat!"

I bit my lip till it bled, to suppress a yell. The hot water had suddenly soaked through my clothes to the skin. But it was the words I heard, as much as the scalding, that stirred me to the outcry luckily checked in time.

The water was rising. Yet, not daring to move, I held my cramped and tortured position as I listened to the conversation of the unseen ones.

"How do ye know he came into this flat?" the janitor was asking in an awed half-whisper. "Did ye see what door he left the dumb-waiter by?"

"I didn't see it," answered the policeman. "But I know it was this door, just the same."

"An' how?"

"Listen. There's me an' this other man, pullin' on the rope down below, understand? Neither of us can see anything of the shaft above the guy we're after on account of the dumb-waiter bein' in the way. An' then, all of a sudden, the rope we're yankin' on goes light. That means, thinks I in a flash, that the feller's found a door ajar an' gone through it.

"But which door? That's what I'm goin'

to find out. I yells to the man with me to leave go of the rope. Then I pulls it down alone, countin' the strokes.

"When the car gits down to the ground, I pulls it up again by the duplicate rope on the pulley, still countin' the strokes. It goes past the first floor, an' the second. And stops—at the right number of pulls, exactly, mind—at the third floor, which is this flat!"

The fellow was wasting his time as a patrolman—he should have been a detective. How I wished that promotion had only come to him before? Then he wouldn't have been called out on this case, to my undoing.

"He's here," the cop went on, "here in this house. Hiding' somewheres, he is!"

"But," came tremulously from the janitor—evidently without appetite for the search he saw in prospect—"but how d'ye know he didn't come in through the dumb-waiter door in this kitchen, an' go out through the front door at the other end?"

"Maybe he did," retorted the officer, "but I doubt it. Anyway—where could he go to? The man that was with me in the cellar is on guard down-stairs at the front. An' I'd 'a' heard before this if he'd caught the feller we want."

"But—maybe he went up-stairs, not down?" suggested the timid janitor. "You know, he could have gone up an' maybe got away over the roofs!"

"It ain't likely," replied the policeman. "But—just in case he *was* spry enough to get out of this house so quick, an' *did* go that way, suppose you go up to the roof and look. See if he's on the stairs leadin' up. An' if he ain't, wait there at the roof door. That'll guard the buildin', top an' bottom, while I search through this flat!"

I heard the janitor leave, and now the copper would begin his hunt in the kitchen.

And I knew that I would be caught. There could be nothing else in store for me.

I nearly gave myself away, and saved him the trouble of looking for me, just then. The steam was rising thickly from the water flowing around me in the tub. And I got a choking mouthful of the vapor.

An instant I hovered between a cough, a sneeze, and noisy strangulation. And then the danger passed, as I buried my face in my coat-sleeve.

"Now, ladies," said the policeman to the servant-girl and her mistress, "I'm goin' to rout this feller out of this flat. He's here, I'm sure of it. I'll begin by searchin' the kitchen."

"But there's no place for him to hide here!" tremulously quavered the old lady of the house.

There was silence while, I imagined, the policeman's eyes roamed the room. He couldn't miss seeing the laundry-tub.

And out of it the steam from the running hot water was now pouring! I heard the creak of his heavy shoes coming toward me.

"There's this laundry-tub!" he said. And his hand fell on the board over my head.

"Oh, no; he can't be in there!" exclaimed the lady. "See—steam is coming out. Maggie here has put some clothes to soak in hot water. I told her to do it an hour ago. And the man would be boiled if he went into that tub."

The steam escaping in plain view from my hiding-place had saved, not betrayed, me!

The servant-girl's mouth was shut against telling her mistress that no soaking clothes—save those I wore!—were in the tub. Her negligence in not carrying out orders tied her tongue.

The cop's hand left the board above me.

"Then there's no other place in this kitchen for him to hide, for a fact!" he said. "We'll go into the nearest room—what is it, the dining-room?"

"Yes. And there are plenty of places where one could hide in there, too!"

Both women left the kitchen with the officer.

And scarcely had their footfalls sounded on the carpet of the hall before I scrambled noisily out of that tub. In high time, too—I couldn't have borne the scalding water another minute.

Stealthily, I crossed the floor and trained one eye around the doorway up and down the hall.

No one was there. The woman had said that there were many possible hiding-places in the dining-room, in which I now heard the trio hunting for me. Perhaps their search would be confined to that room for a while.

On tiptoe, I stole out into the hall, and crept silently along to the front door. Noiselessly I drew the latch, and stepped outside.

I was free—no, not yet! I was out of that flat, but a prisoner in the building.

The entrance down-stairs was guarded by Dr. Drew's accomplice. And the roof door was held by the janitor.

Whichever way I went, I would run into a trap. Out there on the stairs, I was as much a captive as though already in the grip of the copper I had eluded.

And just then I heard somebody coming up.

Who was it? Maybe somebody sent to search the stairway by that villain down below, who had suspected, not hearing from the policeman, that I had got out of the flat.

Or, finding another policeman on the street and putting him on guard at the front-door, perhaps my enemy was coming to look for me himself.

The suspicion set me trembling.

Steadily, the steps mounted toward me. What should I do—which way could I go?

By now I had backed up a whole flight of stairs. I was on the fourth-floor landing.

In not more than another minute I would be confronted by whoever was approaching. Peering over the banister, I saw the top of his light-gray felt hat only two floors below me. Cornered, I cast one wild look around.

There were the twin door-bells of the two fourth-floor apartments. If I rang one, and could be admitted on some pretext, I would be out of the way of whoever was coming up the stairs.

It was my only chance. If I ran away before the man mounting from below, I would fall into the clutches of the janitor.

And I couldn't go down, meeting an antagonist whose strength I had not estimated, at that moment when I had so little craving for a bodily encounter.

Between two fires, I reached out blindly for the middle course, and rang another door-bell.

CHAPTER VI.

A SLIPPERY TONGUE.

WITH heart beating time to the measured steps of the man coming up-stairs, I waited in an agony of suspense for the door before me to open.

Would it open—could I think of some plausible excuse to gain me admittance—before I was discovered standing there on the landing?

Torn by hope and fear, trembling with impatience for the answer to my ring, I waited.

From beyond the door, I heard the rustle of skirts as somebody came along the inside hall. On the other side of the portal, the sounds ceased.

And then the door flew open in my face.

"I'm the gas-man, come to see about your bill!"

I blurted out the words, the first that popped into my head.

The woman in the doorway peered out at me in the shadow of the hall.

"Oh—come in!" she said—and no music ever sounded sweeter!

She stepped invitingly away from the door. And I fairly bounded inside, shutting myself in the flat with an instantaneous sweep of my hand that gripped the door-knob.

At the whirlwind manner of my entrance, her eyes on me widened.

"Well!"

Her gasp held surprise, a fleeting trace of alarm, and injured dignity.

"What—what does this mean?" And she drew herself up.

"Pardon me, madam!"—my brain worked nimbly—"there's a draft out there in the hall. I'm susceptible to colds. I wanted to get out of the air your open door was blowing through the corridor."

Her lips tightened as her eyes held me. Wet, from my waist down, through my recent submerging in the hot water, I cut no prepossessing figure.

"Go into the parlor, please!" she directed, pressing back against the wall to let me precede her.

Willing, indeed, to go first, I walked into the room she had indicated.

"I'm glad you've come at last!" were her first words as she followed me into the parlor. "I've written to your company twice in three weeks to send a man up here to see me!"

I could only incline my head to this.

"This bill that I have refused to pay," she went on, "is an outrageous overcharge. Ten dollars for one month—why, we *never* had a bill that big as long as we've being taking gas from your place!"

I couldn't think of anything to say. But, fortunately, I was saved the necessity of speech.

"I have the bill," she continued, "in the next room. Wait a minute, and I'll get it."

Turning, she walked out, leaving me in a nice fix!

What was I going to do when she came back with a gas-bill that I was supposed to know all about, but which, in reality, would be as mystifying as any puzzle that ever came out of China to me?

Wait—this wasn't so bad, though. I had an idea.

When the woman brought me back the bill she had said was an overcharge, what would be more natural for me to do, in my rôle of collector, than to take it and tell her I was going down in the cellar to verify it with the meter?

That would get me out of the flat. And, by this time, whoever it was that I had

dodged, would have passed this floor on his tour of the stairs after me.

I would have a clear road below. True, somebody was waiting at the front-door to head me off. But I did not mean to try to leave the building by that entrance.

No, I would go down in the cellar. From there I could cross to the basement of the next apartment-house, and the next—in short, come out up the block far enough from this dwelling to make my escape certain.

How lucky it was that I had forgotten about the census, and told this woman, on the spur of the moment, that I was the gas-man!

Fate had so ordained it that she was actually looking for a call from one of that stripe. And, blindly, I had taken advantage of the chance that now looked to be the very means by which I should get out of my scrape.

My reflections came to an abrupt end. A key had rattled in the lock of the front door toward which I was faced. And into the flat stepped—

A man wearing a light-gray soft hat. The man who had been coming up-stairs! He had followed me, tracked me, here!

But that could not be. He had just opened the door with a latch-key. I had needlessly feared him; he must be the head of this house, the husband of the woman who had let me in.

He had looked directly in the parlor on the instant that the door opened. Seeing me, a strange man, there—catching the quick, backward start I gave at sight of him—it was natural that he should step forward immediately the door closed, his eyes suspiciously upon me.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

In my haste to assure him that my presence meant nothing untoward—

"Oh, I'm the census-taker!" I announced glibly.

He nodded, relieved, and began to unbutton his coat.

"I see," he said. "Around for facts and figures again, are you?"

I opened my mouth—and kept it wordlessly agape. The woman had come back into the room.

"Oh, you're home, dear!" she cried to her husband. And added: "Henry, this is the gas-man!"

"The gas-man!" gasped the fellow. "Why—no, he's not! He's the census-taker!"

"The—what?" she shrieked. "Why, he told *me* he was the gas-man!"

"And he told me he was the census-taker!"

They faced me together. An instant I met their combined stares—ready, nay, *eager*, to sink through the floor—had it only been made of the same green cheese as were my joints.

Then the man took a menacing step toward me.

"I see this fellow's game," he told his wife. "He's a flat-robber—one of the sneak-thieves who've been pilfering the residences in this neighborhood during the past month.

"He looked suspicious to me when I saw him in this parlor first. As I came in the door, he started back—probably I surprised him just in the act of stealing something of value."

"And he acted suspiciously to me, too, Henry," cried the woman. "When I opened the door for him, he bounded inside and shut it behind him as quick as a flash. It frightened me for the minute."

"Yes, that's the kind of a fellow he is!" her husband exclaimed. "He's of the tribe of meanest crooks living. A woman-frightener—too cowardly to steal while there might be a man around, but quick enough to attempt to scare a weak, defenseless woman into giving up her treasures at the point of a gun!

"Well, you dirty bully, I've caught you this time. You thought you'd have an easy time of it, alone in here with this frail woman, didn't you? Well, you've got me to deal with now.

"Thank Heaven, Emma, I came home half an hour earlier. I'm going to make an example of this cur. I wish I could lay my hands on a policeman this minute—"

He stopped at an interruption. Not from me. I was beyond speech, struck dumb, by the awfulness of my predicament.

But the door-bell had just rung.

Startled, the man and woman faced each other. A second they stared into each other's eyes.

And again the bell pealed.

The woman turned at a nod from her husband, and went swiftly from the room to the front door.

I heard it open. And then—

The voice of the policeman I had escaped on the floor below boomed out in no uncertain tones:

"Excuse me, lady, but did a feller wear-

ing a brown suit and a black tie, with a smooth face"—it was my description that he gave—"ring your door-bell?"

CHAPTER VII.

PLAIN AND FANCY LYING.

Now I was run down at last, cornered beyond all possibility of escape.

There was the officer of the law at the door of the flat in which I had eluded him. And here I was, held prisoner in the parlor, not a dozen feet away.

In another minute I would be in the grip of the policeman, where the maniac, Dr. Drew, and his equally guilty friend wanted me. Charged with their inhuman crime, I would be on my way to the seat they rightly deserved in the electric-chair.

I shuddered at the thought. But the tremor of revulsion was an impotent one. I was helpless.

It was all over. There stood the copper at the door. And here was I, a prisoner on yet *another* charge of a crime of which I was innocent—that of being a flat-robber.

I was in a trap, from which it was useless to think of squirming.

"I'm after a man"—the voice of the officer came distinctly to my ears—"who got out of the flat below, after he fooled me by gettin' in it.

"I've just finished searchin' that apartment from end to end. He wasn't there. And he couldn't have gone up to the roof or down-stairs. So I figured he'd sidestepped by ringin' the door-bell of some other apartment, an' told some yarn to get in.

"Have ye seen such a man, ma'am?" Brown suit, black tie, smooth face?"

The woman stepped back from the door.

"Yes," she said, "he's here now. Right in through to the parlor, sir."

My time had come—

"Officer! Officer!"

The muffled shout floated up from the entrance-hall of the building.

"Come down—we've got the man! *Come down and take your prisoner!*"

I clutched at my collar to free my throat of its sudden choking.

"What's that ye're sayin'?" bawled the policeman.

"We've caught him! Your man's downstairs! Come quick and get him!"

"Are ye sure? There's no mistake?"

"He's caught, I tell you! Come down on the run and arrest him!"

I heard the clatter of the bluecoat's feet descending the stairs, three at a jump.

"The man ye say is in yer parlor, lady, ain't the one I want," he was calling back to the woman as he ran. "They've caught the feller I'm after below. I guess whoever it was rang your door-bell is all right—just luck that he fits the description I give ye, that's all."

The woman shut the door and came back into the room.

"Well—"

Her eyes swept from her husband to me.

He whipped around on me.

"You wait," he snapped. "I'll get you yet."

My mouth opening and shutting as a fish out of water, I watched him go to the chair on which he had thrown his hat and coat.

"Emma," he grunted, as he struggled into the garment, "you stay here till I get back. It's too bad that cop, who showed up just in the nick of time, was busy. But *I'm going to take this thief to the station-house right now, myself.*"

The paralysis of surprise that had stricken me at the unexpected manner of my escape suddenly vanished as a new danger threatened.

"Stop!" I cried.

The man jumped half the length of the room toward me, his fist under my nose.

"Hold your tongue!" he rasped. "One word out of you, and I'll bat your head—"

"Listen to me," I pleaded frenziedly. "You've *got* to shut up and listen to me."

He glared, but was silent.

"Don't you try to take me to jail!" I hurried on. "You'll make the mistake of your life if you attempt that. I'm not a sneak-thief, a flat-robber, a low intimidator of women, as you accuse me. I *am* a census-taker—"

I whipped my hand into my pocket and brought out the papers and book with which the bureau had so recently supplied me.

"And I can prove it," I finished, holding out my bona-fide credentials.

The man drew back.

"Don't try to bluff me," he sneered.

"For the love of Heaven—take these papers into your hands, man, and look at them. That's all I ask—*look* at them!"

He searched my face, then snatched the documents.

A frown knitted his brows. The frown changed places for a surprised lifting of his eyebrows as he read the unmistakably genuine credentials.

"These are all straight," he said slowly. "If you didn't come by them dishonestly—"

"Don't talk like a fool. You know I couldn't get hold of a scrap of this matter unless I came by it regularly."

"That's true," he admitted. "But—"

His brows lowered again.

"If you're the census-taker," he threw at me, "why did you tell my wife you were a gas-man?"

"Because I am," I answered coolly.

"What d'ye mean? One minute you're one thing, and the next another. If you're a gas-man—"

"Let me explain," I cut in. "I work for the gas company, and on the side I'm a census-taker. See? I'm out calling around the city all day long. And it's no trouble to take the census from the people at whose homes I am calling. It means more money to me, that's all.

"I thought it would be no more than fair to the gas company—who don't know about this—to do their business first. So, when your wife asked me who I was, I told her the gas-man.

"Then you came in. I was just going over in my mind the questions I meant to ask her when she came back—had the census job uppermost in my mind, you see—and I told *you* I was a census-taker. Now, is everything all clear?"

I tried to hide the anxiety on my face as I watched theirs.

The woman crossed over to her husband.

"This fellow answers exactly the description that policeman gave of the man he was after, Henry!" she said, looking at me.

"Madam," I pointed out to her, "how much of a description did he give you? How many men do you think there are in this city who have smooth-shaven faces, and wear brown suits and black ties?"

I pointed my finger at the man.

"Your husband's one of them," I ended.

She answered with a sour look at me.

"And, Henry," she went on to her husband, "look at the disreputable appearance of him—his clothes all wet and mussy. Do you think the census people, or the gas company, would send such a looking man around to people's houses?"

"My dear—!" began the other fellow.

"Pardon me!" I interrupted. "I can't help my appearance—and I'll explain to your wife how accidental it is. When I was down in the basement of a building across the street from here, looking at a meter, I got in the line of the janitor's hose with which he was sprinkling down some newly delivered coal in a bin. I was pretty well drenched—while performing the duties which, if I wasn't connected with a gas company, I wouldn't be doing. Would I?"

"Well!" quickly put in her husband. "I guess we owe you an apology. I'm sorry for the hard names I called you!"

"No harm done!" I assured him. "And now—I've got to get busy."

Turning to the woman—

"If you'll let me have that gas-bill in your hand," I said, "I'll take it down in the cellar and verify the disputed figures with the meter!"

I meant to put into effect my former plan to get out of the flat, go through the basements of the houses adjoining, and come up on the street as far down the block as I could.

And this time it looked as though I would be successful at the start-off, anyway. The woman surrendered the bill, and her husband escorted me to the door.

"I'll be up in about five minutes," I lied again, stepping outside.

I began to descend—slowly.

For, below me, I heard the sounds of many voices from a crowd on the stoop.

If I went down-stairs to the cellar, some one at the door of the building would be sure to see me.

I made up my mind to change my plan. I could go over the roofs as well as through the basements. I would go back and have it out with the janitor on guard there.

As soon as the people I had just left went inside their flat and shut the door, I would retrace my steps.

I caught a whisper from above. I shot a quick glance up through the banisters.

And there stood the man—and his still suspicious wife—peering down.

They were watching to see if I really *was* going down to look at a meter. And, under their eyes, toward the almost certain chance of capture by my enemies below, I *had* to go!

CHAPTER VIII.

A DOOR-BELL IGNORED.

LOUDER sounded the roaring of voices from the entrance of the building.

Nearer and nearer I approached the danger of being taken by the policeman, if his eyes, or those of the real perpetrator of the crime from whose consequences I was fleeing, lighted on me.

It was maddening, the position in which I found myself.

I couldn't turn back nor stop, without losing what my laborious lies had gained me—my escape from that man and his wife.

If I loitered, even on the stairs, I would bring the fellow down after me. Then, with him, I would have to go into the cellar and confront a gas-meter whose workings were as mysteriously unknown to me as to a babe unborn.

I was at the top of the first flight by now.

And that policeman had said that he could see, through the glass in the vestibule-door, anybody on those stairs!

It was so—I could see, from where I stood, the heads in the noisy crowd on the front steps. The bobbing top of a light gray helmet, too, was the center of the group.

Harried forward by the eyes above me, my heels weighted by dread of falling into range of those below, I started down.

It was a gantlet that I ran, that stretch of stairs. It's most dangerous spot, the center. For there, before the glance of anybody on the stoop, I would be revealed at full length.

Toward this spot I crept downward. One step—two.

Why creep? It was only for a moment, if I ran, that I would be framed from head to foot in the woodwork setting of the glass in the door. After that, I would slip, step by step, out of that frame.

Bent double, I scooted down, and brought up against the narrow bend in the wall that separated me from the door at the lower hall.

Only then did I realize that I was safe. Nobody had seen me come down that flight of stairs. And here, here in this tight angle next the door-jamb, nobody could see me unless the door was opened.

From the argument which I heard clearly as it went on outside on the stoop I judged, too, that the excitement out there would prevent anybody from entering just then.

I caught the voice of the man who had "sicked" the policeman on my trail:

"I tell you I made a mistake, officer! This is *not* the man you are to arrest!"

"You called me down-stairs to pinch him, didn't you?" retorted the angry copper. "Well, then, pinched he's goin' to be!"

"But he's not the right man. It's all a mistake; get that into your head."

"Mistake nothin'! Didn't I see him when he ducked down in the cellar inside, when ye first told me to arrest him? Don't I know what he looks like, from the one glimpse I had at his face? This feller is about his build. And he's smooth-faced, wearin' a brown suit an' a black tie!"

Indeed I had been right when I told that woman up-stairs that there were men a plenty of that meager description in the city.

One was outside now, in trouble because he bore that slight resemblance to me!

"Listen to me!" shouted Dr. Drew's fellow villain. "I had a better look at the man than you did. Take aside the clothes, necktie and clean-shaven face, and this man here looks no more like the other than—a monkey!"

"I'll smack your jaw for you!" broke in the outraged voice of the victim of mistaken identity. "Callin' me a monkey—let go of me, you big stiff of a bonehead cop! Call me any more names—no, you won't! I've stood enough of this blame business. Leggo of me!"

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" entreated my enemy. "I'm trying to get you out of this; can't you hear me? I'm telling this policeman to let you go—*I* know you're not the man we want!"

"You called me down here to take this feller," sing-songed the officer, "an' that's all there is to it. What did ye tell me ye had the right man fer—if ye know what he looks like so well?"

"That's what I'm *trying* to tell you!" cried my traducer eagerly. "I saw this gentleman come up out of a basement, three doors up the street, while I was standing outside this house on guard. From the rear, and at the distance, he looked to me like the fellow we're after.

"I thought that maybe he had got away from you, and had gone through the cellar of this building up the street and was escaping. So, before he could get away, I shouted for you to come down and catch him.

"Then, when you had run up the street and brought back this man, I saw at once that he wasn't the one we want. I'm certain of it—positive we're holding this fellow wrongfully. In the meantime, the other may be getting away!"

Listening, I only wished I *was* taking to my heels. But I couldn't leave my cramped place of concealment by that door without being seen.

"Hey, what are you standing there for?"

I *was* seen—by the man looking down over the banisters on the fourth floor landing!

"What are you doing there—standing down by that door!" he called again.

I couldn't call anything reassuring up to him loud enough to reach his ears without attracting the attention of the group outside.

"I see you there. Why are you hiding? Answer—what are you doing?"

Wildly I looked around me—

Fool that I was!

Why had I stopped here in this angle by the door? The woodwork of the portal was all of three feet above the floor and below the glass. By going down on my knees, I could crawl back up the hall to the cellar-door without being seen from the front steps!

True, the man above could look down on me. But he was four flights up-stairs—much farther away than the crowd on the stoop.

As I began to crawl away from the door on my hands and knees, I heard what they were saying outside.

"What were you doin' down in the cellar this man saw you come out of?" the policeman was demanding of his prisoner. "You ain't the janitor of that buildin'? Are you a delivery-boy?"

"I'm a gas-man!" said the other. "I came out of that basement from examinin' a meter!"

"Show your badge!" directed the man who was after me.

"There it is. Take a look, Mr. Cop!"

By this time, I had crawled back toward the basement door half the length of the hall.

And above me I heard a scurry of feet on the stairs overhead.

"Wait there, Emma!" the man from the fourth floor shouted. "I don't know—*but I'll soon find out what he's doing!*"

The man was coming down-stairs after me, hotfoot!

"All right!"—now it was the voice of the policeman outside I heard. "Ye can go; sorry we stopped ye!"

I heard the scrape of his feet on the stone steps of the stoop.

"The right man," he went on, evidently to my persistent Nemesis, "is up-stairs in the parlor of the fourth floor flat. The lady there told me so—I'd have had him by this time, if ye hadn't called me away fer nothin'. But I'll git him now. *I'm goin' back into this house after him!*"

It was now or never with me. If I didn't get to that cellar-door before the man from above came down-stairs, and before the cop opened the door, I'd be a gone goose!

I rose to my feet, ready for a dash to the basement-door, now but a score of feet away.

I took one lumbering jump toward it—

And stopped, frozen, in my tracks. The voice of the janitor floated to me up the stairs for which I was headed.

"I care nothin' fer what that policeman told me!" he was calling back to somebody—most likely his wife.

"I care nothin' fer what I was told!" he shouted. "An' I'll not stay up there an' guard the roof. My business as sup'rintendent o' this buildin' comes before chasin' crim'nals. An' I'm goin' to light the lights in the hall and on the stairs, come what will!"

I was in a three-cornered trap, this time!

Here was the janitor coming up the stairs that I meant to use in escaping the cop coming in at the door—while from above clattered down the man from the fourth floor!

There was only one means of escape open to me. That was the door of the ground floor flat, right at my side.

Thank Heaven, I didn't need to ring the door-bell and wait till too late for admittance.

When the man now dogging me had sprung out of the apartment after me, he had left the door on the jar. There it stood, open to my touch.

Only a second did I hesitate at reentering the house that sheltered the horible evidences of the crime of which I was accused.

The street-door opened behind me at the same instant that the cellar-way emitted the janitor—on the echo, too, of the thudding of the man from the fourth floor's feet on the tiled hall at the foot of the stairs.

I whipped inside the flat beside me—out of sight!

CHAPTER IX.

CAUGHT.

NOISELESSLY I closed the door behind me and collapsed weakly against it as I heard the sounds that followed my vanishing from the hall outside.

"Look out where ye're going!" jerked the voice of the cop.

"Use your eyes yourself!" retorted the tenant of the fourth floor.

The policeman, coming in at the front door, had bumped the other as he hit the bottom of the stairs, I took it.

"Get out of my way!" continued the man who had seen me crawl along the hall. "I'm after a crook!"

The copper gave a short laugh.

"Humph—hah!" he grunted with grim humor. "So'm I, me friend!"

"A man I'm now sure is a sneak-thief got out of my flat on the fourth floor by a neat set of lies, said he was a gas-man going down cellar to investigate the meter, and only came down as far as this vestibule-door. He hid there beside that door-jamb—I watched him over the banisters. And when I called down to ask him what he was doing, he went down on his hands and knees, crawling back up the hall. What he did it for, I don't—"

"Ye're the head of the house on the fourth floor?" cut in the officer eagerly.

"Yes—"

"What side?"

"The flat on the east."

"Enough! That's the man I want—I take it it was your wife that told me she had a feller answerin' to the description of a guy with a brown suit, black tie—"

"You're the policeman who came to our door not five minutes ago? Yes, that's the fellow who got away from us, came down here—"

"Say no more!" the bluecoat broke in crisply. "Stand aside—he's behind ye now, if ye say ye saw him crawlin' down this hall—"

He ended with a gasp. I knew why.

Looking ahead, past the man who had evidently stepped out of the way, he saw that the hall was empty!

"But—but he ain't here."

"Then he's gone down cellar, as he told you he meant to do, bent double out of sight of us on the stoop—and he's trying to escape through the basement to the next building!"

It was the sharp voice of my enemy, the friend of the criminal, that had chipped into the conversation now.

"No, he *ain't* gone down in the cellar!" contradicted the policeman. "Look!"

"What's the trouble now?" asked the janitor—his presence in the doorway to the cellar bearing out the copper's flat assertion that I had not gone that way.

"He couldn't have gone down in the cellar," the officer continued. "Nor out at this front door. And not up the stairs. By Heaven, it's a clean case of vanishing into air!"

"Don't be a fool!" snarled Dr. Drew's accomplice.

I heard his footsteps drawing nearer to me. And then his fist struck the panel of the door behind which I stood.

"*This* is where the rascal went!" he cried.

He wheeled and tried the knob, throwing his weight against the portal.

But I was ready for him.

While he talked I had put out both hands against the door. My heels were propped against the wall of the corridor behind me—I could have held the door shut against an army outside in the wider front-hall, where no brace was offered to their feet!

Again and again he threw himself against the panels, twisting the knob futilely.

The policeman laughed at length.

"Come on away!" he scoffed. "You can't open the door—and neither could he, without the key!"

"But there is no key!" the persistent demon raved. "There isn't any key! It's—it's lost!"

"There's a spring-lock on all these doors, though. You can't get past that—neither could he!"

I knew that the spring-lock was out of commission, and so did my enemy who had entered the flat and found me there a half-hour ago through that mischance.

But the policeman did not know it. And he could not be made to believe. The fact that I held the door shut as tightly as though locked outweighed with him all the arguments of the other.

"I've got eyes in me head, and a bit of a brain there, too," said the cop. "The man didn't go into that flat through an inch-thick door."

"Where did he go, then?"

"Up-stairs, of course!"

"Up—why, you blockhead, he couldn't! This gentleman was coming down the stairs after he saw the fellow hiding down here in the hall and crawling—"

"Shadows!" grunted the cop.

"What the deuce—"

"I mean what I say. This man didn't see the feller down here at all. What he thought was him was the shadow thrown by some one of us out there on the stoop. When we started to come in here that shadow of our rising heads threw itself along the hall—lookin' like a man on his knees."

"Are you crazy?" Thus the man who had come down the stairs.

"I am not!" stoutly denied the officer. "It'd be easy enough for one on the fourth floor to look way down here and mistake a shadow for a man who was thought to come down—"

"Thought to come down! Why, I *saw* him come down with my own two eyes, every step of the way!"

"You thought ye saw him. He prob'ly stopped—"

Their voices were diminishing as they walked slowly away from my hiding-place.

Then to my joy I heard the heavy, obstinate tread of the policeman's feet beginning to mount the stairs, followed by the others, still arguing.

Sure that they were at least a floor above me by now, I stood away from the door. Could I escape while they were temporarily out of my road?

I didn't intend to risk running into another trap. Swiftly I walked into the parlor. Carefully I parted the lace curtains at the front windows and looked out into the street.

A crowd was gathered before the door. I could not go out now.

I whirled away from the window at a stealthy sound behind me.

There stood my enemy, Dr. Drew's accomplice!

Just standing there, watching me in silence from the doorway. And slowly on his face a smile was widening into a vicious, evil-boding grin.

CHAPTER X.

KNOCKED OUT.

"*You!*"

My dry lips formed the word.

The spruce young man took a short step toward me.

"And—you!" he said, with a sarcastic tilt to his wicked smile.

For a dragging second or two we stared back at each other.

"You see," he said slowly, "I knew that the lock on the door of this flat was a human one. *They* don't stand forever—when they think their need is over. So—I came away from the searching-party, led by that idiot policeman, up-stairs. And — er, fortunately, had no more trouble in walking in here than you did."

At the jeer in his voice the hot blood surged over my face.

"Very clever of you, I must say"—suddenly I crouched—"to walk into my hands, from which you won't get out without the beating of your life, you *murderer!*"

He laughed with rare scorn.

"Still clinging to the phraseology of your double-dashed society, I see!" he scoffed.

And then he threw himself on guard. I was advancing steadily, slowly, on him.

Jaw set, eyes agleam, I meant to crush him from my path as certainly and forever as I would annihilate a reptile.

My blood surged in my veins as I measured him. He made no match for me—I outweighed him half a hundred pounds. Outmuscled him, too, I judged.

It would be the odious business of only a minute or two to accomplish his overthrow, no more.

I was within ten feet of him now. Slowly my tense-fingered hands came up from my sides. I stopped, poising for a leap across the distance separating us.

And then, my eyes on his face, I saw a change come over his satirically smiling countenance.

The grin was swept from his lips; his jaw dropped loosely. The eyes were distending, before my gaze, from his blue-white face—with horror.

Not of his impending fate at my hands. He was not looking at me. But beyond—behind my back—the sight of something had struck such sudden terror to his heart as I never shall see depicted on a human physiognomy again, I pray.

Startled, I wheeled around.

Instantly, a low chuckle slipped from the lips of the man my eyes had left. I turned my head and caught an instant's glance of him, standing with a clock which he had swept up in his hands from the table by his side.

What imbecile business was he up to with the timepiece at such a moment?

And then, like a flash, he had lifted the clock to the level of his shoulder, and flung the heavy, ornamental thing straight at me.

Tricked by his ruse into looking away from him, I had been off guard.

I had no time to think of dodging the deadly missile.

And it caught me fairly in the center of my chest!

I reeled backward and fell with a thud.

In a shower of falling stars, I felt my senses leaving me.

Then I received the shock of my antagonist's body full on my own as he leaped upon me. His hands were pinioning my arms to my sides, his hot breath panting in my face as he knelt on my stomach.

Out of my eyes, that were closing, I saw him dart one hand into the inner pocket of his coat, from which he brought out a small leather case.

From it a vial leaped into his hand, and out of the tiny bottle he poured a few drops into a shining instrument.

A hypodermic syringe—the friend of Dr. Drew was a doctor, too!

The fantastic phrase pleased my waning consciousness. It sang through my dizzy head:

The friend of Dr. Drew—he was a doctor, too! The friend—

Nearer drew the needle-point of the instrument. I felt its almost painless puncture at my throat.

"There!" I heard, as from afar. "That will keep you here to be found on the scene of my guilt, and my friend's!"

The voice ceased.

And then I went to sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME REVELATIONS.

I OPENED my eyes and sat up.

It was still gray dusk in the flat—surely I could not have been senseless for many minutes.

The exciting events through which I had just passed coming back to me, I remembered the manner of my overthrow by the trig young man.

And, since he had put me down and out with a dose of morphin, or some other equally powerful opiate, how was it that I had returned to consciousness so soon?

I put up my fingers to my throat, to reassure myself that I *had* felt the needle of his syringe there—

And drew my hand, wet, away from the collar of my coat.

I understood, now. The hypodermic had missed its aim; its contents had been spilled on the cloth of my jacket—not into my veins.

It was the crack on my head that had deprived me of my senses. Nothing else.

Now, save for a splitting headache, I was as well as ever. And, that being the case, it was high time I picked myself up off the floor and got out of the place.

My enemy had told me I was sure to be caught. He had probably gone at once to bring the policeman.

At any minute they might return.

I scrambled erect, walking somewhat waveringly to the front windows. Parting the curtains, as I had done before, I looked out.

The street was deserted. Now for escape!

And, for the second time in as many minutes, I wheeled at a disturbance at my rear.

There stood—*Dr. Drew!*

A cry slipped my lips at his sight—a cry of abject terror.

There was no escaping him nor his accomplice! I was in their power. The fiends—they were too strong for me! Too strong!

"Thank God, you are alive!"

The tousle-haired maniac in the doorway broke the silence.

He advanced into the room—

"No! no!" I fairly shrieked, backing, trembling as with the ague, against the window-frame. "Don't come near me! Keep away!"

He stopped, looking at me.

"I will not harm you, sir!" he said gently, soothingly.

It was a trick! He was fencing for time to get near enough to me to put his hands, blood-stained—

"Keep off!" I screamed, gone mad with fear. "Don't touch—touch me! Don't come near—!"

"My poor fellow!" he cried. "My poor, poor victim of an hour's madness that possessed me, but now has fled! Believe me—as Heaven hears me, I mean you no harm!"

I searched his face in a very agony of hope and doubt.

"You—you aren't mad any longer?" I quavered weakly.

"Look into my eyes!" he invited, stepping nearer. Though I drew back, I could see into their depths—detect the placid clarity of sane reason there. "I am no more mad than you—now."

The last word spoke a volume of sorrow.

"Would that I had never been!" he went on bitterly. "In my madness, I assaulted you—put you in your present condition!"

"No, you didn't!" I interrupted, with a feeble laugh. "It was a friend of yours that knocked me out last!"

"But—I don't understand! *I* grappled with you, overthrew you, left you here to be found—"

"Not by the police, as you expected!" I broke in. "It was your friend—a young, spruce-looking doctor—who found me!"

His brow knit. Then—

"Porter!" he exclaimed. "My pupil, to whom I taught all I know—it is his description. But—you say *he* has just struck you down? Why should he do that?"

"To save you from the consequences of what you had done when I came to your door," I answered.

Slowly he nodded.

"That might be!" he said reflectively. "Porter would do anything for me, in return for what I have taught him—"

"Of murder?" I cried.

"That is what you and your people call it—yes!"—sadly.

"Well," I retorted, "he was well taught. He finished the job you had started—in cold blood, too!"

Puzzled, the man before me searched my face.

"He finished my work—?" he hesitated. "Tell me what has happened since I left this house!"

I did so—informing him of all that had befallen me at the hands of his "pupil."

"Porter is overzealous," he commented when I came to an end. "But you need not fear that he will carry out the purpose he learned from you I meant to accomplish. You will not suffer for what I have done. I have come back to give myself up to punishment.

"For what you have suffered at my hands, I can only apologize. But Porter's part I can excuse. In the desire to help me, his 'master,' as he calls me, he was mad. It is common to find, due to the strain under which we work, madness among us vivisectionists—"

I gasped.

"What did you call your friend and yourself?" I cried.

He looked at me in surprise.

"We are vivisectionists!" he replied quietly.

"Then—the blood on you when you opened the door of this flat to my ring—?"

"Was a dog's. I had just finished an operation, and thought I had killed the animal, until now, when you tell me Porter completed—"

"Was the dog the property of a woman on the third floor of this building?"

"I had stolen her pet, yes. It is a Pomeranian, that I tried in vain to buy. Then, actuated by the madness of my scientific experiments, I stole it this morning—"

"I wasn't listening to his explanations any longer.

That woman's "Mignon," which she had addressed as "darling baby," was not a child—but a pet dog!

And—this Dr. Drew and his friend Porter were not murderers, then. They were scientific surgeons—vivisectionists!

I had been fleeing from that cop to avoid arrest as the thief of a dog, a fuzzy-haired, spindle-legged mutt!

I opened my mouth to laugh myself to death. And stopped before I started.

For, with a bark, a dog bounded into the parlor.

It was the pet of the woman on the third floor. Alive and sound.

Her "darling baby"—Mignon!

CHAPTER XII.

MY ULTIMATUM.

"THERE—there is the dog I stole!" cried the doctor.

He caught the beast and held it up to me in his arms.

"But I thought you killed it?" I exclaimed.

"I killed another—a street dog that I was operating on when you called," he said. "This one I was saving to operate on tomorrow!"

I reached out my hands for it.

"I'll take it back to her," I said.

He surrendered the yelping animal.

"Yes," he replied, "it is right that you should return it. As an officer of the society—"

I faced him squarely.

"What in the name of Sam Hill *is* this blame society I've heard so much about?" I demanded.

"Why—are you joking?" exclaimed the doctor.

"I'm eaten up with curiosity, that's what I am, to find out what this 'society' you've got on the brain is!"

"As a member of it, you ought to know," said he. "The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!"

Then I had my belated laugh.

"Is that what you thought I was," I spluttered at last, "when I first came to this door?"

"Yes," he answered. "And you're not?"

"Not much!"

"Then, what are—"

"I'm the census-taker!" I answered.

With a grin at his amazed face, I stepped by him toward the door leading to the hall.

"You won't try to run away," I asked, "while I'm up-stairs delivering this dog to its heart-broken 'mother'?"

He shook his head.

Then the front door of the flat opened and the policeman, preceded by Porter, entered.

It took a full five minutes to straighten things out with the four of us. And then I went up-stairs.

The husband of the bereaved woman on the third floor opened the door to me.

"Oh—you've got that ratty hound, have you?" he grunted at sight of my load.

His tone was not happy.

"Here's Mignon!" I said, looking him in the eye with an appreciative twinkle in my own.

He smiled back at me.

"Well—my wife'll be glad to see it again, anyway!" he said. "Come in—into the parlor."

I preceded him into the flat.

And in the arms of the woman lying on a couch amid pillows, smelling-salts, and half a dozen other first aids to the nervously prostrated, I laid the whining pup.

Then I backed hastily away.

"Reward the man who brought back my darling!" cried the woman on the couch. "Reward him properly, Richard!"

I stepped nearer to "Richard."

"You can reward me, if you like," I said eagerly, "*properly*."

He looked down and discovered that I hadn't my hand out.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Don't you recognize me," I said, "Mr. Duncan?"

It was the man who had so strongly promised, and who had failed to give me employment.

"Why, sure I do!" he cried. "You're the young fellow who wanted a place in my office, aren't you? What have you been doing lately?"

I told him.

"If that position in your business is still open, sir—" I ended.

His wife called hysterically from the lounge:

"Give him anything he asks for, Dick!"

The man reflected for a moment and slowly smiled.

"I guess, then, you'll have to consider yourself hired!" he said. "But—what about this census-job?"

I closed my jaws.

"They'll have to get somebody else in my place," I announced determinedly—"somebody with a stronger set of nerves than mine, if they want a sticker on the job! The thing's too strenuous for me. I've rung my last door-bell!"

THE END.

Glenside's Leading Citizen.

BY FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

The Country Storekeeper's High Hopes, Frightful Disappointment, and Astounding Surprise.

"THE winters we hev now ain't of no account any more," Sparks declared. "I remember 'way back in sixty-eight—no, it was sixty-nine—"

"Now, hold on, Jim," Cooper interrupted. "Get your years right 'fore ye begin."

"Wot ye mean?" Sparks demanded hotly.

"I mean, Jim, thet I didn't come to this here town till seventy-two, an' I know you come after me."

"Guess that's 'bout right," Turner put in.

"You both seem to think you know everything," Sparks grunted.

"Wal, I don't know as the exact year counts, anyway," Turner remarked, with a sly wink at the storekeeper. "Jim'll stretch it jest as much whether it was in forty-nine or ninety-nine. Go ahead, Jim."

But the other had lost all desire to tell his story, and he tilted back in his chair, a look of extreme contempt on his much-wrinkled and weather-beaten countenance.

The other two watched him from the corners of eyes that twinkled merrily, and for some minutes the silence that fell upon the three gathered about the stove was only broken by the whistling of the wind as it roared around the store-building.

"I remember when you come to town, Silas," Turner said thoughtfully. "An' it was some years ago. I remember when old man Cooper brought ye here, only a slip of a city boy, an' how ye licked all the kids of yer own age."

Cooper's eyes took on a far-away look.

"I often wonder," he said, "where I'd be to-day if the old man hadn't taken me from that orphan asylum, an' brought me up as his own son."

Neither of the two men ventured a reply, and, after a moment of reflective silence, Cooper added, "My mother and father both died when I was about seven, and left me an'—"

Suddenly the sharp tinkle of sleigh-bells sounded. The three men were on their feet instantly, and stepping to the frost-covered window in the front door, they crowded about it to learn who was the person passing.

But they quickly saw that whoever it was intended to stop. The sleigh drew up before the store, and as a young man sprang out, Cooper observed: "Another salesman, I s'pose," whereupon the three went back to the chairs they had deserted.

The new arrival did not come in immediately—he was giving some directions to his driver—and the men had already resumed their seats when the door was suddenly flung open, and the stranger advanced toward the group.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said affably, as he rubbed his hands in the warmth the stove radiated. "A pretty cold day, isn't it?"

"Wal, I've seen a hull lot colder ones," Sparks rejoined. "I remember—"

But he caught himself, and with a sheepish glance toward the other two countrymen, he suddenly directed all his attention to his pipe, upon which he puffed industriously.

The stranger stared hard at Sparks, awaiting the continuance of his reminiscence, but as he saw that person was not disposed to tell it, he looked toward the other two.

"I want to see Mr. Cooper," he said.

"That's me, I guess," the storekeeper drawled.

"Mr. Cooper, my name is Dalton," the other went on. "Here is my card."

He drew one from a convenient pocket, and the old man took it with no display of interest.

"I represent, as you will see, the Prominent Men's Publishing Company of New York," Mr. Dalton proceeded. "Address, 111 West Second Street."

Cooper nodded his head mechanically. As yet he could not see how such a fact was of the slightest interest to him.

"We are about to get out a new book—a very massive, beautiful volume, bound in full morocco—a veritable *edition de luxe*, in which we shall give the picture and life-history of our various prominent and wealthy New York merchants. At least, that was our idea in the beginning. But we have modified that slightly.

"We decided that it would be of more interest to the business world if we did not localize it entirely, so we have set aside three hundred pages for wealthy and successful New York City merchants, the other one hundred pages to be used for the same class of out-of-town-men—men who have built up a name and a business for themselves—men whose word is as good as their bond—men whose advice is sought in personal affairs as well as those of state—men such as you—men who, if I asked any citizen of this town its most prominent business man, he would reply without hesitation, Silas Cooper."

The eloquent flow of language that had crossed Dalton's lips had its effect upon the three before him—they stared at him in open-mouthed wonder, and the stranger, quick to see the result of his words, dropped his tone to one of confidence.

"And now, Mr. Cooper, we want your life-history and your portrait. Our book would not be complete without it. We want it to show conclusively that the merchant in the country, although he has not attained the great wealth of our successful New York Crœsuses, taken proportionately he has passed him in the race for riches. While, from a money standpoint, he may not be his equal, he has that which the millionaire cannot purchase—health, and the joy of living in God's own country."

"Wal, I should suttenly say this ain't Satan's own country jest at this time of the year," Sparks chuckled. "The thermometer was down to zero this mornin'."

Dalton laughed good-naturedly, then continued:

"This book circulates all over the civilized world. Can you imagine the head of a business house in New York looking over the pages of this volume, and seeing your picture sandwiched between Rockefeller and Morgan? The first thought that comes to him is, 'There's a man whose trade I want!' And what is the result? Other houses have seen and said the same thing, and the liveliest competition is begun for your trade, which means that you will be able to buy your goods cheaper than you have ever done. To sum the whole thing up, you will secure the very highest grade of advertising."

"I wish I was a successful merchant," Sparks muttered under his breath, as he beamed upon the storekeeper.

"Wal, it sounds good to me," Cooper remarked.

"Sounds good!" the stranger echoed. "Why, my dear Mr. Cooper, it's the greatest chance of your life."

He glanced quickly toward the rows of canned goods that lined the shelves of the emporium.

"You probably wonder where I learned of

you." He nodded toward the shelves, which displayed the name of a prominent wholesale grocer on the labels of the stock. "Mr. Joseph Seabury, of Joseph Seabury & Co., from whom you buy, sent me here. He has taken a page, and voluntarily he mentioned your name as one of his best customers, and asked me to see you. So I came up specially to get your subscription."

Cooper was growing more and more interested. Every argument this stranger advanced was making him more desirous to avail himself of the great honor he felt was thrust upon him.

"You see, here is our dummy," the other went on, opening a small package he held. "Now, just give me your order, and I'll reserve a page for you."

"Wal, I guess ye might as well," Cooper said, a pleased smile about his mouth—the newcomer had plainly tickled the old man's vanity. Then a puzzled look spread over his face.

"But how do you people git anythin' out of this?" he wanted to know.

"Oh, we naturally have to charge a small sum to those to whom we give space," was the careless reply. "But the sum is merely a trifle, and that includes a copy of the book when published."

"But what do ye call a small sum?" Cooper insisted.

"To be perfectly frank and honest, our prices vary. We size up our man, and charge accordingly. We have gone as high as ten thousand dollars a page."

"Ten thousand dollars!" the storekeeper cried in amazement and dismay, while the other two countrymen looked as if they had suddenly stepped upon a highly charged electric wire.

"Yes, but that man knew he would get that sum back many times from the advertising he would receive, and he paid it without a question. Now in your case I'm going to put the price as low as I possibly can, because we really want you in the book."

"How low?" Cooper asked skeptically.

"I'm going to make it five hundred dollars."

"Five hundred!" the other repeated.

"That's as low as I can possibly make it," Dalton returned. "Two fifty now, the balance when the finished book is delivered to you."

"Oh, I couldn't pay thet much," the old man protested.

"But think, Mr. Cooper! Here is a book that will make you known all over the United States. A book that you can hand down to your children, and that they can point to with pride, after you have left this world, and say: 'That is my father.'

"Why, Mr. Cooper, it's better than a legacy. Any one who has money can leave it after he dies—it's the only thing he can do with it—but who can leave a book like this—a book that your children's children will point to, their chests swelling with the esteem for their forefather, and say: 'This is my grandparent'?"

Old man Sparks, whose eyes had opened wider and wider at Dalton's eloquence, suddenly burst out: "Silas Cooper, if ye don't take it, yer a fool!"

"But Mr. Cooper isn't a fool, and he isn't going to be one," the stranger put in smilingly.

Then he turned to the storekeeper again.

"Suppose I assign you a page now. We have other agents out, and as merchants are simply snapping up this great opportunity, in a few days the pages will all be filled."

"I got a picture thet was taken only a couple of months ago," Cooper remarked.

"Then you must let me use it," Dalton insisted.

A smile chased away the lines of reflection on the old man's face and he looked up at the other.

"I guess ye kin," he announced.

"That's fine!" Dalton exclaimed. "Give me the picture and your check for one half the amount—I'll fill out the contract and receipt—and the matter is settled. And let me tell you, Mr. Cooper, to your dying day you will thank your stars I dropped in here to see you."

Before he had finished speaking he drew from his pocket a blank form, and filling it out, handed it to the old man, who signed it, and then going over to his desk, wrote out his check for two hundred and fifty dollars.

As Dalton held out his hand for it, he said: "Now I'll take the picture with me, if you'll get it, and the history of your life, too."

Cooper nodded and hurried toward the back of the store, where there was an entrance that led to his house adjoining.

"Fine man, Cooper," Sparks commented.

"Oh, you can see that at a glance," Dalton rejoined. "He's just the type of man we want in our book, and when he sees the write-up, it'll add ten years to his life."

"Silas 'll be so plumb full of self importance we won't be 'lowed to sit 'round his stove no more," Turner chuckled.

"Ah, but you're wrong," Dalton insisted. "He's not that kind of a man. I can see he isn't."

"Indeed he ain't," Sparks agreed. "He's—"

But further comment upon the personal qualities of the storekeeper was interrupted by his reappearance, the photograph in his hand.

"Guess that one 'll do," he said, as he handed it to Dalton.

"It surely will!" cried Dalton. "A splendid likeness," he added, glancing from it to the man it represented. He then wrote on the back of the picture the full name and address of the original, and placed it in his pocket.

"Now, just write out briefly your life history, giving all the dates necessary, and I'll take it along with me," Dalton suggested.

The old man did as directed, and at the completion of the task, the agent tucked the data away in a wallet, and rose to go.

"The book will be completed soon," he said. "When it is, I'll bring it to you myself. I'd like to know you better, Mr. Cooper, and we might spend a pleasant afternoon together."

"Shouldn't wonder if we could," the storekeeper chuckled.

"Very well, good-by." Dalton extended his hand to the old man and shook it warmly, after which he did the same with Sparks and Turner.

"Good day, gentlemen. I hope we shall all meet again soon."

With this parting remark, he passed out and beckoning the liveryman, who was walking his horse up and down the street to keep him warm, he stepped into the sleigh, and the jingle of bells told the three inside that the New Yorker was gone.

"Silas, ye allus was a lucky feller!" Sparks remarked after a brief silence. "I allus said so, an' now I knows it."

"It *will* be sorter nice," Cooper ventured.

"Sorter nice?" Turner blustered. "It's more then thet, I can tell ye. It not only brings you afore the people, but think of the thousands thet never heard of Glenside. It's a great thing fer the town, too."

Within twenty-four hours this same opinion was general—the news of Cooper's sudden rise to prominence had spread over the hamlet like wild-fire, and every person in it was talking of the book that was soon to be the pride of everybody who claimed Glenside as his or her place of residence.

In fact, it became the only topic of conversation, and as the days passed, each one bringing nearer the date when the great book would arrive, excitement rose to fever heat.

II.

Some two weeks after Dalton's descent on Glenside, Cooper had some business come up that would take him to New York.

In reality, the matter was one that could easily have been settled by letter, but he argued with himself that such was out of the question. What he really wanted was an excuse for a trip to the metropolis, which would include a call upon the Prominent Men's Publishing Company, in an effort to learn just how soon he could expect the volume that was so eagerly awaited.

Accordingly, the following morning he purchased a ticket to New York, and was soon on his journey to the great city, which, as a rule, he visited twice a year.

He glanced about the car curiously, thinking how different the casual glances the other passengers bestowed upon him would be if they knew what a prominent man he really was. And he also wondered how many of these same people would, a few weeks from now, recognize him from the picture that was to make of him a man looked up to by the business world generally.

With these thoughts uppermost in his mind, the trip was very short, and before he realized it, the heavy train was pulling into the Grand Central Station.

Reaching the street, he asked a policeman how to get to 111 West Second Street, and received explicit directions.

He alighted from the car at the corner of Second Street, and started down it, his eyes following the numbers on the buildings. Then a slight apprehension came over him as he realized that the neighborhood was not a desirable one. Cheap tenements and dirty shops lined the street, and the farther he walked, the poorer the quarter became. Finally he arrived opposite No. 111, and his heart almost failed him.

It was a low, tumble-down, ramshackle structure, and the smell of burning horse's hoofs that struck his nostrils told him it was used as a blacksmith's shop.

Cooper stopped short and drew out the card that Dalton had given him. He read and reread it, searching for some mistake that he felt certain had been made. But there was the number in plain type, and he entered the building.

"Is this 111 West Second Street?" he asked.

A man who was at the forge, working the bellows, faced him.

"That's what it is," he replied.

Cooper advanced toward him, the card in his hand.

"Ever hear of these people?" he inquired in a timorous voice.

The other stretched out a grimy fist, and taking the bit of pasteboard, read aloud: "The Prominent Men's Publishing Company."

Then he looked up at the Glenside storekeeper, whose face showed the apprehension he felt growing upon him.

"No, there ain't never been no such concern here," the blacksmith replied. "Not in the last ten years, anyway. This here neighborhood ain't no place for book people," he added with a laugh.

He thrust the card back toward the old man, and turned to his fire, from which the glow had already died. Cooper took the card mechanically, and with a thickly spoken "Thank ye," turned away.

What step to take next, he could not decide; the only thing he could see before him was to go back and face the people of Glenside, who would not only snicker at the ease with which he had fallen prey to a swindle, but would laugh outright as they recalled the words of the slick young stranger, whose utterances had made such an impression on Jim Sparks that he had been able to repeat them almost word for word—a proceeding which he followed whenever he could buttonhole any one long enough to listen to him.

To say that Cooper was completely stunned at this sudden turn of events puts it mildly. He was prostrated with disappointment and humiliation, and dreaded above all things his return to Glenside. And now, instead of being the great man he had come to think himself, he realized he was exactly the contrary.

Not until he reached Broadway did his eyes light up with a glimmer of hope.

"I'll do it!" he muttered, and signaled a car.

For some distance the car rumbled on. This time he did not need to ask questions regarding the location of the building for which he was bound—he generally made it a practise to call there whenever in New York.

"Is Mr. Joseph Seabury in?" he asked of a clerk when he finally arrived there.

"I'll see," was the reply. "Who shall I say wants him?"

"Silas Cooper, of Glenside, Connecticut."

The boy left, quickly to reappear and lead the way to the private office of the head of the wholesale grocery firm.

"You are Mr. Cooper?" said Mr. Seabury, and at a nod from the storekeeper he extended his hand.

"I've never met you before, Mr. Cooper, but your name is very familiar to me. I've often seen it on our books. Won't you sit down?"

"Mr. Seabury," the storekeeper from Glenside began, holding toward the other the card of the book-publishing company, "did you send these people to me?"

A puzzled look spread over the other's face as he took the card and read aloud, "The Prominent Men's Publishing Company."

Then he glanced up at Cooper.

"Why, no; who are they?"

"Thet's jest what I'd like to find out," the old man sighed. "The young feller what represented them said you sent him to me."

"*I* sent him to you!" Seabury echoed. "Why, I never heard of such a concern. What do they publish?"

Very reluctantly the storekeeper related his story, ending with his finding a blacksmith-shop at the address on the card.

"Mr. Cooper, facts are facts," Seabury said slowly. "They can't be avoided, so I might as well tell you you've been fleeced. I never heard of these people, but I guess I can explain how he came to use my name."

"Can ye?" The other spoke hopefully.

"You carry quite a stock of our canned goods on your shelves, don't you?"

The old man nodded.

"He saw these, and used my name as one with which he knew you'd be familiar. I'm very sorry; but, as far as I can see, you've small chance of getting your money back."

"It ain't the money so much," Cooper declared. "It's the fact that I've been made sech a fool of; an' the worst part of it all is thet everybody in my town knows 'bout the thing, an' they'll know, sooner or later, jest how I been took in. Thet's the part thet hurts."

"I wish there was something I could do for you," Seabury said. "But I can see nothing whatever. Of course, you might go to the police and explain the case, but I think you would be wasting your time."

"I don't want no more publicity," the Glenside man groaned. "I don't want another person to know how I was took in."

He paused to give vent to a deep sigh. "I guess they's only one thing left fer me to do," he added.

"And what's that?"

"Go home to Glenside an' face the music."

"Why, I think you exaggerate your case."

"Ye don't know them people," the old man retorted bitterly. "Ye ain't got no idea how this here thing'll be town gossip, jest as it was when they heard I was to hev my picture in a book."

"Well, you know them better than I," Seabury told him.

"I guess I do!" the old man exclaimed. "That's why I ain't crazy 'bout hurryin' back home."

He rose slowly to his feet.

"But I got to go some time, so I might as well go now."

Seabury shook hands cordially, insisting that Cooper stop and see them whenever he was in the city. But the other only nodded his acceptance of the invitation, and silently passed out of the office and to the street, where he boarded a car that would take him to the railroad station.

Mr. Cooper was not a young man by any means; but had he met any one who knew him, as he passed through the Grand Central Terminal, he would have realized that he seemed to have aged ten years in as many hours. His step was slow and faltering, his head hung dejectedly, and his eyes, when they were raised, shifted nervously from side to side, all quite contrary to his usual self.

At length the time came for the departure of the train, and he settled down in his seat to await the call of Glenside.

The trip seemed a never-ending one; but at last his home town was reached, and he slowly made his way down the car aisle and to the station platform, from which he hurried in the direction of his store. After a brisk walk the lights of it came into view, and with it a dread to face the men he feared might be seated about the stove.

But it suddenly occurred to him that it was about the supper-hour; and, with this fact before him, he entered the store to find it deserted by every one except the clerk, to whom he nodded, and passed on to the door that led to his house.

Here he found his wife awaiting his arrival, and the table set. So he sat down to partake of the first food that had passed his lips since breakfast.

His wife quickly noted there was something on his mind—a fact that was proven by his loss of appetite—but she refrained from questioning, knowing that if the matter was of any importance to her he would soon tell of it.

The old man tried to eat, but it seemed to him as if the food choked him, so he gave up the attempt, and, returning to the store, told the clerk he was not feeling well, and would retire for the night.

Anything for an excuse to put off as long as possible the explanations he would be forced to make. He was sure Sparks and Turner would stop in as soon as their evening meal was finished to learn of any new developments.

Cooper returned to his home, and, going to his room, sat down to think over some solution of the case. But none came.

Suddenly his wife walked in upon him.

"Silas, Jim Sparks jest send word in thet he wants to see you," she said.

"Is he in the store?" Cooper asked.

"Yes."

"Then tell him I ain't—I ain't feelin' well to-night," he directed. "Tell him I'll see him to-morrow."

Mrs. Cooper departed without further words, and once more the old man was alone with his thoughts. But they proved very poor company, and at last he prepared to retire.

The old storekeeper craved the sleep that would, for the time being at least, clear from his mind the facts he had learned that day, but it was far past midnight when slumber came to him.

III.

He hadn't been long in the store the next morning when a stamping on the front steps told Cooper some one was shaking the snow from his feet, and he glanced in that direction. But the frost on the front windows prevented his seeing who was to be his first customer of the day.

Then, the door opened and Sparks entered.

"So you're all right," was his greeting. "Missed ye last night."

"Yes—I—I—wasn't feelin' well," Cooper stammered.

"Turner was here, too," the other informed him. "We was anxious to know if ye found out anythin' 'bout the book."

"Was ye?" the storekeeper faltered.

"'Course we was, jest the same as every one else is in Glenside. Didn't find out nothin', did ye?"

Before Cooper could reply, the door opened and Turner rushed into the store.

"Mornin', Silas," he exclaimed. "Hear you was sick last night."

"But he ain't this mornin', though he does look a bit played out," Sparks put in.

"Are ye all right ag'in?" Turner queried.

"I guess I am," was the slow response.

"Wal, I jest dropped in on my way to work to find out how ye was," Turner informed him. "Don't seem natural to think of *you* sick."

"'Deed it don't," Sparks declared. "An' as long's yer all right ag'in, I'll be movin'. But we'll see ye to-night, won't we?"

"Boys, I got somethin' to tell ye," Cooper began, his lips set in grim determination.

Both men faced him quickly, the hardness in the other's tone causing them to stare questioningly into his face.

"They won't be no book!" Cooper blurted out.

"They won't *what?*" came from the two as from one voice.

"I say they won't be no book," Cooper repeated. "It's all a mistake."

"Jest what are you tryin' to tell us?" Sparks asked impatiently.

"Jest what I say. They was a mistake made, an' I made it."

"But we both saw ye pay the money," Turner interposed.

"Yes, I paid it," the old man agreed bitterly. "Thet's the trouble. I was took in. Thet Dalton was a sharper."

For a moment the two men were too astonished to speak—they only stared blankly at the storekeeper, who awaited the return of their articulating power.

Sparks was the first one to get back his speech, and he burst out, "Then yer picture ain't goin' to be in it?"

Cooper shook his head.

"An' this here town ain't goin' to get the advertisin' we was all expectin'?"

Again the doleful shake of the head.

"Wal, Silas, all I got to say is thet I never thought you'd 'low any one to take two hundred an' fifty dollars away from you, an' give ye nothin' fer it."

"But I thought he was honest," Cooper pleaded. "He spoke so, didn't he?"

"He spoke like ye wanted him to," Turner sniffed. "He puffed ye all up, an' ye was so busy listenin' to him thet ye never stopped to think 'bout the honesty of his words. Ye didn't want to think they was anythin' else but honest, an' all the time he was fillin' ye up to the neck, so ye'd hand over yer check without a murmur. An', 'stead of bein' the smart business man he said you was, you was bein' made a fool of all the time."

"I know it," Cooper groaned.

"But ye didn't then, an' it don't do ye no good to know it now." Turner glanced toward the clock. "Gorry! It's after seven now!" he exclaimed. "I'll see ye to-night."

"So'll I," Sparks added as he followed Turner to the door.

As they passed out, Cooper muttered to himself: "Mebbe they will, an' mebbe they won't."

The rapidity with which news travels in a country town is astonishing—at least it is so to the outsider, but not to Silas Cooper. He knew how it would be, and when people began to arrive at the store a half hour after Sparks and Turner had left, and informed him that they had already learned the truth regarding the promised book, he was expecting them, and in as few words as possible told them how he had been cheated.

But this information drew little sympathy. Rather, from their actions and words, these people seemed to think they were the ones who had been cheated, and this cut deeply into the old man's pride—particularly when he noted their indifferent manner toward him.

"Took in, I hear," was the sneering greeting of a number of morning arrivals, and so to heart did the old man take their words, that he began to be sick in earnest, and after a vain attempt to eat his lunch, he went to his room.

The clerk was kept busy all the afternoon, listening to the unkind remarks directed toward his employer. All the town seemed to have risen against him, and the future looked black and cloudy.

Although Cooper did not hear the comments passed upon him, he knew about them—his knowledge of the people was sufficient, and he groaned beneath the double trouble that had come upon him, until he worried himself sick. After supper he was kept to his room by real illness.

But to those who gathered in the store that night, expecting to hear his story in detail, it seemed as if he was trying to avoid them. They felt they were not being treated as they should be—it was bad enough to know they were robbed of the chance to make Glenside famous, and now the very man they felt was to blame for it refused to join them and explain the details.

So, when at closing time they took their departure, they were not feeling any too kindly toward Cooper, and the same senti-

ment quickly spread through the little hamlet.

The next day Cooper felt more like himself, and resumed his duties in the store. But after supper the dread to meet those he knew would drop in came over him, and he again decided to keep to his room.

He had been seated there for some time, when his wife opened the door to say:

"Silas, they's a man in the store who wants to see ye."

At the sound of her voice, Cooper roused himself from his reverie to ask; "Who is it?"

"I dunno," she replied. "Harry jest come to the door, an' said ye was wanted. He said it was a stranger, an' thet he wanted to see ye private."

A new hope suddenly found a resting-place in Cooper's breast, as he asked himself, could it be any one connected with the publishing company?

"Hev him brought in here," he directed, and as his wife left the room, he paced it nervously, to await the arrival of the stranger who wanted to "see him private."

He had not long to wait. The door was pushed open, and an elderly, dignified gentleman, whose very air bespoke prosperity, stepped within the room and paused as he gazed steadily at the storekeeper.

"Are you Mr. Cooper?" he asked.

"I am," the other replied.

"You don't know me," the stranger said. "But I came up here from New York purposely to see you."

"What about?" the old man questioned eagerly, now certain that this man bore some news regarding the Prominent Men's Publishing Company.

"Last night, while riding on the back platform of a Broadway car in New York City, I caught a pickpocket in the act of stealing my watch. Grabbing him, I held him until a policeman was called, and together the three of us went to the police station."

Cooper's eyes opened wide with wonder. What could be the interest of this story to him?

"When we reached there," the stranger continued. "I preferred the charge, and, upon searching the prisoner, they found some photographs, and also some matter that related to these likenesses. Yours was among them, and when I read the matter, I knew my search was ended."

He paused, and when he spoke again his voice was choked with joy.

"Don't you know me?"

Cooper was too confused to reply.

"Don't you know your own brother?" the stranger asked.

"Is it—Frank?" Cooper cried, and as the other nodded his head, the two men rushed at each other, and seizing hands, shook them with an ecstasy of joy.

Some minutes later they sat down to talk it all over, and starting at the beginning, proceeded to trace the events of years.

They had been left orphans at an early age, the one to be adopted by Mr. Cooper, the other by a family that soon removed to the West. In this way they had lost track of each other entirely, and when the one became a wealthy mine-owner, he started to search for his brother.

But such a lapse of time had taken place that all memory of the name and address of the people who had adopted him was blotted out, and his search proved unsuccessful until the arrest of the pickpocket and the ultimate result of finding the picture and the life history that accompanied it.

"But how did he come to have your picture—this pickpocket?" the newcomer now wanted to know.

"What kind was he?" Cooper queried.

From his brother's description, he easily recognized the man as Dalton, and then followed a brief recital of the events that led up to his securing the photograph.

"But I'm glad I gave it to him," Cooper laughed gleefully. "It brought ye to me—an'—well, I guess that's wu'th two hundred and fifty dollars, an'—but come on out to the store. I want ye to meet Jim Sparks. An' I know Turner 'll be out there, too. I want 'em to know how I wasn't cheated after all. I want 'em to know how thet was the best money I ever spent. Come on."

FAITH.

BETTER trust all and be deceived,
And weep that trust, and that deceiving,
Than doubt one heart that, if believed,
Had blessed one's life with true believing.

Frances Anne Kemble.

The Worst Is Yet To Come.

BY GERALD N. COE,

Author of "The Clown's Mate."

This Summer's Tale of the Comedy Happenings in a Unique Boarding-House Is Streaked with the Possibilities of Tragedy.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE IDEA CAME.

"CAN'T say I think much of your idea," objected Harvey Hartley. "There are probably half a million boarding-houses in America, and maybe two million people living in such places. Wherever there's a prune to be had there's a boarder."

"Oh, I don't mean a hashery, Harvey," his little wife retorted. "I mean a real stylish boarding-house. What else are we going to do with this old rambling place? Twelve rooms, all furnished in haircloth, and only two people besides Aunt Gertie to live in it."

"What the mischief did your uncle leave it to you for?" Harvey queried.

"We ought to be thankful," she remonstrated. "It's lucky he left me anything."

"Might as well have given you Grant's Tomb, for all the good it's going to do anybody," her husband replied sourly. "What's a man going to do with a barn of a place like this—way over on the Palisades, three miles from the ferry, and half a mile from the trolley-car? That's what I'd like to know."

"Make a polite boarding-house out of it, just as I suggested before," was the wife's enthusiastic statement.

"Oh, rats! No boarding-house for mine!" he cried. "I had a friend who tried the thing one time. It got to be a regular bed of anarchy; they showed signs of treating him as though he were the Czar, and the poor devil never dared to go to bed without looking around for a bomb. His sister ran the place for him, and it nearly drove her to the insane asylum.

"Well, what are we going to do for a living, then?"

"Father," he suggested.

"That won't work. He's given you money ever since you lost your job and married me at about the same time. No, sir; we're going to start a boarding-house in this old mansion."

"It's a crazy idea," Hartley said sullenly. "I think that rich uncle of yours left it to you for a joke. The place wouldn't rent for twenty dollars a month, and it's so far away nobody would ever think of buying it, even if it had—"

His remark was cut off by the sudden advent of a stout old lady in an all-over apron. It was Aunt Gertie, who kept house for them and cooked the meals in exchange for her board and lodging.

She entered in a hurried, flustered manner, and held out a newspaper at arm's length.

"I think it's just awful, the cranks there are in this world," she cried, adjusting her spectacles and glaring at the paper. "Now, here's everybody preparing for the summer season and his own bit of a holiday, and this column in the paper is full of people grunting about their vacations. Look at this one."

She thrust the paper into Mrs. Hartley's hands, and Harvey read the following letter with her:

EDITOR:

And now everybody is talking about the holiday season. Every person you know is planning for a week or a month in the country, or in the city. They call it a vacation.

Absurd! Where do people go for rest? To the worst places imaginable: the country boarding-houses and summer-resort places where they feed you on cold-storage eggs and imagination soup.

It is getting so that one hates to think of even having a vacation. It's so much easier to stay at home and work.

For instance, take my own case. I am very fond of cats. It's not because I'm an old maid; it's because cats have souls and are much more pleasant than human beings. Last summer I took my two cats and went away for my three weeks' vacation. I am a private stenographer, and need some sort of rest each year.

Well, would you imagine it, I was turned away from three boarding-houses because I always have my cats eat at the table with me.

They wouldn't allow it; and yet the places were called summer resorts, and I was supposed to be on my vacation.

It's simply an outrage, and more than we should be forced to bear.

Why isn't there some place where people can go and do as they please? Some place where people can do absolutely as they want to? Where they can feel at home? Not a stylish place, but a good house where one can pay for his comfort and get it?

ONE WHO KNOWS.

The Hartleys smiled at the protest. It struck them both as being rather pat. They had had almost similar experiences on vacations at boarding-houses before they were married.

"Here! Read this one!" urged Aunt Gertie, pointing a befloured finger at another short item in the correspondence column:

EDITOR:

My vacation is at hand. I am a hard-working bookkeeper and a dyspeptic. This forces me to avoid change in diet. I live very simply on kumiss and crackers.

I want to go away for my two weeks' vacation; yet no place is open to me. I can't go to a regular boarding-house or summer hotel because the stuff is so indigestible, and the other boarders laugh at me for taking nothing but kumiss and crackers.

I want to be left alone. Isn't there any place in the wide world where a man can pay for his personal comfort and be left absolutely to his own devices?

DYSPEPTIC.

"I've noticed a lot of these complaints lately," said Aunt Gertie, as they finished reading. "It sounds awful foolish. There certainly are a lot of cranks in the world. Maybe that's why boarding-houses don't make more money."

"Good idea!" cried Hartley, jumping up and walking up and down the room with his hands behind him. "By George! There seems to be a demand for a boarding-place where people can do as they want. I think they'd all be willing to pay for it. Bank clerks, worn-out bookkeepers like that dyspeptic, drug clerks, grocery clerks—everybody in this blessed old world needs a real vacation. They ought to have it. You always hear them kicking about regular boarding-houses. Nearly everybody's a crank, a faddist of some sort. They ought to be catered to. Besides, there ought to be money in it."

He snatched up a piece of paper and began scratching, while Aunt Gertie and his wife discussed domestic economy *sotto voce*.

In ten minutes Harvey rushed up to them and cried:

"I've got it I've got it!"

Hartley was no ordinary man when he became possessed of an idea. He was alert and capable. It had only been hard luck which had thrown him on his father for support during the past few weeks.

"Got what?" cried Aunt Gertie in sudden alarm, pushing back her spectacles.

His wife, too, looked worried.

"Got the idea to make money out of this old barn of a place with twelve furnished rooms."

"What is it?" demanded his wife, her eyes glowing.

"Here! Listen to this!" And, taking a pose in the center of the room like his favorite actor, he read from the paper on which he had been scribbling. His manner was intensely dramatic, and the women listened breathlessly.

When he finished, he passed the sheet to his wife, who was quite beside herself with enthusiasm, and all three reread it, marking each detail with great care. It said:

GOING AWAY THIS SUMMER?

WHY NOT HAVE A REAL VACATION FOR ONCE?

We have a quiet little nook, just across from New York City, on the Palisades. Splendid view, spacious grounds, elegantly furnished rooms, etc., etc.

ABSOLUTE FREEDOM.

We cater to people who are not satisfied with the ordinary boarding-houses. We want people with unusual personalities. Every man has his fad. He ought to be allowed to indulge it.

We want people like ourselves, who have positive ideas of pleasure and wish to take their rest according to their own ideas, and not be bothered by the regular run of summer people who laugh at what they think are peculiarities, and make miserable the lives of those who really want to enjoy themselves.

We want overworked bank clerks, tired ministers with ideas of their own; telephone-girls, new-thoughtists, animal-lovers with their pets, playwrights, vegetarians, and other dyspeptics. Food-faddists of all sorts.

WE CATER TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.

Ladies with pets, whether cats or parrots, will be welcomed, and their pets treated with due respect, as privileged members of the family.

IT'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

We cater to everybody who wants a *real* vacation. You won't have to dress for your meals here. We don't want society people. We

want plain people like ourselves, who are particular how they have their eggs poached and like to have their whims respected.

We want people who have worked hard for a year and want a *real rest*.

We'll guarantee that you get it.

Your every whim will be gratified.

Terms within the reach of all.

Write to HARVEY HARTLEY, Outwood-on-Hudson, New Jersey, or telephone 367—J, and we'll talk things over.

"Well, how do you like it?" demanded Hartley when they had finished reading. He stood, rubbing his hands together in nervous eagerness to hear their suggestions.

"I think it's a great idea!" cried Mrs. Hartley.

"But we'll have an awful 'houseful of cranks," objected Aunt Gertie. "I suppose they'll be particular on which side their eggs are fried, and they'll want their water boiled, and everything. If you advertise for cranks, you're sure to get them. The world's full of 'em."

"Yes; I know that," put in Hartley.

"Why, back in our home town," went on Aunt Gertie, "just around the corner was old Pa Rossman, who insisted on makin' puns and crackin' jokes on everything. It would be hard to have a man like him around. Then, there was old Spikins, who thought a man could live on water, tried it, and died. We wouldn't want any dyin' on our hands, you know. And there was old Miss Miggs, who kept a pet ostrich, and used to take it to market with her. We wouldn't hardly have room for no ostriches."

"Of course not, Aunt Gertie," Hartley put in abruptly. "But all you have to say just bears out the fact that the world is full of cranks, and that they'll all be crazy to come to a place where they won't be molested, for a little vacation."

"I guess you're right, Harvey," the aunt admitted reluctantly.

"How do you like the advertisement, Marg?" And Hartley turned to his wife.

"It's all right," she answered slowly, "but won't it cost a good deal to put it in the paper?"

"Not more than five dollars," her husband answered. "I'll bet we only have to put it in once. The newspapers will give us free advertising, because the scheme is unique, and just what the people nowadays want. If a thing is worth doing at all, it's worth doing well."

"It's all right," agreed Aunt Gertie; "but I do hate to think of receivin' tha' ·ful de'uge of cranks and superintendin' the cookin' of their eggs, and all that."

"Cheer up," cried Hartley; "the worst is yet to come!"

CHAPTER II.

A LOT OF QUEER FOLK.

A WEEK later was opening day. The ad. had done its work, and Hartley had been deluged with reporters wanting the details, and unsatisfied people wanting rooms and board.

He had the house filled in two days' time, but the place wasn't ready for the boarders actually to come in; so he had borrowed more money from his father, hired a servant, and put up a sign on the porch:

DO-AS-YOU-PLEASE HOUSE.

That was the name over the door, and it embodied the principle of the place.

On the opening morning everything was spick and span. All arrangements with boarders had been made either by letter or telephone, and none of the boarding-house trio had seen a single applicant.

Naturally they were a bit nervous as they assembled in the front parlor on opening day and waited for their boarders to arrive.

"Wonder what they'll look like?" queried Aunt Gertie nervously.

"I'm a little bit worried over that barber who says he's coming over to try out his idea that a person can live solely on peanuts and at the same time learn to play a flute with a mouth-organ attachment."

This from Mrs. Hartley.

"Wonder what the instrument looks like?" put in Hartley.

"Did you order that bushel of peanuts?" asked his wife, turning to Aunt Gertie.

"Yes; but I'm worried about that fellow who wrote he liked foods out of season."

"The inventor?"

"Give him canned corn and those left-over winter potatoes," suggested Hartley, with a smile.

"No, that won't do at—" Aunt Gertie began to object when her eye happened to rove out of the window. She jerked back the curtain and stood petrified.

"Good Heaven!" she cried, pointing a trembling finger at a swirl of dust coming down the road. It was accompanied by a hectic chugging, like that of an automobile.

"What is it?" demanded Mrs. Hartley, jumping to her aunt's side.

"Looks like our first boarder," answered Hartley, his mouth open as the whirlwind suddenly stopped and dissolved into two parts; one, a girl with leather leggings and a divided corduroy skirt; the other, a big black motor-cycle.

"Of all things!" cried Aunt Gertie, going white around the lips.

"It's that girl who said she was going to bring her cycle along!" cried Mrs. Hartley. "Who ever thought it would be a motor-cycle?"

By this time the girl had thrown the wheel carelessly against the porch and was ringing the front-door bell.

"The maid'll go," said Hartley, as Aunt Gertie started to answer it.

"I'll go myself," the aunt replied firmly; "she'll scare the maid to death."

In a few moments Aunt Gertie ushered in the corduroyed young lady, and she stuck out a greasy gantlet to the Hartleys.

"Thought I'd ride over on my cycle," she explained. "I'm just crazy about it! Every night after I leave the office I take a spin. I'm going to ride all the time over here. The roads are pretty good."

"Oh, yes." Mrs. Hartley tried to be sympathetic, though she found it hard to keep the surprise out of her expression. "It must be such fun! How did you happen to take up motor-cycling?"

"Well, you see, most girls don't do it," explained the young lady, who had been introduced as Polly Washburn. "I won the motor-cycle getting subscriptions for a magazine. It was a man's prize, I guess. But they sent it to me and I couldn't throw it away, so I learned to ride it. Gee! It's great fun! Ought to see the other girls in the office look at me when I ride it home! They talk about it all the time. But they're just jealous. Cats! That's what I call 'em. I hope there's nobody here that objects to a young lady riding a motor-cycle if she likes?"

She glared around with a combative eye.

"Oh, no," murmured Hartley, rising to the occasion. "Decidedly not. In fact, quite the reverse. You could ride an elephant here if you liked, and it would cause no comment."

"Say, that's swell!" enthused Polly Washburn, grabbing off her greasy gantlets and flinging them into a corner as she flopped on the sofa and began mopping her face with an oily handkerchief. "Gee! I feel right at home here already. Got any lemonade handy? I just love lemonade."

"No, er—that is," began Aunt Gertie, with a puzzled frown. "Yes, I'll get you some at—"

Her reply was chopped off by a musical tattoo at the door-bell.

"Jane will answer," said Mrs. Hartley, assuming a dignified look and trying to keep from peeking out of the window to see who had arrived.

Polly Washburn filled in the interval by saying that she'd tied her suit-case on behind her motor-cycle; that it didn't contain much in the way of clothing, for she was going to spend her whole vacation in the divided cycling skirt. Everything else of interest in it was lemons; she said she ate them with salt before retiring each night.

"It's good for the complexion," Miss Washburn admitted naively, rubbing an oily finger over her sallow skin, already mud-splattered.

At that moment the parlor curtains were thrown back, and in danced a nice little man, with a leather case under his arm, a curled mustache and hair parted in the middle.

"The barber!" moaned Mrs. Hartley in an aside to her husband.

The newcomer was dapper, slim, and very petite. He had all the fashion of a polished barber, and walked into the place as though it were receiving-day in a fashionable mansion.

"Did you hear my ring?" he asked with a finished little smile, daintily dawdling with one of the spirals of his mustache.

"Oh, yes!" Aunt Gertie had recovered herself first.

"Very musical! Very musical I am," he explained abruptly. "Some object to my music. Once, quite early in my career, I was dismissed from an important barbering post for playing continually on the combs in the shop. Music will out, you know. Shall I play you a little thing I composed?"

He tapped the leather case under his arm significantly, and went on:

"It is the flute, you know. My own invention, with mouth-organ attachment. Much better than the mouth-organ alone, and a great improvement on the jew's-harp."

Hartley was racking his brains for a reply. The invention of an excuse failed him, and he was just about to request the little barber to go as far as he liked, when Miss Washburn's voice rang out with a tinkling laugh:

"I say, those patent-leather pumps look funny. Did you think you were coming to a ball?"

The barber turned and saw Polly Washburn for the first time. His eyes plainly showed his horror.

"Who is the young person?" he queried politely, turning to Hartley for an explanation. "It's evident she has no ear for harmony, even in dress. I suppose she would misunderstand my music, as others have."

"No, I understand music very well," cried Miss Washburn, glaring back at him. "I suppose you object to young women riding motor-cycles. I guess it's better than being a musical barber, anyway."

"Oh, no objection whatever!" said the little barber, glancing down at her greasy costume with evident scorn.

"I'll give you some music," cried the girl, flaring up immediately at his scornful glance.

She dashed out of the room, and Hartley, not knowing what to expect, quickly assumed the rôle of mediator and followed her.

Before he reached the door Miss Washburn had seized the automobile-horn on her motor-cycle.

"*Honk! Honk! Honk!*" the blatant blast penetrated to the parlor.

The musical barber clapped his hands to his ears and danced up and down in agony on his patent-leather pumps.

"Great Heavens! Turn it off!" he screamed.

"*Honk! Honk! Honk!*" was the only reply he received.

There is no telling when Miss Washburn's spite would have vented itself if at that moment a form hadn't rushed up the sidewalk, dropped a big bird-cage, and seized Polly firmly by both arms.

The girl turned defiantly, to face a strapping big woman with a red nose.

"Don't you know that noise is a nuisance? Can't you realize that I have sensitive nerves?" cried the newcomer, shaking Polly by the arms and pushing her red nose into the girl's alarmed face.

Hartley interfered.

"Take the machine farther down the road, and blow it to your heart's delight," he told Miss Washburn, disengaging her from the larger woman's grasp. He managed to whisper into Polly's ear: "I like to hear it myself. It served the little barber right."

The girl, evidently mollified, turned and rushed into the house. Bumping into Aunt Gertie on the threshold, she demanded breathlessly:

"Where's my lemonade?"

"I'll get it in a minute. Wait until I welcome the new guest?"

Aunt Gertie hurried down the stairs to help the woman with the red nose pick up her bird-cage and several scattered bundles.

"Oh, are you Mrs. Hartley?" cried the lady with the red nose. Evidently Hartley had succeeded in explaining that the noise would not occur again, for she seemed quite happy.

"No," answered Aunt Gertie, "but I can welcome you on her behalf; come on in. She'll be so glad to see you."

"*Me!*" repeated the large woman very haughtily.

"Yes, you." Aunt Gertie spoke in her sweetest manner.

"Aren't you forgetting somebody?" The nose was becoming redder, and Hartley stepped over to see if he could divine the trouble.

"Yes, Mrs. Hartley will be very glad to see you," he repeated; then added: "I hope we're not forgetting anybody."

"Oh, but you haven't met him yet!" cried the large lady, her face lighting up suddenly.

She dropped to her knees on the grass. The barber came suddenly skipping down the steps, and jerked Aunt Gertie's waist-sleeve. He seemed happy again, and asked in a sweet, toilet-water voice:

"Where are the peanuts?"

"Oh," cried Aunt Gertie, looking around in flustered concern, "that's so! You are the man who wants them."

"Is there any harm in that?" he asked threateningly.

"Oh, no; not the slightest! There's a bushel all ready for you. Go and see cook about it in the kitchen."

The barber went off happily, with his flute under his arm, and the woman with the red nose, on her knees, looked up and pointed to the bird-cage. She had removed the cover to it, and a huge, ugly parrot popped his varicolored head through the wires and screamed:

"Put the kettle on! Put the kettle on!"

"That's Rob Roy," explained the large woman with pride.

"So that's the other one you meant?" cried Hartley, remembering the woman's letter. "I'm so sorry we forget to mention Rob Roy, but it shall never happen again."

Suddenly an advancing form, not fifty feet down the road, attracted Aunt Gertie's attention. Her eyes bulged out, and she stared for a full half minute. Then she grasped Hartley by the arm, pulled him away from Rob Roy, and whispered in an agonized tone:

"Good Heavens! Look at this one coming now!"

Hartley turned, and his eyes popped out a sixteenth of an inch farther than Aunt Gertie's as he stared at the curious figure struggling up the highway to a haven of rest under the gilded sign:

DO-AS-YOU-PLEASE HOUSE.

CHAPTER III.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

"WHO can he be?" cried Aunt Gertie, bustling the red-nosed woman and Rob Roy up the steps into Mrs. Hartley's welcoming arms.

"I'll bet it's the inventor!" cried Hartley with sudden inspiration.

At that moment the quaint little figure, perspiring over a curious-looking and evidently heavy wooden box under his arm and a bulging suit-case weighing him down on the other side, caught sight of Aunt Gertie and Hartley, dropped his burdens and waved to them in an imperial manner.

Both rushed forward to help.

"I say," began the little man, shoving up a pair of green glasses suspended on the bridge of his nose by two silk, elastic threads, tied to locks of hair on either side of his head. "I say, there ought to be a machine invented to run alongside a man and carry his bundles."

"It's the inventor, all right," breathed Aunt Gertie in an awed aside to Harvey.

"Do you know, I've often thought," went on the bent little fellow, pressing carefully the upper button to his vest—a folded fan sprang from beneath his loose-fitting standing collar and began fanning him violently —"I've often thought that the motion one wastes in drawing his leg back in walking could be put to use, stored up, and made to carry his packages.

"You see," he continued, "it's only the *forward* motion of the leg that really gets one anywhere. The leg, in being drawn back, only performs a motion which is clearly a waste of energy. Now, if an invisible sprocket were to be attached to the ankle and a small steel rod run from that to the—"

"Won't you come up to the house?" Hartley put in, violently grabbing up the curious little wooden box and making as if to start for the porch.

"Great Heavens! *Drop it! Drop it,* I say!" screamed the inventor, jerking down the green glasses and glaring at Hartley.

The manager of the Do-As-You-Please House wavered under the glare; then, remembering that his guests must be placated, he dropped the box to the ground. A startling rattle came from the thing, and there was a whir of wheels.

"Now you've done it!" yelled the inventor. "Why did you drop it? *Why did you drop it,* I say?"

"You told me to," answered Hartley blankly, and Aunt Gertie picked up her skirts and ran for the house with fear in her mild eyes.

Dr. Honeycomb, the inventor, fell to his knees beside the precious box and mumbled over it as though it were a child.

"Why did you drop it?" he repeated again, looking up at Hartley and mopping his face with a strange handkerchief, which had a sponge attached to the center of it. "Don't you know it is my famous invention? I came out here on my vacation to perfect it. You ought to be horsewhipped. The mechanism is ever so delicate. What if you have ruined it?"

With feverish fingers he unfastened the lid and disclosed a complicated machine, composed of the works of two clocks, a few odd piano-strings, three horseshoes, and a series of small screws ranged in a row.

"What on earth is that?" cried Hartley in astonishment.

"It's my famous invention," replied the doctor, beginning to look relieved as he found that nothing had been damaged.

"What does it do?"

"Everything. It will revolutionize the world."

"But what is it to be used for?"

The doctor rose, picked up the box tenderly, and placed a forefinger on the side of his nose in a very shrewd manner.

"You shall see, you shall see. It is a secret at present. Somebody might try to steal it if all knew what it was."

"But what is the principle?" queried Hartley, beginning to worry over the possibilities if anything further should happen to the complicated mechanism.

"Ah, that is the greatest secret of it all." Dr. Honeycomb wagged his head wisely. "You shall see for yourself. I shall have it completed directly. Then you may all come and witness the marvel."

A little bit uneasy on the score of the precious box, Hartley picked up the doctor's suit-case and started toward the house. When they reached the parlor an amazing tableau presented itself.

Polly Washburn had Mrs. Hartley backed into a corner, and was telling her a reel of personal experiences in motor-cycling. She gloried in the relation of the number of times she had been arrested for speeding, and drank lemonade from the pitcher Aunt Gertie had provided, at intervals, without taking the trouble to first transfer the liquid to a glass.

The red-nosed lady (whose real name was Perkins, and whose stage-name would have been Florabella Fotheringale if luck hadn't been against her and the manager hadn't died the day before she was to be starred at a try-out in Indiana) was sitting in a corner holding an animated conversation with Bob Roy, whose main contribution to the dialogue was:

"And we'll all take tea! And we'll all take tea!"

While in the center of the room the musical barber posed, in shaving position, and lathered the end if the mouth-organ flute with his mobile mouth. It was a shame to torture the poor instrument, and it let out piteous wails, as if in protest.

The moment Dr. Honeycomb's eyes rested on the flute his expression lighted up; he jumped at the barber and wrested the thing from his hands.

"Very ingenious! Very ingenious!" he remarked with enthusiasm, twisting the mouth-organ attachment around to see how it was made.

"Give it back!" screamed the barber.

"Very interesting. But this should have been here," went on Dr. Honeycomb, jerking at a network of wires, breaking one loose and twisting it to the position which seemed better to him.

"He's ruined it! He's ruined it!" bawled the barber.

Hartley, remembering that razors are used in the profession, snatched the flute away from the engrossed inventor, and handed it back to the tonsorial artist.

The parrot, alarmed, began calling out: "Fire! Fire!"

Polly Washburn, attracted by the argument, dashed away from Mrs. Hartley, and took sides against the barber.

Miss Perkins raised her voice above the hubbub, crying for silence on the ground that Rob Roy was nervous, and noise might throw him into a fit.

Mrs. Hartley slipped out of the room in the excitement, and her husband followed, slamming the door behind him, and rushing to the kitchen.

"We've got a nice mess on our hands," he cried, when he met his wife.

"I'm worried, Harvey," she replied, looking at him with fearful eyes.

"What are you worried about?"

"I'm wondering if they're all really sane. We don't want to start a private insane asylum here, you know."

"Of course not; they're just cranks," rejoined Hartley, but a bit uncertainly.

"But that musical barber with that funny flute attached to his mouth-organ. He certainly doesn't act natural."

"He's just a bit eccentric," Hartley assured her.

"But I'm worried, just the same, Harvey; how can you tell the difference between a sane and an insane person? I'm at a loss to know myself. It bothers me."

"Oh, that's easy," answered Hartley with confidence in his tone. "They test them in the insane asylums by filling a tub with water, letting the water run, and giving the crazy man a bucket to bail the tub out with."

"But I don't understand. How can they tell by that whether he's crazy or not?"

"Why," answered Hartley with a smile, "if the man is crazy he'll keep on bailing out the water. If he's sane, he'll simply turn off the tap and let the water run out the drain at the bottom of the tub."

"Oh, I see!" and Mrs. Hartley hurried away.

"What are you going to do?" he cried after her.

"I'm going to fill the tub with water, and get a bucket for the barber."

"Better not!" Hartley cautioned her. "I'm almost sure he's all right. He might be insulted if you asked him to bail out the tub."

"Well," she hesitated. "One of them *is* crazy, I'm sure. Either the barber or the inventor."

As she spoke a shadow settled on Harvey's face. It was evident that he had considered the same possibility.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERIOUS MAN.

THAT night when the Hartleys were going to bed, rather discouraged with their first day, Harvey thought he heard a strange noise, and, suddenly stepping to the door, caught sight of a white-faced man just disappearing around the turn in the hall.

In the instant he saw the face he knew there was something the matter with it. He had never seen the fellow before, and it cer-

tainly was strange that an unknown man should be in his house at that late hour!

As quick as thought, Hartley jumped from the room, sprang around the corner, and leaped upon the skulking figure.

A wild cry escaped the unknown, and with difficulty Hartley managed to pinion his arms to the floor and call to his wife for a light.

Mrs. Hartley came running with a lamp; there was fear in her eyes; it was quite evident that she had been brooding concerning the insane question that had been raised in her mind.

The light disclosed the pallid face of a young man. In his hand was a small black satchel.

"Well, who are you?" queried Hartley, trying to keep his voice at normal pitch, for fear of exciting the boarders who might have overheard.

"I came late," was the quick reply. "I didn't want to bother you to let me in. I found that the door was unlocked, and I was going to—"

"Are you the young man who was coming here to board in reply to our advertisement?" broke in Hartley, remembering that there was one boarder yet to come.

"Yes," answered the young fellow quickly, as though a sudden thought had occurred to him. "I read your advertisement in the paper."

"He's not the new boarder," put in Mrs. Hartley, who had noticed the sudden change in the man's attitude when Hartley had suggested that he might possibly be the missing lodger.

"Be quiet, Helen," said Hartley, thoroughly convinced that his conjecture was correct, and not wishing to annoy the young man for fear of losing him.

He raised the fellow to his feet, looked him over critically, and then told him:

"Your room is down the hall here. I'm sorry I made the mistake. Will you forgive my attack on you? I was naturally surprised at the sudden appearance of a strange man, until you explained."

"Oh, that's all right," answered the other good-naturedly, brushing off his clothes and picking up his bag.

Mrs. Hartley rushed over and whispered in her husband's ear:

"He's insane, I tell you. Even if he is the young man we expected, he certainly wouldn't come in an unexpected manner like this, and walk right in on us, if he were in his right mind."

But Hartley thought differently. He knew that his wife's nerves were on edge from the day's experiences, and while he disliked to go against her wishes, he could not see his way clear to eject the newcomer from the house.

"I—I wouldn't have come in unannounced unless I had had business here," answered the young man haltingly.

Hartley, ashamed of the attack he had made, and wishing to set the new boarder at his ease, apologized profusely, and showed the young man to the room reserved for him.

Saying good-night, Hartley joined his wife in their bedroom.

She was in a highly nervous condition, and hard to calm.

"I know he's crazy," she insisted, her lips quivering. "His eyes looked like it. He'll make trouble, I am certain. Oh, Harvey, I wish you hadn't had this wild notion of starting a place for cranks. It's a private insane asylum—nothing else."

But Hartley laughed at her fears, told her she had insisted on boarders herself, and as long as they had them they would have to treat them nicely.

In the middle of the night he was suddenly awakened by an exclamation from his wife.

"Did you hear that noise, Harvey?" she asked in a tense tone.

He listened for a full half-minute. There was a slight sound as though the front door were being cautiously closed.

"Hear that!" whispered Mrs. Hartley, giving a startled jump.

"It's only the wind," Hartley tried to reassure her.

"It's not. It's that young man you let in. Oh, what if he was a burglar!"

"Bosh," rejoined Hartley, going to the window and looking out, but seeing nothing.

His wife insisted that he go to the new man's room and see if he were still asleep in his bed.

"Of course he is; sleeping soundly, too, I'll bet," replied Harvey. "He might shoot me if I looked in."

"I told you he was crazy," was her comment on this. "Of course he would shoot you. Don't go. Stay here."

Mrs. Hartley was first up in the morning. She slipped down-stairs to see about breakfast, and casually picked up the morning paper.

The first line she read gave her an electric shock.

Holding the paper at arm's length, she hurried up to their bedroom, shook Hartley

from sleep, and held the newspaper before his half-closed eyes.

He read the headlines mechanically:

LUNATIC ESCAPES.

Thought To Be at Large on The Palisades. Attendants of the Asylum Sent Out on Secret Search, Hope to Recover Insane Man Without Publicity.

By the time he had read that far, Hartley was wide-awake. He pulled the paper closer to his astonished eyes and went over the rest carefully:

> At dinner-time yesterday noon, in an insane asylum at Outwood-on-Hudson, one of the lunatics was found missing.
>
> As his is a very dangerous case, the asylum authorities immediately sent out all the attendants and guards they could muster to make a secret search for the man.
>
> The lunatic has a very vicious nature. He is a young man, with pale complexion, and has a mania for attacking people unexpectedly and trying to kill them. At other times he is very peaceful and gentlemanly. But many of the attendants at the asylum bear marks which he has inflicted.
>
> In spite of the secret search now being carried on, the news has leaked out, and we wish to warn all residents in the vicinity of Outwood-on-Hudson to beware of the dangerous lunatic.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Hartley. "The new boarder answers the description exactly."

"I told you all the time he was a lunatic," cried his wife.

"But he was harmless when I fought with him. He got up peacefully and went to his room. I don't know. I believe the young fellow is the one who answered the ad, all right."

"But don't you remember how vague he was? He said he saw your ad. only after you mentioned it, and that he found the door open and had business here, so he came in. No; I tell you, Harvey, it *is* the insane man."

"But he didn't seem violent."

"Of course not. That's what it said in the paper. Sometimes he's violent and sometimes he's perfectly peaceful."

"I wouldn't wonder if you were right." Hartley frowned and began to look very worried.

"What shall we do?"

"I'm not certain yet. I guess we'd better wait."

"Wait! And be murdered in our beds! Maybe he's killed one of the boarders already."

"Whew!" whistled Hartley. "This is fierce. I'm rather sorry we ever undertook this thing. It would be a natural place for a lunatic to come and hide."

"Yes, he'd be among friends," replied his wife. "It would be hard to pick him out as a lunatic when we already have the inventor and the barber. Great Heavens! Harvey, maybe *they* are lunatics, too."

"No, I guess not. But I'm pretty sure now the fellow who came so unexpectedly last night *is*."

"We must do something at once. We can't harbor him. He might turn violent and kill somebody."

"You're right. But what shall we do? Lock him in his room, or what?"

"No; he might jump out of his window and go around to kill the cook. That's impossible."

"Suggest something, then."

"Why, we'll call up the insane asylum, tell them we've got their man, and try to humor him until they come for him with an armed posse. That's all."

"But how'll we humor him?" demanded Hartley.

"Let's not worry about that. I'll go and telephone right away. There's no time to be lost."

So saying, she slipped out of the room, and Hartley began to dress feverishly.

At the phone Mrs. Hartley whispered into the mouthpiece:

"We've got your lunatic. He's over at Hartley's Do-As-You-Please House."

"Good!" exclaimed a man's voice at the other end of the wire. "Me saw your ad. and thought he might take refuge there. Sorry, but all our attendants are out looking for him, and we have nobody to send just at present.

"But you must get somebody here right off; we can't be responsible for him," cried Mrs. Hartley, finding it difficult to keep her voice pitched at a whisper.

"I'll call up the police and tell them to send four men to get him right away," was the reply to this. "Be very careful, and be sure to humor him."

"We'll do our best, but get the police here right off."

She rushed back and told Hartley the news, and they stood trying to think out a plan of action to pursue when the lunatic should come down to breakfast.

They stole up to his room to see if he was

up; they might be able to hear him snoring if he were asleep, or walking around in the room if he were awake. But the door was wide open.

CHAPTER V.

A TERRIBLE COMPLICATION.

"He's probably gone down to breakfast," suggested Hartley.

"Then he's made his own bed," whispered his wife, peering inside.

"I can't understand it," commented Hartley.

They both edged forward, finally gaining a position where they commanded the whole interior.

"He's not there," Hartley breathed with vast relief.

"And his bag is gone," added his wife.

They sneaked into the room and looked around. It did not show the slightest sign of having been occupied.

Mrs. Hartley threw back the sheets and found that they had not been touched.

"Where's he gone? What's become of him?" she demanded, turning on her husband as though he were to blame.

"Search me! How should I know?" Hartley shrugged his shoulders. "But I'm glad he's gone, anyway."

"That's the noise I heard last night."

"Maybe that was it," admitted Hartley.

"I'm certainly glad he took a notion to leave the house without killing anybody."

"It is fortunate."

They looked around for some clue, but nothing was found.

"What will we do when the policemen come to get the lunatic?" Mrs. Hartley wanted to know suddenly.

"Gee! That's so. We'll have to keep the barber and inventor under cover."

"Yes, they might be taken for insane."

"Wouldn't that be fierce," replied Hartley, thinking of the consequences.

They walked slowly down the hall together, and joined the boarders at breakfast.

"Where is our barber friend?" asked Hartley, as he passed Aunt Gertie.

He had noticed that the amateur musician was the only one missing from the table.

"I don't know. He hasn't come down yet," was the reply.

Mrs. Hartley began to look worried as the meal progressed, and the barber failed to put in an appearance.

Hartley was just about to leave the table to investigate, when there came a heavy knock at the front door.

"The lunatic!" cried Mrs. Hartley, jumping from her place and putting a hand on Hartley's shoulder.

"No, the police!" he answered under his breath.

Together they went to the door and opened it.

There stood four stalwart officers lined up in grim array.

"We've come for that escaped lunatic," explained the foremost.

Hartley stammered and flushed up.

"It—it was a mistake—er—the lunatic has escaped," he finally managed to explain.

The officer looked at him shrewdly; it was evident from his manner that he was in doubt as to Hartley's own sanity.

"How'd it happen?"

Harvey hastened to explain all they had seen and heard and imagined about their curious visitor of the night before.

"But that's no proof. He's probably hiding in the house at this minute," replied the officer.

It was the very inference the Hartleys dreaded most.

"I'm—I'm pretty sure he's not," Hartley stammered.

"We got orders to get him," went on the officer roughly. "There ain't nobody from the asylum with us, but I guess we can tell a lunatic when we see one, all right. He's probably in the house somewhere."

"He isn't down-stairs anywhere," Hartley replied. "We've looked all around down here."

"Then we'll try up-stairs," said the officer, turning with a sign to his men and entering the house at once.

The Hartleys were happy in the thought that the boarders were at breakfast and the door closed. They only hoped that the policemen would finish their search and get out before the meal was over.

Hartley himself started to rush up the stairs first, but the officer pulled him back with the exclamation:

"Stay here! The lunatic might bite you. We'll take care of this."

"But, ah — one of our boarders is still asleep; he hasn't come down to breakfast yet. You mustn't bother him," cried Hartley, for he had intended to rush ahead and protect the little barber.

"We'll take care of that."

"Go back to breakfast, Helen; the boarders will be wondering what's up," said Hart-

ley, turning to his wife, as she stood trembling in the hall.

She did as he bade her, and he stood alone by the outside door, waiting and wondering what would be the outcome of the investigation.

The little band of bluecoats could be heard tramping about in the upper rooms, turning over chairs and doing their duty with rigid care.

"I hope they don't do any damage," Hartley said to himself. "They're like bulls in a china shop. I ought to have gone up with them."

Suddenly there came a startled note from the barber's mouth-organ flute. Hartley heard the policemen rush for the room from which the sound had issued.

He stood in breathless suspense as a series of surprised toots came from the flute, followed by a scuffle in the barber's room.

Hartley put fingers in his ears and danced around in agony. What would happen now? The policemen seemed to be turning the house upside down. That the boarders had not rushed from the dining-room to learn the cause of it all Hartley attributed to his wife's ready wit.

When he took his fingers out of his ears the noise had subsided, and there was only the trained tramp of heavy feet toward the stairs.

"We've got him!" cried the policeman in charge, leaning over the banisters.

Hartley knew in a flash that the worst had happened.

They had mistaken the musical barber for the escaped lunatic.

At that moment the grim little procession appeared at the bottom of the stairs. Two officers held the barber, who was clutching at his flute and frothing at the mouth in an endeavor to explain.

When he saw Hartley he burst out with:

"Is this the way to treat a gentleman? I was taking my morning exercise and just practising a little on my flute before breakfast, when these men come in and attack me. Out of harmony. Entirely out of harmony. They are brutes. They have no ear for music."

The officer shook his head at Hartley and put a significant forefinger to his forehead.

"Dippy! Absolutely dippy," he remarked. "Don't pay any attention to him. We found him in a pair of pajamas, probably stolen, sitting on the back of a chair, with his feet on the seat of it, playing this foolish instrument."

Hartley was too horror-stricken to remonstrate. While he was trying to summon his breath to explain that it was all a mistake, the two policemen had marched the kicking, struggling barber out on the porch in his pajamas and started him down the steps.

"But he's not a lunatic!" cried Hartley then. "He's one of my boarders. He came yesterday."

"Oh, no," answered the officer in charge shrewdly. "He was just playing off on you. That's one of the regular dodges. He tried to act sane until you accepted him as a boarder. Then we find him in his pajamas, in that impossible position, playing the flute. No, he's the man, all right."

"But I tell you he isn't," insisted Hartley, growing red in the face.

"Don't worry. They'll identify him over at the asylum, all right. He's the feller. You can't fool me on a real 'dip' like him."

So saying, the officer stepped out on the porch, slammed the door behind him, and trotted off after his men, bearing the barber, who had now begun to scream.

Hartley stood swaying back and forth. What could he do? Opening the door as soon as he could pull himself together, he looked out, and found that the policemen were already out of sight with their prisoner.

"Helen! Helen!" he called, closing the door and dropping against it weakly.

His wife hurried from the dining-room at once, and he explained what had happened.

"Oh, awful," she cried. "It's too horrible."

"Well, I couldn't help it. The policeman thought he was crazy, and he wouldn't believe it when I said he was a real boarder here."

"But you've got to get that barber out of the insane asylum now."

"No; they won't hold him over there. The policemen were just sent to get a lunatic; they couldn't identify the barber as the one who escaped. When they take him to the insane asylum the mistake will be seen and they'll let him come back here."

"In his pajamas!" cried his wife.

"Oh, I think it will come out all right. They will know he isn't the lunatic they're looking for—I mean, they'll know he isn't a lunatic."

"I'm not so sure about that," his wife replied. "When they see that mouth-organ soldered on to the flute and hear him talk about music they'll probably keep him as an insane person, anyway."

"Heavens! I hadn't thought about that."

"Oh, it's dreadful. And then that real lunatic isn't caught yet. He may be lurking around or hiding in the house now."

At that moment they heard a step on the porch. Hartley threw open the door, hoping it was the police returning to say they'd discovered their mistake.

To his utter astonishment, there stood the young man with the pale face and leather bag he had encountered in the hall the night before.

"It's the escaped lunatic! Call up the police, Harvey!" screamed Mrs. Hartley, slamming the door in the young man's face.

(To be continued.)

UNDER THE RIVER-BED.

BY ARNOLD HOFMANN.

The Climax of Misfortunes in a Would-Be Author's Luckless Half Day.

"WHY, in the name of common sense, didn't I listen to advice, and stay away from this great, heartless city?"

Dick Martin sighed gloomily, as he stood forlorn on the street corner, trying to get one last puff out of the infinitesimal remains of his final cigarette.

He burned his fingers and his lips as well in the attempt, so he tossed the smoldering bit of tobacco into the gutter and spat after it. As long as he had tobacco he could at least still his hunger by smoking; but now even that had run out.

"The editor of the *Idle Hours* magazine was right after all. I turned out to be nothing but a flash in the pan, just as he said. Why didn't I believe him then, and give up before it was too late?"

Martin buried his hands deep in his empty trousers-pockets, and sauntered off toward the park in search of a stray newspaper in which he might look over the "want ads."

Poor, disheartened Martin no longer had any literary aspiration. The would-be author had hung on to the very last, but now he had given up.

He was looking for a job. A common, ordinary, every-day job, and so low were his finances that he could not even spare the wherewithal to buy a newspaper.

In the vest-pocket which his watch had formerly occupied he had exactly fifteen cents, consisting of one slick dime (which he had been withholding for fear of having it returned to him on account of its worn condition) and one fairly good-looking five-cent piece. That was all the money he had in the world.

To look at Martin no one would have guessed his dilemma (save perhaps from the length of his hair, which was growing over his collar at the back, and this might easily have been attributed to an artistic temperament). His clothes were of late cut and still good — he thanked his stars for that; and he prided himself on being very neat in his personal appearance.

But his shoes were worn thin at the soles and his stomach was very empty, for he had eaten neither supper nor breakfast. Moreover, he owed his landlady three weeks' rent, and that lady had kindly but firmly informed him that she would wait one more week, and after that—well, there was no telling what might happen after that.

If it had not been for Martin's honest face, polite behavior, and cheerful manners she would have turned him out on the street long ago.

Lucky Martin (so the fellows had called him at school) had come from the West intent on making his fortune in New York. People with experience there had advised him not to go. They had told him of the overcrowded conditions of the great metropolis, the greed for money, the heartlessness, the multitude of people who would be struggling shoulder to shoulder with him for every little opportunity that might offer itself.

His friends on the newspaper where he worked for fifteen dollars a week had told him to stay at home and be satisfied. His sweetheart had pleaded with him. But all this had availed nothing. Martin felt that his calling was to be an author, and he had determined to fight his battle for success where the fray was thickest.

He had no one to advance him any money. What he did he would have to do on his own resources. His widowed mother had been left barely enough for herself and could not afford to finance her ambitious son's wild-goose chase, as people termed it; nor would he have accepted anything from her, for that matter.

Therefore he had saved and skimped until he had scraped together a small sum. And with that he had left home.

His mother was the only one who had not discouraged him. She had said very quietly and had turned her face away as she said it: "If you feel that literary work is your calling, if your heart is in it, then go, my son, and God bless you."

On arriving Martin had realized, in part, what a baffling proposition he had to face; but he had plunged right in with his customary directness. And his usual luck had been with him, for his very first story, "A Sonora Romance," had been accepted by the *Idle Hours* magazine. And what was more, the story had made a decided hit with the editor, who had complimented him on the vivid way in which he portrayed life among the Mexicans and on his graphic scenic descriptions.

Martin's second story, though not so good as the first, had been promptly accepted, and Martin thought himself established as a magazine writer.

Then his bad luck began. One story after another had been refused. Martin, dumfounded, had not been able to understand it. He tried again and again; but always with the same result—rejection.

Finally he had been informed by the editor that he had turned out to be nothing more than a "flash in the pan." This remark had nettled Martin, and discouraged him as well; so he never again went near the *Idle Hours* office, and sent his stories elsewhere. But they had flocked back to him, bearing politely printed slips of various sizes and colors, each more courteous and thankful than the other, but each beating gently around the bush at the same thing—rejection.

These little slips broke the news as tenderly as one could possibly wish for; but they were funeral notices just the same, and Martin couldn't bear funerals of any kind. Yet he had endured all this and had kept on writing, thinking that he must hit the mark again sooner or later. He refused to be discouraged.

And he might have kept it up indefinitely had his meager supply of money held out. But it had not. The little sum he had brought with him had been eaten up, and what he had received for his two accepted stories had also dwindled until now it had reached the low ebb of fifteen cents.

His watch, his ring, and his pretty stickpin, the thing among his few possessions he prized highest, had all passed in under the three bronze balls of the money-lender. His watch he had sold outright, and now, every time he walked by the place where he had left it, he saw his old friend glistening at him through the show-window, marked, "A Bargain," though the price asked was twice what Martin had received for it.

Martin thought of all these things as he walked slowly along. He felt that he was a failure.

He snapped his jaws together tightly as a vision of home passed through his desolate mind—that prosperous Western city where he had his friends, where people liked him and made much of him, thought him a bright fellow, slapped him on the back and called him "Lucky Martin." Oh, it was tough, bitter, overwhelming!

The gnawing at his stomach finally brought him back to the present by warning him that there was no time to lose, so he shrugged his shoulders, made a grimace, and walked on at a gingerly clip.

It was a disagreeable, cold day, and the usual line of bench readers were absent. Martin walked and walked and walked and grew hungrier every minute, but no paper was to be found.

At last he gave up in despair and turned to leave the park, when a gust of wind whirled a scrap of newspaper in front of his feet.

He picked it up and found it to be part of a "want ad" section of that day. Eagerly he scanned the scrap in search of a position, regardless of what it might be, but all he could find was "salesmen wanted," and he knew with his inexperience there was no use trying that.

At last, right at the bottom where the paper was torn off, he found the advertisement of a Brooklyn firm who wanted a man with a neat handwriting to address envelopes for seven dollars a week. The applicant was desired to call at the office of the firm after six o'clock.

Martin's hopes began to revive. Even seven dollars a week was better than starving, so he carefully preserved the piece of paper with the concern's address and walked aim-

lessly about or sat around on the benches until time to take the Subway under the river. There he reluctantly spent his five cents and carefully shifted the smooth dime from his vest-pocket to the safer one in his trousers.

During the long ride over to Brooklyn his spirits grew brighter. He determined to work steadily and diligently at his new occupation, and perhaps the manager would in time take an interest in him and give him an opportunity to advance. Then in the evenings he could spend an hour or two on his literary work, and in that way possibly succeed in retrieving his fallen fortunes.

It would mean hard work and not much sleep, but then he was willing to put up with that. If he succeeded (and he had no doubt but that he would) in getting back to his old form in writing, he could give up the envelope-addressing and devote all his time to literary work.

Arrived in Brooklyn, he walked cheerfully in the direction of the given address. For the moment he forgot his misery and felt ready to tackle anything.

But here, like everywhere else, a long line of applicants was already ahead of him, waiting to compete even for such an insignificant position.

Martin's heart sank a little when he saw the line, but he kept up his hopes by comparing himself with the others. He was neater and better dressed, and he hoped that his personality might be more pleasing.

At last it came his turn. He sat down, and with great pains demonstrated his efficiency as an addresser of envelopes.

"Great!" said the red-faced manager, shifting his cigar as Martin finished. "Looks very much like a dish of scrambled eggs. I didn't advertise for a man to rake the cinders out of the furnace."

Martin flushed with anger and disappointment. He heard the titter of the other applicants who laughed nervously, partly at him and partly in hopes that it might please the manager.

He wanted to punch the ugly fellow's head for his crude wit and nasty insolence; but, realizing the consequences of such an act, he restrained himself, jammed his hat upon his head, and walked out, slamming the door behind him.

Hotly, blindly, he paced up and down the streets of Brooklyn. His crushed, bewildered brain could not think; his heart was heavy as lead. Full of shame, disappointment, and disgust, he walked along blindly, looking neither to left nor right.

Oh, but it was bitter! The world was so cruel and heartless. He had struggled so hard. He was straight and upright and diligent.

He had tried to be everything that people said was necessary for success. And what was his reward? Disappointment and failure.

A big, hard knot was choking his throat, and his eyes burned.

He passed through throngs of people all going home from their day's work. They looked tired, but contented. Oh, how Martin longed to be one of them! But he was an outcast. Soon he would be a common vagrant.

Shop-girls were laughing and talking about their sweethearts. Men talked of their day's toil; of what they intended to do in the evening. Every face wore the light of anticipation.

Men were eager to get home to their wives and children, to eat a good supper in happiness and contentment in the bosom of their little homes. Younger men looked forward to more exciting things.

Only Martin seemed to be left out in the cold. Despair, starvation, stared him in the face.

How long he had wandered on in this mood he did not know, but all at once he felt some one slap him rather roughly on the shoulder.

"What are you doing over here, Dick? Haven't you got time to speak to a fellow?"

It was a good-natured voice, and Martin, looking up, beheld a former fellow roomer.

"Why, hallo, Williams!" he said, reaching out his hand. "I beg your pardon, I didn't see you, or I surely would have spoken. Living in Brooklyn now, are you?"

"No, no; I'm on the road. Salesman, you know."

"Oh! Glad to see you, Williams. By the way, I'm looking for a job. Couldn't perhaps get me in with your company, could you?"

The "drummer" smiled.

"What's the matter? Given up the writing gag, have you?" he asked.

Martin nodded.

"Well, possibly I can get you in where I am," continued Williams. "I'll do my best when I get back to the main office in Boston. I'll let you know in about a week."

"Nothing doing," sighed Martin, sadly shaking his head. "I'm up against it. I've got to find something right away."

"Is that so?" Williams covered up his

astonishment. He felt sorry for Martin, and began to think of some way in which to help him out.

"Let me see," he went on, knitting his brows and biting his lips. "By the way, you drum the piano, don't you?"

"Yes, a little." Martin tried not to say it too eagerly.

"Well, if you're not particular, and need the money badly, I know a fellow who runs a moving-picture show up on Eighth Avenue. He told me to-day he was looking for a man to thump the ivories. There's ten a week in it for you."

"That'll be all right," mumbled Martin, coughing violently to keep a grin of joy from overspreading his face.

"Wait a minute, and I'll go in here and telephone to him," and the obliging Williams disappeared into a drug-store.

Martin was delighted. He could have embraced his friend out of joy and gratitude. But he didn't want him to know the exact condition he was in, and this gave him no small amount of worry. He feared that, out of politeness, Williams might accept the ten cents toll-call from him.

When the other came out, Martin tremblingly offered to pay for the telephoning.

"No, no; I wouldn't think of such a thing," laughed the "drummer," and Martin gave a sigh of relief.

"Here is the name and address on this card. He said for you to come around promptly at ten to-night. If you're not on time, you lose out."

"Thanks, Williams; you're a good fellow, and—"

But the other waved him off. "Don't mention it. Glad to do it for you. I've got to hurry on now, Dick; good luck to you. I'll let you know about the selling job. So-long, old boy," and with that he was gone.

Martin was overjoyed. He walked along with fresh hope and energy, and a spring in his step; he even half forgot his hunger.

He looked in at a jewelry-store window and saw that it was seven o'clock, so he decided to while away an hour before starting back to New York.

The only thing to do was to wander about and look in at the shop windows, so he did that. And now his face, too, wore the light of anticipation.

His hunger, however, kept getting worse and worse, and the more he walked the hungrier he grew. A whiff, even of cheap restaurant smell, was more delicious than any perfume to his famished nostrils; and when he passed a bakery, the sweet, fresh odor of bread and pastry drove him nearly frantic.

It got so, finally, that he did not trust himself to look in at the windows for fear he might lose complete control of himself, break the glass, and dash away with an armful of cakes and pies.

At last the torture became unbearable, and when that enticing bread odor again overwhelmed him, he thought of his smooth ten-cent piece. He figured that he could buy a cut of pie for five cents and still have enough left to get to his job with. He would most likely secure the position, and the manager would no doubt advance him a dollar.

It was an enticing scheme, and his mouth watered in anticipation as he stood in front of the bakery window, his eyes gloating over a juicy cut of lemon pie on display within.

He went inside, and stood moistening his lips as he waited for the fat baker to finish off a customer ahead of him. He reached in his pocket to pull out the smooth coin, the acceptance of which by the baker was questionable. The dime was gone.

An exclamation of horror burst from Martin's pale lips. Again and again he felt, hoping against hope, but all he found was a tiny hole in the pocket.

"I'm done for," he muttered, and reeled out of the store.

On the pavement he stood dazed. Absolutely penniless. Oh, Fate was cruel to poor Martin! There was a position—ten dollars per week—it seemed a fortune to him, dangling before his very eyes. All he had to do was to reach out and take it; and yet, here he was bound hand and foot, perfectly helpless, all because of a measly, slick dime which had decided to part company with him!

It was growing dark. What on earth was he to do? He felt like a man famished for water, who is tied at the brink of a cool, gurgling spring, unable to drink.

Tears of anguish forced themselves into his eyes, and he started off at a brisk pace and tore frantically about from corner to corner, not knowing where he was going, and not caring.

He tried to think, but his feverish brain was in a whirl. On and on he walked through the fast-gathering gloom.

The street-lamps seemed to wink and laugh at him. He felt as though every one was looking at him and knew his predicament. Some seemed to pity him, but the most seemed to be laughing and ridiculing his misfortune.

Of one thing he was certain. He would not beg. No. Sooner would he die. If he could only run across some acquaintance of whom he could borrow! But for that to happen would take nothing less than a miracle, for Martin knew scarcely half a dozen people, and they lived and had their interests in Manhattan. It was strange enough that he should have run across Williams in Brooklyn.

Still, with the lingering hope in his mind that the impossible might happen, he eagerly scanned all passing faces by the lamplight; but to no avail.

The thought struck him that he might walk. He could get over the bridge for nothing, so he pulled out the card and looked for the address; but the moving-picture place was up beyond Fifty-Third Street, and poor, worn-out, hungry, footsore Martin knew he could never walk the enormous distance in the two hours that were now left him, so he trudged along hopelessly.

Time passed until he had barely an hour in which to keep his appointment. Still there was no sign of relief in sight.

"Something has got to turn up. I must get there," he muttered wildly to himself. "It's too cruel. I can't be left to starve like this. It isn't fair."

But no one heard his cry of despair, and there was no answer.

For some time he had been inconvenienced by a slight pain in his foot, but he had had no time to pay any attention to so small a matter. Now, however, from the much walking about, the pain became unbearable. There was a foreign object in his shoe, and it had to be removed.

Martin had reached that frame of mind where he didn't give a hang for anybody, so he sat down on a door-step and took off his shoe. He turned it upside down, shook it, and then his heart gave a bound of joy as he heard a coin hit the pavement.

It was hard to see in the darkness, but Martin found the coveted dime quickly enough. It had slipped into his shoe on its way down the trousers-leg.

Heaven be praised! What a miracle! He was saved in the nick of time. Hardly stopping to replace his shoe, he clutched the coin in his hand and rushed for a Subway station.

To Martin's great delight, the ticket-seller did not refuse the worn coin, and, his heart thumping hopefully, he was at last seated in a train speeding for Manhattan. His time margin was extremely small, but he felt sure he would make it.

The only other passenger in the car with him was a pleasant-faced, elderly gentleman. Martin was so overcome with joy that he wanted to sit down next to the man and tell him all about it; but he restrained himself, and drummed nervously on the side of the seat with his finger-tips.

His luck had turned—he felt it. That strange conviction came over him which comes over people at times and makes them foresee the outcome of things. But in Martin's case the presentment failed; for, while they were running under the East River, the train gave a jolt and stopped suddenly.

Martin's hopes wavered. Five minutes went by; his hopes dropped. Ten minutes passed; Martin's hopes were shattered completely.

"What an awful place in which to be detained," remarked the elderly gentleman pleasantly. "Right under the river. It's really gruesome when one comes to think about it."

"Yes—very," said Martin as cheerfully as possible, though in his heart he wished that the water would rush in and end it all.

The gentleman began walking up and down in the car.

"What do you suppose is the matter?" he asked of Martin, who failed to explain by remarking sadly:

"I guess we're stuck."

"Yes; that's evident; but what's the reason? I'll ask the guard."

He went forward, and, returning, sat down beside Martin.

"There is no telling how long we may be held up here. The signal-lights show red. The guard thinks there is a wreck ahead."

"A wreck? Great Scott, then there's no chance of getting out of here for hours!" exclaimed Martin, with an inward groan.

"Very likely not. It's provoking," and the gentleman looked at his watch. "I had an important appointment I wanted to keep; but now it will be impossible for me to make it."

"I'm in the same boat," sighed Martin; and he thought bitterly to himself: "Yes, your appointment was probably some after-theater dinner or a directors' banquet. Of what importance is that compared with mine? My very life depended on it."

"Well, that's too bad; but all we can do is to make the best of it," smiled the gentleman as he observed the deep gloom that overspread Martin's face.

He tried to laugh, and changed the subject.

Time went by, and the train still stood fast. The guard came in, and, stretching

himself out on one of the side seats, went off to sleep. The two passengers tried to pass away the time by talking on current topics, Martin speaking in an absent, listless way; for his heart had been broken by this last hard blow of fate.

The eagerly hoped-for position as piano-thumper was lost to him. He owned five cents. He had had nothing to eat since noon the day before. There was not a thing to look forward to.

Was it a wonder that poor Martin found it hard to keep his mind on any consecutive topic?

"Do you know," said the gentleman, struck by a sudden inspiration, "this being detained under the great river, the wreck ahead—goodness knows how serious it may be!—the important appointment which we are unable to keep, might make a novel plot for a magazine story."

"Dandy," agreed Martin, his eyes sparkling as the new idea brought him partly out of his melancholy.

Who could this pleasant, cultured-looking gentleman be? he began to wonder. From his remark about plots, possibly a writer—probably some high-brow journalist or author whose name Martin probably knew.

He began to take a very keen interest in the gentleman and in what he was saying. He longed to ask his name, but he did not wish to be so bold. Therefore he did not allow the conversation to wander from the subject of magazines and writers, hoping thereby to discover the man's identity, or at least his occupation.

The other spoke with a brilliancy that astonished Martin, but he was very careful to keep himself in the background.

"Do you know," said the other presently, with an animated expression, "one of the truest, most vivid short stories I have read in a long time was one called 'A Sonora Romance,' written by an obscure writer named Richard Martin?"

Martin's heart began to thump so violently that he was afraid it would burst.

"His characters are so real," continued his fellow passenger enthusiastically. "He makes real human beings out of those native Mexicans; and his touches of scenic description are striking. He makes you see everything in bold relief. Perhaps you have read the story. It was published in the *Idle Hours* magazine some time ago. I don't recollect which month. Did you see it?"

Martin was so overcome with emotion that he could not utter a word. His first impulse was to tell the gentleman that he was Richard Martin; but he thought of his present situation, and, rather than admit that he was a failure, refrained from making his identity known. Besides, why should the man believe him? Who was the man, anyway, and what good could he do?

The gentleman, taking Martin's silence as a negative, continued:

"I called up the editor, and asked for Martin's address; but he told me that he had lost track of the fellow. I said nothing more, as I surmised that Martin was one of their valued contributors, and they were afraid of losing him."

Martin smiled bitterly.

"Valued, indeed!" he thought.

If the gentleman only knew how utterly worthless Martin really was, he would soon change his opinion as to the veracity of the editor's information. Nevertheless, Martin's nerves tingled with excitement. He felt as though something wonderful was about to happen, and he sat speechless.

"But I have been looking for this Martin," the other went on. "He's a valuable man, and I'd like to get hold of him."

Martin could contain himself no longer. This might be the chance of his lifetime. He would risk being laughed at—anything—but he would make the attempt.

"Sir," he gasped, as one in a dream, "I am the author of 'A Sonora Romance.' My name is Richard Martin."

The gentleman gave a start, and looked at him quickly.

"What? You the author of that story!" he exclaimed; and then Martin saw an incredulous smile creep about the finely cut lips. "Really? Well, how remarkable!" he added doubtfully.

Martin flushed with anger and dismay.

"I am the author, and I can prove it to you. I'll quote parts of it to you," he cried hotly.

And Martin began. But his mind refused to work. After the fatigue and agony of suspense that he had suffered all day, the present strain of intense excitement proved too much for him, and he stammered, faltered incoherently, stopped, and turned pale.

Was fate to block his way again?

Martin was wild, frantic, and sat nervously biting his white lips.

The other, not knowing what to make of it, but feeling sorry for the young man, took a fountain pen and pad from his pocket.

"The *Idle Hours* magazine prints the facsimile signature of the author under each

story, as you know, of course. Would you please write your name upon this pad?"

The suggestion was like a ray of sunshine to Martin. Eagerly he grasped the pen, and dashed off his name.

"There," he cried, "now do you believe me?"

The last trace of doubt vanished from the other's face, and he began to apologize.

"Of course I didn't doubt your word, Mr. Martin, but I only wanted to make sure. I'm delighted to have found you, sir." Here he held out a cordial hand. "My name is Lewis Walton."

An exclamation of mingled joy and surprise burst from Martin's lips.

"The editor of the *Imperial Magazine?*" he murmured, grasping the offered hand.

"Exactly. How strange that we should meet here in so unusual a way!"

Then, after giving Martin a few moments in which to compose himself, he added: "You must have been down there at some time or other among those Mexicans whom you described so well. Were you?"

"Yes; I used to live there as a boy. My father was a mining engineer; his interests were in Mexico, so we lived there a number of years."

"Is that so? Then, you can speak the language?"

"Yes, fairly well."

"That's capital!" And the editor patted him warmly on the shoulder. "Capital! Are you under contract with any magazine at present, Mr. Martin?"

"No." Martin felt like yelling it out at the top of his voice.

"Very well, then, if we can come to terms I would like to send you down to that country to write special articles for our magazine. Would you care to do anything like that?"

"Immensely," gasped Martin, his eyes bulging from their sockets, and for the first time forgetting entirely about his hunger.

"Very well. The *Imperial* will pay your expenses, and we will arrange on a good price for each article. Do you agree, Mr. Martin?"

Here the train started off, awakening the guard with its roar, which made speaking difficult.

"I agree on the spot," shouted Martin.

"Good! Come to my office to-morrow morning, and we will settle the particulars," yelled the editor in Martin's ear; and Martin nodded with a grin of joy.

"What caused the delay?" asked Mr. Walton of the guard.

"The lights got twisted—that's all. There was nothing ahead of us, but lots behind," was the reply.

"Well, of all things! What a nuisance!" exclaimed the prominent editor.

"What a blessing!" thought Martin, as he heaved a happy sigh.

Despite all his good fortune, his hunger persisted in asserting itself, so while they were waiting to change for the local he made two or three attempts at speaking, and hesitated. Finally he mumbled something about having run off without his money, and if Mr. Walton would be so kind as to advance him a dollar he would be very grateful.

"Certainly," said the editor quite seriously, as he realized Martin's true condition. "Here, Mr. Martin, this is the smallest I have."

He smiled, and handed the author a crisp five-dollar bill.

"Just take this."

After a last cordial hand-shake and a promise to be on hand in the morning, Martin got off at Fifty-Ninth Street.

Beside himself with joy, and feeling as though he were walking on air, he started around Columbus Circle, intending to go down Eighth Avenue; but he got no farther than Pabst's big restaurant, where he went in and ordered a planked steak.

THE ROSE THOU GAV'ST.

THE rose thou gav'st at parting—
  Hast thou forgot the hour?
The moon was on the river,
  The dew was on the flower;
Thy voice was full of tenderness,
  But, ah! thy voice misleads—
The rose is like thy promises,
  Its thorn is like thy deeds.

Charles Swain.

The Odds Against the "Banner."

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Man Who Ran Away," "The Isle of Mysteries," "His Handicap Mate," etc.

The Knockout Blow to Young Demstreet's Expectations, and His Fight for His Property on the Jadestown Battle-Ground.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

JAMES DEMSTREET, expecting to inherit all his grandfather's wealth, finds, on the old gentleman's death, a string attached in the shape of a condition. He is to run the Jadestown *Banner* for a year, and in that time must double its circulation and make a net profit of a thousand dollars on the investment. This is bad enough, but matters are made worse when Jimmie discovers that his cousin, Fred Hamilton, has received a similar proposition from their grandfather, based on his success with a new paper in the same town, big enough to support only one. An additional incentive to success is the prospect of winning Jessie Caxton, with whom Fred is also in love.

Demstreet goes to Jadestown, and on the way to his new offices sees a collision in the street between a small boy, carrying a pail of coffee, and an old gentleman wearing lavender trousers. It turns out that the lad is the office-boy for the *Banner*, whose managing editor, Mr. Willett, discharges him at the behest of the pompous old gentleman, who turns out to be one Steiner, a leading merchant of Jadestown, and a big advertiser. Demstreet reinstates the boy, and writes an announcement for the *Banner* stating the circumstances. This angers Steiner, who promptly withdraws all his advertising, and influences the other members of the Retail Merchants' Association to do the same, turning it all over to Hamilton's new paper, the *Echo*, to be issued by the end of the week from offices across the street from the *Banner*.

CHAPTER V.

THE ENEMY OPENS FIRE.

GENERALLY a braggart is not a man to be feared. Big words do not make big deeds, and often the man who boasts is the man who fails to make good when actually put to the test.

But Demstreet knew that such was not the case with his cousin, Fred Hamilton. Although the latter was greatly given to boasting and blustering and much vaunting, he generally succeeded in anything he undertook.

He now went about the task of launching his new paper, the *Echo*, with such skill and energy that Demstreet became very much worried.

The latter, looking out of his office window a day after his arrival in Jadestown, saw workmen busily engaged in painting and decorating the vacant building, which was situated directly across the street from the *Banner* office.

Within four days the work of transforming the building to the needs of its new tenant was finished and a large and striking-looking sign bearing the legend: "The Daily Echo — Jadestown's Leading Newspaper," ornamented the front of the structure.

Then ponderous wagons, containing heavy machinery and office furniture, began to arrive, and Demstreet from his window saw the machinery and fixtures necessary to the operation of a modern newspaper carried into the building opposite.

Nor was his cousin's activity confined to these preparations. While the offices and plant of the *Echo* were being made ready, Hamilton hustled around, interviewing merchants and prominent citizens of Jadestown and near-by towns and villages to get them interested in his new paper.

On the first day of the following week the first issue of the Echo made its much-heralded appearance.

Demstreet eagerly purchased a copy and apprehensively perused its new and well-printed columns.

He discovered that his crafty cousin had not failed to make capital of his (Demstreet's) trouble with Steiner, precipitated by the office-boy.

Not only were the pages of the new paper liberally sprinkled with the advertisements of Steiner and the other members of the local Retail Merchants' Association; but there was a long editorial article on the front page, double leaded and in big black type, which began as follows:

OUTRAGEOUS ATTACK UPON A PROMINENT CITIZEN.

Mr. Maurice Steiner, One of Jadestown's Leading Merchants, Brutally Assaulted by an Employee of the Banner and then Ridiculed and Jeered at by that Shameless Publication.

THIS SORT OF JOURNALISM MUST BE WIPED OUT.

That is Why the Jadestown Daily Echo Has Come Into Existence. It Will be a Clean Sheet, Published for Clean People, With Friendship and Consideration for All and Malice Toward None.

LEADING CITIZENS OF JADESTOWN INDORSE THE NEW VENTURE.

They Denounce the Banner for Its Ruffianly Policy and Welcome the Echo to Jadestown, Declaring That There Has Long Been a Need for Just Such a Paper.

The rest of the article was written in a vein thoroughly characteristic of Fred Hamilton.

The first day's issue of the new paper sold well, and to add to Demstreet's despair the sale of his own journal had begun to fall off perceptibly. Several old subscribers had written to the office canceling their yearly subscriptions and, in addition, the sale of single copies had shown a decidedly marked decrease.

The prediction of Willett, the managing editor, had turned out to be correct. The stimulated circulation which had greeted the first issue of the *Banner* under Demstreet's ownership and had greatly encouraged that young man, had proved only temporary.

The people of Jadestown had bought the *Banner* to read Demstreet's article concerning the incident of Steiner and the can of coffee; but, their curiosity satisfied, they had not continued to buy the paper.

What was still more discouraging was the fact that the *Banner* was still barren of advertising. Demstreet had scurried around town trying to persuade business people to patronize his sheet; but thus far his efforts had been without result.

Hamilton met Demstreet on the street and laughed at him sarcastically.

"Allow me to congratulate you, my dear cousin," he jeered. "You've certainly made a brilliant start. And, by the way, I want to thank you for picking that fight with Steiner. You could not have done me a bigger favor. It enabled me to launch the *Echo* under unusually favorable circumstances. My paper is a pronounced success already. The subscriptions are simply pouring in and so are the advertisements. Don't you regret now, my dear James, that you did not agree to the proposition I made you the other day?"

"No, I don't," replied Demstreet with great heat. "I wouldn't listen to that proposition if you made it to me again now. I'm going to carry out the terms of our grandfather's will honestly—and I'm not beaten yet, Fred Hamilton, so don't crow too soon. The *Banner's* circulation is still way ahead of yours."

"Yes, but it won't be for long. I've scarcely got started yet. I'm going to take away all your subscribers before many days have passed. And, besides, you haven't any advertising and my pages are full of good paying ads. I've got you whipped to a frazzle already, my boy.

"As for renewing my offer to you to fake this fight and divide our grandfather's money between us, you need not comfort yourself with any such hope. That proposition is not open to you any more.

"I don't mind admitting that before you started to take charge of the *Banner* I was a little bit afraid of you, Jimmie. I gave you credit for possessing brains and, even though you had no experience in newspaper work, I supposed that, with the lead your paper had in circulation and standing, you were going to be a little too strong for me. That is why I made that proposition to you.

"But now I am mighty glad you did not take me up on the offer. I see now that I have nothing to fear from you and your decadent old sheet.

"In fact, I don't mind telling you in confidence, that I have a painful surprise in store for you. It would not astonish me at all if your newspaper should suspend publication before the end of this week. I'm going to deal a certain crushing blow before another twenty-four hours have passed, and I verily believe that that will finish you and put you out of your misery."

"You're only four-flushing!" cried Demstreet contemptuously.

"Am I, indeed? You wait and see. I won't tell you what this surprise is going to consist of, because if I did so it would not be a surprise any longer; but I confidently expect that when it comes it's going to stagger you."

He went off chuckling, leaving his cousin much depressed.

"I wonder what he meant by these mysterious words," said poor Demstreet to himself. "Was that only a bluff or has he really got something big up his sleeve?"

He was not left long to wonder. The crushing blow fell that same day.

Thomas Yates, the red-haired, freckle-faced youth who acted as assistant editor, reporter, etc., on the *Banner*, came into Demstreet's office with a very sheepish expression on his face.

"I am sorry to have to say, sir," he faltered, "that I've got to quit the *Banner*. I want to hand in my resignation to go into effect at once, sir."

"Going to leave me, Yates!" exclaimed Demstreet, in surprise. "Why is that?"

"I've got another job, sir."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Yates," said Demstreet, a worried look on his face. "I hate to lose you because I greatly relied on you to help me get out the *Banner*. I'm new at the game and don't know anything about this town yet. Won't you stay until I can find somebody to fill your place?"

"No, sir. I couldn't do that," replied the young man. "I've got to start on my new job immediately. I'm sorry, Mr. Demstreet; but business is business, you know. I've received a mighty good offer and I can't turn it down."

"What is this new job you've been offered?" demanded Demstreet, with sudden suspicion.

Thomas Yates stared hard at the floor and shifted his feet nervously.

"It's—it's a job on the new paper, the *Echo!*" he stammered. "Mr. Hamilton has made me a very liberal offer to come and work for him."

"Ah! I guessed as much!" exclaimed Demstreet with a scowl. "So you're going over to the enemy, eh, Yates?"

"Yes, Mr. Demstreet. I'm very sorry; but, as I said before, business is business, you know."

"Very true," observed Demstreet coldly. "Well, good-by, Yates. *I* won't detain you any longer. Kindly close the door as you go out."

Yates hurried out of the room, and soon afterward, Willett, the managing editor, who had been out to get "a bite to eat," came into the office.

Willett's face was flushed and he appeared to be in a highly nervous state.

"Mr. Demstreet," he stammered, "I—I'm going to leave you, sir. I desire to hand in my resignation—to take effect now."

"Ah! You too, Willett?" exclaimed Demstreet, turning pale. "You're going over to the rival paper, I presume."

"Yes, sir; Mr. Hamilton has made me a very good offer. I am to be assistant editor of the *Echo* at almost double the salary I was getting here. I'm sorry to have to leave you so abruptly, Mr. Demstreet, but—business is business, you know."

"So young Yates was remarking a few minutes ago," said Demstreet bitterly. "I suppose you're both right. I believe it's the custom for rats to leave a ship when it's sinking."

Willett's face turned first very white and then very red.

"I—I don't think you have any right to make a remark of that sort, sir," he declared indignantly. "Your figure of speech is most unfair. I am no rat, Mr. Demstreet, and neither is young Yates. I'll give you a better simile, sir. When a captain deliberately scuttles his ship you can't blame the crew for taking to the boats.

"That's the position Yates and I are in, Mr. Demstreet. You've deliberately gone to work and wrecked the *Banner*. I've got a wife and family to support, and I believe Yates is engaged to be married. We are not to blame for looking out for ourselves.

"Mr. Hamilton made us this offer to-day. He told us that he would give us good jobs if we went over to him at once; but that if we waited until the *Banner* suspended publication he would not take either of us on. Therefore we had to agree to join his staff immediately."

"So this is the big surprise my cousin promised me!" mused Demstreet. "Well, he was right. I guess he's dealt me a crushing blow all right. He's robbed me of my editorial staff, and it's quite evident that I can't get out the *Banner* all alone. I guess I'm as good as done for."

He did not express these gloomy thoughts aloud, however, but turned to his managing editor with a grim smile.

"Very well, Willett," he said. "I accept your resignation to take effect at once, good-by—I wish you luck with your new job."

"Thank you, Mr. Demstreet. I hope you don't bear me any ill-will, sir. You can't really blame me for making this change."

"No, I suppose not," replied Demstreet wearily. "Of course you're right to look out for your wife and family. I take back my remark about the rats and the sinking ship. I should not have said that. I guess your simile is a much more appropriate one,

Willett. One cannot blame the crew for saving themselves when the captain has scuttled the ship, and I guess I've scuttled the *Banner* all right."

After Willett had made his exit, Demstreet sat motionless at his desk for many minutes reviewing the dismal situation.

His brier pipe, gripped between his tightly clenched teeth, had gone out, but he did not bother to relight it.

"I guess I'm beaten," he mused. "It doesn't seem worth while to keep up the fight any longer. I can't get out the *Banner* all by myself and I don't know how to find a new staff.

"I suppose I could take a trip to New York and hire a couple of newspaper men; but they would be strangers to Jadestown, and consequently would be ignorant of local conditions and not of much use. And besides, who would get out the *Banner* while I was away?

"I give my cousin Fred credit for having got the best of me. I guess he's going to be the heir to our grandfather's fortune all right. I might as well quit right now."

Just then his glance settled upon a framed portrait that stood upon his desk—a photograph of Jessie Caxton.

At sight of that picture his mood suddenly changed and a determined, belligerent expression came to his face.

"No," he cried, thumping his desk with his fist. "I'm not quite beaten yet, and I'm not going to give up the fight. What the deuce am I thinking of? I'm no quitter. I'll continue to get out the *Banner* if I have to write every line of it myself."

There came a knock at the door and the office-boy entered.

The youngster had been out on an errand for Demstreet and had returned to report the result.

"Ah, Johnnie," exclaimed the latter, surveying the lad with a grim smile, "I was forgetting about you. Have you, too, come to tell me that you desire to hand in your resignation and go over to the rival paper?"

"Me? No, sir," exclaimed the boy, in great surprise. "I ain't going with no rival paper. I don't understand you, boss. What's the answer?"

"Mr. Willett and Mr. Yates have left the *Banner* to join the staff of the *Echo*," explained Demstreet. "I thought that perhaps you also had received an offer to join the *Echo's* force."

"No, sir. They ain't asked me," declared the boy earnestly. "And what's more, I wouldn't go if they did. I wouldn't leave the *Banner* for a job that paid double, Mr. Demstreet—not after the bully way you stuck to me when that Steiner gent wanted me fired."

"Good boy!" exclaimed Demstreet with enthusiasm. "I'm glad to see that you are not ungrateful, Johnnie. Such loyalty must not go unrewarded.

"Your salary is going to be double from now on and, in addition to running errands you are going to be assistant editor.

"Our staff is pretty small, Johnnie, but you and I are going to get out the *Banner* betwen us, my boy—and what's more we're going to do our best to make a success of it, too."

CHAPTER VI.

A DAY OF TRIUMPH.

LITTLE Johnnie's face flushed with pleasure at his employer's words.

"Do you really mean that, boss?" he gasped. "Is that on the level about the double salary and the assistant editorship, or are you just kiddin' me?"

"I'm not kidding, you, Johnnie," replied Demstreet gravely. "I'm thoroughly in earnest, I assure you. Of course, you will have to continue to run errands just the same, because I need an errand-boy just as badly as I do an assistant editor, but you shall act in the latter capacity as well."

"But I ain't strong on spellin', boss," confessed the lad hesitatingly, "and I never was no good at composition. I'm scared that I can't make good as an editor."

"There's a whole lot of editors who are not strong on spelling and who are exceedingly weak at composition, Johnnie, judging from the stuff they turn out," said Demstreet. "Besides, I sha'n't expect you to do any writing. Your editorial duties will be more of an advisory nature. You've got a wise little head, and you've been with the *Banner* for some time, so you may be able to give me some good suggestions as to how to get out the paper."

The youngster threw out his chest.

"Well, yes, boss. I guess I could do that, all right. You're welcome to my advice any time you want it. There's somethin' I'd like to suggest right now."

"What is it, Johnnie?" inquired Demstreet, regarding the earnest boy with an amused smile.

"It's about that feller Steiner, boss. Why

don't you go back at him for takin' his ad. from the *Banner* and persuadin' them other fellers to take out theirs? I think I know a way of gettin' square with that mutt."

"You do, eh?" exclaimed Demstreet, with a note of mingled eagerness and surprise in his voice. "What is it, Johnnie? That's just the kind of suggestion I'm looking for."

"Well, boss, that feller Steiner pretends to be a such a square and upright man of business. He boasts that he's strictly on the level, and that every man, woman, and child in Jadestown can be sure of a square deal at his store. He calls his store 'The Square Deal Department Store,' you know."

"Yes, I know that, Johnnie; go ahead, my boy. You've got me very much interested."

"Well, I happen to know, boss, that Steiner ain't such a square dealer, after all. He sells fake goods at his store, and I kin prove it."

"You can. By Jove, Johnnie, you're all right!" exclaimed his employer enthusiastically. "That's just the stuff I want."

"In this mornin's *Echo,*" the boy continued, "Steiner's got a half-page, advertisin' a big sale of genuine imported oil-paintin's.

"I happen to know, boss, that them pictures he's offerin' for sale ain't imported at all, and they ain't genuine paintin's either. They was manufactured in a factory in New York, and they're nothin' but cheap lithographs pasted on canvas and then varnished and touched up here and there with oil paint to give them the look of bein' hand done. That's the kind of a cheap faker that mutt Steiner is."

"Good Heavens, Johnnie, are you sure of this?" cried Demstreet excitedly. "This is a very valuable piece of information—if it's the truth. How do you know all this?"

"I've got a cousin, boss, who works in the factory in New York where these pictures are made. His boss turns them out by the thousands. It's quite a big business. They're made entirely by machinery, except for the handwork on them, which is done by a couple of retouchers, who daub on the oil paint afterwards so as to give them the rough look of a real paintin'. They're got up so swell that they'd deceive anybody who wasn't no picure expert.

"This cousin of mine is visitin' at my home at present, and he was tellin' me yesterday that Steiner placed a big order with his boss a few days ago, so when I saw Steiner's advertisement in the *Echo* this morning I knew right away what the game was."

"Johnnie, my boy," cried Demstreet enthusiastically, "I'm mighty glad I doubled your salary and promoted you to the post of assistant editor. You're worth it.

"Run out now, as fast as you can, and purchase one of those pictures at Steiner's store. Here's ten dollars. Get back here with the picture as soon as possible. I'm something of a judge of paintings, and I'll be able to tell right away if these pictures are fakes.

"And if they *are* fakes," he went on with a grim smile, "I'll hand our friend Steiner a jolt that will jar him some, I reckon."

"Goody!" exclaimed the new assistant editor joyously, and hurried off to execute his errand.

Fifteen minutes later he returned, bearing a picture in a gilt frame which was almost as big as himself.

"Here it is, boss!" he exclaimed. "I had to wait, because there was quite a big rush at the picture-counter, and it was some time before I could get served. Them fake pictures are sellin' like wild-fire. The people of this town must be a fine bunch of suckers."

Demstreet eagerly unwrapped the big package and surveyed it carefully.

"You're right, Johnnie!" he exclaimed with a sigh of satisfaction. "This is nothing but a cheap lithograph, pasted on canvas, varnished and retouched by hand with oil paint. And Steiner had the nerve to charge ten dollars for it, eh? Well, we'll open the eyes of the people of Jadestown a little, I guess."

"Are you going to hand it to him hot, boss?" cried the boy appreciatively.

"Am I? You wait a little while, Johnnie, and you shall see. Fill my ink-well, my boy, and get me a fresh pen. Don't let anybody disturb me for the next hour. I'm going to be very busy."

He sat down at his desk and began to write fast. In less than an hour he had completed a two-column editorial article, which began as follows:

WHEN IS A PAINTING NOT A PAINTING? WHEN IT'S BOUGHT AT STEINER'S "SQUARE DEAL STORE."

The Banner Herewith Exposes a Fake Bargain Sale of Fake Oil-Paintings, and Enlightens the Good People of Jadestown as to How They Are Being Duped by Their Leading Merchant.

Demstreet showed what he had written to Johnnie, who chuckled over the copy.

"That's hot stuff, boss!" exclaimed the boy. "I reckon it will jar Steiner some. You're going to print it on the front page, of course?"

"I should say so. It will be on the front page of to-morrow's issue, and the head-lines will be printed in the biggest type we've got. Take this copy down to the composing-room, Johnnie, and tell the foreman to let me have a proof as soon as possible."

Johnnie was down-stairs quite a long time, and when he returned to Demstreet's private office his face was flushed and he was very excited.

"Say, boss," he cried, "I've just found out something that will interest you. That feller Hamilton, of the *Echo*, has been tryin' some dirty business."

"He has, eh?" exclaimed Demstreet. "What has he been doing now, Johnnie?"

"He's been tryin' to persuade our compositors and pressmen to quit the *Banner* and go over to the *Echo*. I heard the men talkin' about it when I went down-stairs with that copy."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Demstreet, turning pale. "Has that confounded rascal been after them, too? If he succeeds in winning those fellows over I'm done for. That's the last straw. I can't get out a paper without men to set the type and run the presses."

"Don't worry, sir," said the boy, with a reassuring smile. "Them fellers ain't goin' over to the *Echo*. They're goin' to stick to you. I fixed it all right."

"*You* did?" exclaimed Demstreet, patting the youngster approvingly on the shoulder. "Good boy, Johnnie. How did you manage it?"

"I gave it to them straight from the shoulder, boss. I says to them: 'See here, you fellers, you're a fine bunch of mutts to be thinkin' of quittin' a good boss like ours to go over to the rival paper.

"'I'm a workin' man like yourselves,' I says to them, 'and it's up to us workin' men to stick together. The boss stood by me like a man when that bloomin' plutocrat Steiner wanted to have me fired, and it's for standin' by me that the boss is now havin' trouble with the *Banner*,' I says to them. 'Fellers,' I says, 'are you goin' to let Steiner and that mean-lookin' guy, Hamilton, put Mr. Demstreet out of business for doin' the square thing by a poor hard-workin' kid, or are you goin' to show yourselves to be men by stickin' to our good boss to the last gasp?'"

"And what did they say to that, Johnnie?" inquired Demstreet eagerly.

"When I'd got through talkin', boss, Henessey, the foreman, says: 'By Jimminy, boys, the kid is right. This feller Demstreet is all right, and we ought to stick to him for the game way he stuck to this kid and told Steiner to go to blazes. All in favor of throwin' down the offer of that cuss Hamilton and stickin' to our present boss signify the same by sayin' aye.'

"And they all said 'Aye,' and voted to stick to you, boss," went on the boy, with a grin. "So there's no need for you to worry any about that."

"By Jove, Johnnie, you're all right!" exclaimed Demstreet. "I prophesy that you're going to be a great politician when you grow up. That's another good turn I owe you, my lad. If those fellows had quit, the *Banner* would have had to suspend publication, I guess."

The next morning the article on the *Banner's* front page created quite a lot of excitement in Jadestown. There was a rush to buy copies of the paper; so much so that by noon the entire issue was sold out.

But a boom in circulation was not the only result of the *Banner's* exposé of Mr. Steiner's business methods. The article denouncing the fake oil-paintings caused the propritor of "The Square Deal Store" a lot of trouble, which fact pleased Demstreet even more than did the increased sale of his paper.

The people of Jadestown, attracted by Steiner's alluring advertisement in the *Echo*, had bought largely of the alleged imported pictures, and they were furious when they learned how they had been deceived.

That afternoon, Johnnie, who had been sent out on an errand by Demstreet, returned to the office with a broad grin illuminating his sharp features.

"Say, boss," he chuckled, "I dropped into Steiner's store on my way back, and a fr'en' of mine who woiks there told me that there's been a crowd of angry people goin' there all day, shovin' the *Banner* article in Steiner's face and demandin' their money back.

"Steiner is furious. He's all up in the air. He caught sight of me in his store, and he chased me out, bellowin' at me like an angry bull. You've certainly got him goin', boss."

Demstreet burst into a roar of laughter.

"By Jove!" he cried. "This is the happiest day of my life!"

"But that ain't all, boss," went on Johnnie, still chuckling. "I've got better than

that to tell you. Steiner's got into trouble with the Retail Merchants' Association on account of the *Banner* article.

"It seems that several of the members of the association bought some of those paintings and hung them in their front parlors. Steiner pursuaded them that they were gettin' great bargains, and they believed him. They didn't suspect that he'd hand a lemon to members of his own organization.

"Now that they know the truth, they're mighty sore, and I guess there's goin' to be a lot of trouble for Mr. Steiner at the next meetin'."

"That's fine!" exclaimed Demstreet delightedly. "This move has turned out even better than I dared hope for."

It was a day of triumph for the *Banner* and its exultant young proprietor; for just as the latter was preparing to leave his office that evening, a stout, red-faced man entered and requested a few words with Demstreet.

The visitor was Maurice Steiner himself; but he looked very different from the pompous person with whom Demstreet had quarreled over the firing of Johnnie some days previously.

Steiner carried his hat in his hand, and his manner was quite humble as he stood nervously in front of Demstreet's desk.

"I—I've come to insert an advertisement in the *Banner*," he stammered. "I—I want a whole page in to-morrow's issue, and I'll use a page three times a week from now on.

"And er — by the way, Mr. Demstreet, you'd do me a great favor which I should appreciate very much if you'd be good enough to publish a little editorial in to-morrow's issue stating that it was all a mistake about those—about those paintings."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded Demstreet sternly. "If you suppose I'm going to publish a retraction of our article in this morning's issue, you are mistaken.

"That article told the truth, and the *Banner* will retract nothing—not if you fill our whole paper with advertisements."

"I—I don't ask you to print a retraction, sir," faltered Steiner. "I don't expect that. All I ask is that you be good enough to print a few lines stating that I acknowledged that those pictures were frauds—but that I myself was deceived by the man I bought them from in New York.

"You can say that the wholesaler who sold me the pictures told me that they were genuine, imported oil-paintings, and that I was foolish enough to take his word for it without investigating.

"If you will do this for me I will endeavor to show my appreciation, not only by bringing my advertising to the *Banner*, but by persuading everybody I know to advertise in your able newspaper."

"All right, Mr. Steiner," said Demstreet, struggling desperately to hide a grin of satisfaction and triumph. "I guess we can accommodate you by printing a little article along the lines you suggest. But it will have to appear over your own signature, of course. You write out whatever you want us to publish, and we'll print it to-morrow morning in the form of a statement from you."

After the humbled proprietor of "The Square Deal Store" had departed, Demstreet jumped impulsively from his chair and grabbed the hand of the youthful assistant editor with an energy that caused that youngster to wince.

"By Jove, Johnnie, old fellow!" he cried joyously. "We've won out! We're going to make a success of the *Banner* after all."

CHAPTER VII.

A FRIEND ARRIVES.

For the next few weeks it looked as if Demstreet was going to win the journalistic battle for his late grandfather's fortune. The *Banner* continued to prosper. New subscriptions came in every day. To be sure, the circulation was still far from being doubled, as was required by the terms of the will; but as Demstreet had several months in which to bring about that desired result, he felt that the outlook was decidedly encouraging.

True to his word, Steiner continued to give the *Banner* a page advertisement three times a week, and, as this was twice as much advertising as he had given the newspaper under its previous owner, the profits of the publication increased to an extent that was very gratifying to Demstreet.

All the other members of the Retail Merchants' Association who had advertised in the *Banner* prior to Demstreet's quarrel with Steiner had brought back their patronage to the paper, and, in addition, Demstreet had managed to land three new profitable advertisements from people who had never advertised in the paper before.

To say that Demstreet was delighted at the way things were going would be to put it very mildly. The young man's heart was as light as an air-bubble, and the *Banner* editorial-room echoed all day long with his merry laughter.

As his good spirits increased, those of his cousin and rival, Fred Hamilton, took a downward course. It was a source of much chagrin and disappointment to the proprietor of the *Echo* to see the *Banner* rise triumphant from the sea of trouble which had threatened to swallow it. Even the fact that Steiner and the other members of the Retail Merchants' Association continued to advertise in the *Echo* also, after replacing their advertisements in the *Banner,* could not console him.

"Confound that cousin of mine," he growled to Willett, the new assistant editor, "he's got the darndest luck of anybody I ever heard of. I thought for sure I had him down and out a few weeks ago, and yet here he is stronger than ever. We've got to do something to down the *Banner* and boost the *Echo,* Willett."

"Yes, sir," replied the assistant editor nervously.

Hamilton turned upon him in a sudden fit of fury.

"Darn it, Willett," he shouted, "can't you say anything else but 'Yes, sir'? That's all I ever hear from you. You're no good whatever to the *Echo.* You haven't made a single suggestion since you've been with the paper. I want a man of ideas. I hired you and Yates because I thought you could give me some valuable suggestions as to how to increase our circulation and get advertising, and neither of you is any earthly good."

Of course, Hamilton was not adhering strictly to the truth in stating that his reason for adding Willett and Yates to his staff had been solely to get the benefit of their services. His real motive had been to cripple his cousin by depriving the latter of his assistants and leaving him to get out the *Banner* by himself. It maddened him to see that this scheme had not been a success.

Willett was shrewd enough to realize why he had been induced by Hamilton to leave the *Banner,* but he did not argue the matter. He was beginning to ask himself uneasily whether he had not made a mistake in quitting Demstreet.

"I—I think we're getting out a pretty good newspaper, Mr. Hamilton," he faltered. "You must take into consideration the fact that we're a new publication, you know, sir. It takes time to get a hold on circulation and advertising. Our circulation is increasing slowly but steadily, and we've got quite a few advertisements already. I honestly believe in a couple of years we'll be equal to, if not ahead of, the *Banner.*"

"In a couple of years!" shouted Hamilton furiously. "That won't do at all, you idiot! It might as well be a couple of centuries as a couple of years. We've got to beat the *Banner* right now. We've got to wipe that confounded sheet off the earth before another ten months have passed. If you don't think it's possible for us to do that, you'd better say so at once, and I'll get another man in your place."

"I've—I've no doubt but that it can be done, sir," stammered poor Willett in a tone that belied his words. "On second thoughts, I'm sure that it won't be a difficult task."

He felt quite certain now that he had made a very serious mistake in quitting the *Banner.*

Yates, too, came in for a full measure of Hamilton's wrath.

"See here, you red-haired, freckle-faced young Rube," the irate proprietor of the *Echo* shouted at him, "you've got to do something big, and do it migthy soon, or you'll be out in the cold world looking for a new job. Do you understand that? Here's that fellow Demstreet, without any journalistic experience, and no editorial staff except an office-boy, printing almost as much news as the *Echo,* with its staff of three experienced newspaper men.

"I'll be dashed if I don't think that I made a big mistake by not leaving Demstreet you two fellows and taking away his office-boy. I really think that would have been dealing him a harder blow."

"I'm doing the best I can, Mr. Hamilton," protested Yates in an injured tone.

"Doing the best you can is not good enough," declared Hamilton sternly. "You've got to do better. I want a big news beat—a scoop that will make the *Echo* talked about throughout the entire county. Go out and look for such a beat, Yates, and don't come back until you find it. If you're not successful in your hunt, you need not come at all."

Yates went out of the *Echo* office in a very dejected mood. He, too, was beginning to regret exceedingly that he had left the *Banner.*

In the meantime, another dialogue was in progress in the office of the newspaper across the street.

Demstreet was shaking hands effusively with a tall, serious-looking young man who had dropped into the *Banner* office most unexpectedly.

"Why, Dick Farriman—dear old Dick!" he exclaimed. "This is indeed a pleasant surprise! Who would have thought of seeing your old phiz in this out-of-the-way burg?"

"Who would have thought of seeing you with your coat off and your shirt-sleeves rolled up, hard at work?" retorted Farriman, with a smile of approbation. "This is indeed a splendid improvement, Jimmie. The last time I saw you, you were a disgraceful exhibition of indolence and inertia. Remember how I reproached you for it, old pal? I'm mighty glad to see that you've settled down to serious business at last."

"I suppose you know why I'm here," said Demstreet. "You've heard about the queer will that grandfather of mine made?"

"Yes, I heard something about it. I overheard some of the fellows at the club talking about it the other day. You've got to run this little country sheet successfully for a year in order to win the old gent's money, have you not? How are you making out, Jimmie?"

"Pretty good, thank you. I had a lot of trouble at the start; but things are going pretty smoothly now. Running a newspaper is quite a lot of fun. I think I shall stick to the business, even though I succeed in winning my grandfather's money. By the way, Dick, let me introduce you to my assistant editor."

He pointed to Johnnie, who was perched on a high stool making clippings from a formidable pile of newspapers.

Johnnie acknowledged the introduction with much dignity.

"Glad to meet you, sir," said Farriman, eying the precocious youngster with some surprise. "But where is your editorial staff, Jimmie? I don't see any of them around."

"In addition to being my assistant editor, Johnnie is also my staff," explained Demstreet solemnly.

"But you don't mean to tell me that you are getting out a whole newspaper with only this—er—this gentleman to help you!" exclaimed Farriman in astonishment.

"That's the truth, Dick. I did have a managing editor and a reporter when I started in, but my alert cousin across the street took them away from me. I suppose you know that Fred Hamilton is running an opposition newspaper in the hope of beating me out of our grandfather's fortune?"

"Yes; I heard that. How is he making out, Jimmie? Is he doing you any harm?"

"Well, yes, he is, to some extent. The existence of a rival sheet makes it much harder for me to double my circulation and make a clear profit of a thousand dollars by the end of the year, as I am required to do according to the will. There's room for only one daily newspaper in Jadestown, you see. The place isn't big enough to support two. I'm beginning to believe, though, from the way things have been going lately, that the *Banner* is going to be that one paper, and that the rival sheet will be crowded to the wall. I don't want to boast, Dick, but I honestly believe I've got my cousin beaten."

"But I don't see how you can get out a newspaper at all without a staff," declared Farriman, with a puzzled frown. "How do you get your news when you haven't any reporters to go out after items?"

His friend smiled. "That is easily explained, Dick. A country newspaper is vastly different to a big metropolitan daily.

"In the first place, a whole lot of good copy is brought to the office by kind-hearted townspeople without any solicitation on my part. The *Banner* has been established for so long that it's got a lot of old friends who are glad to help us out with items which, when properly edited by your humble servant, go a long way toward filling up the paper.

"Then, we subscribe to a New York press service, which sends us a lot of stuff by wire, and, in addition, we get the early editions of the evening papers from near-by big cities, and clip a lot of matter from them, rewriting them and using them in our issue of the following morning.

"And, lastly, our friend Johnnie here is quite a little hustler after news. Nearly every time he goes out he comes back with a local item that's worth printing.

"By these means we get along so nicely that a larger staff would be nothing but a needless expense. That's why I have not bothered to replace Willett and Yates, the two men who left me to go over to my rival. I am glad to save their salaries, because I've got to keep expenses down as low as possible if I expect to make a thousand dollars profit in twelve months."

"I see," said Farriman. "Well, I'm glad to find, Jimmie, that you're going at this thing in such a thoroughly businesslike manner. By the way, old chap, I met a friend of yours in New York yesterday."

"A friend of mine? Who was it?"

"A young lady—Miss Jessie Caxton."

"Ah!" exclaimed Demstreet eagerly. "Did she say anything about me, Dick?"

His friend laughed.

"No; to be quite candid with you, my boy, she did not. I met her on the street, and our conversation was very brief. You did not figure in it at all."

Demstreet sighed.

"Did you tell her that you were going to Jadestown, Dick?"

"Oh, yes. I mentioned that I was starting for this place in the morning, and she wished me a pleasant trip."

"And yet she gave you no message for me!" muttered Demstreet moodily. "She knew that I was here, and that you would see me, and yet she sent me no word by you. That fact confirms my suspicions. There's something wrong."

"What do you mean, Jimmie?" inquired Farriman, astonished by his friend's tragic tone and look.

"I mean this, Dick: I'm in love with Jessie Caxton; I hope to make her my wife some day. I have written to her every day since I've been out here, and at first she used to answer my letters with flattering promptitude. But for the past week I haven't had a line from her. It's worrying me, Dick."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed his friend reassuringly. "You're troubling yourself about nothing, my boy. She's probably been too busy to write. Some girls are beastly careless in the matter of correspondence, you know."

But Demstreet refused to be comforted.

"It's more than mere carelessness," he said. "I feel positive of that. There's something wrong. A few weeks ago that rascally cousin of mine boasted that he intended to take the girl away from me before he got through. I thought that an idle threat at the time, but now I've got a suspicion there was something behind his words, and that he has something to do with Jessie's strange behavior."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENEMY SCORES HEAVILY.

FARRIMAN tried in vain to persuade his friend that the latter's fears regarding Jessie Caxton were groundless.

"If I only could get away from here and go to New York to see her!" he sighed. "But I can't leave the *Banner* in charge of little Johnnie, and the paper has got to be published every day. A few minutes' talk with her might enable me to straighten things out; but I can't get away. I've got to stick to my post."

Farriman looked at his friend approvingly.

"I'm mighty glad to hear you talk that way, Jimmie, old man. I mean I'm glad to hear you state that it's impossible for you to leave even to straighten things out with the girl you love.

"That shows to what extent you're settled down to hard work at last, and how much you've got your heart in your business. You're certainly a greatly changed fellow from the Jimmie Demstreet of a few weeks ago. It's a splendid improvement, old fellow, and I'm delighted to see it. You know I was always worried about your career."

"Well, I'm not worrying about my career now," declared Demstreet irritably. "I'm worrying about Jessie Caxton. It's mainly for her sake that I've settled down to hard work. I want to make a success of the *Banner* so as to be in a position to make her my wife. If I lose her I don't care what happens to the sheet nor my grandfather's fortune nor myself either."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Farriman with a smile. "Are you really as badly smitten as all that? Well, cheer up, my love-sick friend. You're not going to lose the lady of your dreams. By the way, why don't you call her up on the long-distance phone? She's got a telephone in her apartment, of course, and you could have a talk with her over the wire almost as satisfactorily as if you took a trip to New York to see her."

"I've tried that," sighed Demstreet. "I've called her apartment on long-distance at least a dozen times. Each time a maid servant has answered the wire, and, after going to inquire, has come back with the disappointing message that Miss Caxton is not at home. I can't help thinking that Jessie has been at home and that she has been dodging me."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," declared Farriman cheerily. "I'll make it my business to go to see her when I return to New York next week, and I'll find out from her what the trouble is, and send you a complete report.

"In the meantime, Jimmie, let's change the subject. I haven't had anything to eat for several hours, and I'm as hungry as a bear. I've come here to take you out to lunch. I suppose you can throw down the cares of office for an hour or so, and accompany me to the town's best restaurant—eh, my busy editor?"

"All right," replied Demstreet with a sigh. "I'll go with you. By the way, Dick, you haven't told me yet what mission has brought you to Jadestown."

"I intend to tell you about that over luncheon," replied his friend. "Come on, Jimmie. Get your hat and lead the way, old fellow."

Demstreet piloted his companion to Blaney's, on Main Street.

"Is this the best eating-place in Jadestown?" inquired Farriman, as they entered and seated themselves in the none too pretentious looking restaurant.

"Well—er—no, it isn't the best," replied Demstreet with some embarrassment. "The fact is, Dick, I've brought you here because I'm in hopes of getting Blaney's advertisement for the *Banner,* and therefore I've got to keep on the right side of him. Hope you don't mind, Dick?"

His friend burst into a roar of laughter.

"By Jove, Jimmie! You're all business nowadays—even while you're eating. You deserve to succeed. Of course, I don't mind eating here, and I hope you land Blaney's advertising. I'll have to narrate this incident to the fellows at the club when I get back to New York. I bet they'll be surprised to learn how much you've changed."

While they were eating, Farriman explained the errand which had brought him to Jadestown.

"You can congratulate me, old chap," he said. "I've landed something quite big in the engineering line. It's a pretty important job for a fellow as young as I am.

"The D. P. and M. Railroad has decided to run a branch line through Jadestown, connecting with the main line at Hopperstown, a point sixty miles from here.

"The new road is to be electrified, and I'm to have charge of the work. That's why I'm here now, Jimmie. I've come to look the ground over."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Demstreet. "This *is* a pretty big thing for you, isn't it, Dick? It ought to be the making of you. I do congratulate you with all my heart, old fellow."

"Thanks. And, by the way, Jimmie, this ought to prove a good thing for you, too, in a way. The new railroad through here is bound to create a big boom for Jadestown. There's sure to be a wave of prosperity here, and that ought to make things pretty good for the *Banner,* eh?"

"That's so," said Demstreet. "When will the actual work start, Dick?"

"Within a few months. The company is only waiting for my report before ordering me to go ahead."

"But how about the necessary franchise?"

"Oh, we've got that all right. The D. P. and M. has secretly purchased the charter of the old Jadestown trolley-road. There's nothing in their franchise which prevents us from using the right-of-way granted to them years ago."

Farriman went on to describe in detail the plans for the new road, and Demstreet listened with great interest.

When the former had finished, his friend leaned across the table and said eagerly: "By the way, Dick, I suppose you won't mind if I print all this in to-morrow's issue of the *Banner?*"

"I'm sorry, old chap, but I can't permit you to do that. I've told you about it in the strictest confidence."

"But it would make such a whopping big story," pleaded Demstreet. "And it would be a clean beat on the *Echo.* It would make the *Banner* talked of all over the State. Can't you stretch a point and let me use it, Dick?"

"No. I can't. I'm sorry, old man. I'd like to let you print the story, of course; but the D. P. and M. does not want its intentions made public just now, for certain reasons."

"It would be the biggest piece of local news Jadestown has had for many a day. It would mean a big increase in circulation. I'd like to be able to use it, Dick."

"It's too bad I can't permit you to do so, old fellow. I'd be glad to do so if I could. I promise you, though, Jimmie, that you shall have first chance at it when the company decides that its plans can be made public."

Demstreet had to be satisfied with this promise, and further discussion of the subject was put an end to by the sudden entrance of a red-haired, freckle-faced young man, who came in all alone and sat down at a near-by table.

"Do you see that fellow over there, Dick?" said Demstreet in an undertone. "His name is Yates, and he used to work for me on the *Banner* until my cousin persuaded him to leave me and go over to the *Echo.*"

"The young traitor!" exclaimed Farriman indignantly. "You're lucky to have got rid of him, Jimmie. A fellow who would desert his employer in his hour of need is not much good, in my opinion."

He purposely spoke in a loud tone, and Yates, hearing the words, flushed painfully.

The unhappy young man, rendered desperate by his new employer's harsh treatment of him, had been seriously thinking of walking over to Demstreet's table and begging the proprietor of the *Banner* to take him back again; but at these words his courage deserted him.

The waiter took his order and brought him a plate of ham and baked beans, and as he consumed this modest fare he brooded over the harsh words Fred Hamilton had addressed to him an hour previously.

"He's given me a hopeless task," he said to himself bitterly. "How am I going to land a big news scoop which will make the *Echo* talked of throughout the county, when there isn't any such to be had. And he told me that I need not bother to come back to work if I fail to unearth such a yarn. I guess I'm out of a job."

Demstreet and Farriman, having finished their meal, arose and left the restaurant.

"What a chump Willett and I were to leave the *Banner*," Yates muttered to himself. "That Demstreet is a prince to work for, and his cousin is a tyrant."

Farriman accompanied his friend as far as the *Banner* office, and there left him, promising to drop in the following morning.

When he arrived there the next day he found Demstreet in a very excited mood.

"See here!" he cried. "Here's a fine state of affairs. Have you seen this paper?"

He waved a copy of the current issue of the *Echo* in front of his visitor's eyes.

"No. I haven't looked at any newspapers this morning, Jimmie," answered Farriman. "What is in it to make you so excited?"

"What is in it? Here, see for yourself! You're a fine friend, you are."

Farriman took the paper, and turned pale as he read this big head-line stretched clean across the top of the front page:

ELECTRIC RAILROAD FOR JADESTOWN.

D. P. and M. to Build a Branch Road Through the Town. Company's Engineer Already On Ground and Big Work to Be Started Immediately.

THE ECHO HEREWITH PUBLISHES DETAILS OF THE PROJECT.

This Is the Biggest Piece of Local News That Has Been Published for Many Months, and the Echo Can't Help Feeling Proud of Its Achievement in Placing the Tidings Before Its Readers.

NOT A WORD ABOUT THE NEW RAILROAD IN THIS MORNING'S BANNER.

Which Proves That If You Don't Get the Echo You Don't Get the News. Read All About the New Railroad in This Issue of the Echo, and Then Hurry Up and Send Us a Year's Subscription So That You Won't Get Left On Any Big News.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Farriman, turning pale. "I wonder where on earth that paper got its information, Jimmie?"

"I don't know where they got it," retorted Demstreet sourly. "I only know that I might have had this story, too, if it hadn't been for you, confound you.

"You've done me a fine turn by making me keep silent about your infernal railroad. You've made a laughing-stock of the *Banner*. Johnnie tells me that everybody in Jadestown is talking about the article in the *Echo*, and praising Fred Hamilton for his enterprise in landing this big piece of news."

"I'm awfully sorry, old fellow," exclaimed Farriman. "If I had dreamed that this was going to happen I would have let you use the story, of course. I wonder where that paper got its information."

Meanwhile, in the *Echo* office across the street, Fred Hamilton was giving vent to chuckles of delight and patting a red-haired, freckle-faced young man enthusiastically on the back.

"Yates, my boy, you're all right!" he exclaimed. "You've made good, and I'm going to show my appreciation by raising your salary five dollars a week. One or two more beats such as this will put the *Banner* out of business, I guess. This will be a hard blow for my cousin."

Yates had stumbled upon the big scoop by the merest accident. The waiter who had served him the ham and beans at Blaney's restaurant had told him all about the proposed new railroad.

This waiter had overheard Demstreet and Farriman talking about the project, and, being an inquisitive fellow with a retentive memory, had digested every word of the conversation. After the pair had gone out he had told Yates what he had heard, and the latter, realizing that this was an opportunity to save his job, had rushed into the *Echo* office with the tidings.

"Yes, this will be a hard blow for my cousin Jimmie," chuckled Hamilton. "And what's more, in to-morrow's issue I'm going to deal him a still harder blow. I've got a nice little surprise in store for Jimmie Demstreet."

The next morning, when Demstreet arrived at the office, he glanced anxiously at the copy of the *Echo* which Johnnie had laid on his desk.

He always made it a rule immediately upon his arrival at the office each morning to scan the columns of the opposition paper in order to see how his rival was "making out."

"I wonder if they've got any more beats on us to-day," he muttered nervously. "A few more such achievements as that of yesterday,

and Fred Hamilton will make good his boast to wipe the *Banner* off the face of the earth.

"Thank goodness, they've got nothing in the way of a big beat this morning," he exclaimed, with a sigh of satisfaction; but a second later his gaze became riveted on a ten-line announcement printed in large type at the bottom of the front page.

He uttered a cry of distress, causing Johnnie to run over to his desk in alarm.

"What's the matter, boss?" inquired the youngster anxiously.

Demstreet did not answer, but remained staring at the newspaper in his hand.

Johnnie peeped over his employer's shoulder and saw that Demstreet's trembling finger was pointing to the following announcement:

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO OUR READERS:

Beginning To-morrow Morning, the Echo Will Publish Each Day a Liberal Instalment of a Thrilling Serial Entitled "HER STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT." This Story, Which Is One of Absorbing Interest Has Been Especially Written for the Echo by Miss Jessie Caxton, a Young New York Woman Writer of Rare Promise. Don't Miss This Great Treat. If You Are Not Already a Subscriber to the Echo, Send In Your Annual Subscription at Once.

Farriman, entering the office a few minutes later, found his friend still staring dazedly at the announcement in the *Echo,* his face a picture of despair.

"Why, what's the matter, Jimmie?" he inquired anxiously.

The wretched young man burst into a bitter laugh.

"I knew it. I knew it!" he cried wildly. "You see I was right after all, Dick. It was more than mere carelessness which made her fail to answer my letters.

"That cad of a cousin of mine has made good his boast. He has taken my girl away from me. She has gone over to the enemy—here's the printed proof of it.

"Jessie knows what this fight means to me. She is acquainted with the terms of my grandfather's will. She realizes that I shall be a beggar if the *Banner* loses—and yet she is trying to help Fred Hamilton to win.

"She has written a serial for him. That shows how she feels. That shows she wants to see the *Echo* triumph over the *Banner.*"

CHAPTER IX.

ALMOST ANNIHILATED.

"But how do you know, Jimmie, that the Jessie Caxton mentioned in this announcement is the same Jessie Caxton with whom you are in love?" inquired Farriman. "It's quite possible, you know, that it may be an entirely different person who has written this story for your cousin's paper."

Demstreet shook his head.

"No, I'm satisfied that it's the same Jessie—my Jessie. I know that she's been writing stories for a long time. She hasn't had anything published yet; but she writes a whole lot just for the fun of it. I remember now, that some months ago she showed me a novel she had just finished. She called it 'A Struggle for the Right,' I recollect. That's the story which she has given to the *Echo.*"

"Well, maybe she sold it to your cousin, Jimmie? Maybe he offered her a big price for it, and she accepted his offer without thinking that the transaction would look like disloyalty to you?"

"No," declared Demstreet, "that argument won't work. Jessie is too sensible a girl not to realize how much she would hurt me by selling her story to my rival. If she were still true to me she would have given me first chance on the refusal of the manuscript."

"Perhaps she needed money, Jimmie, and was tempted by the big price your cousin offered?"

"No, that's not reasonable. Jessie has a rich, indulgent father who supplies her with all the cash she needs. Besides, she isn't the kind of girl who would be guilty of an act of treachery—for money."

"Well, perhaps this is some crooked work on the part of your cousin," suggested Farriman, determined to be optimistic. "Perhaps he obtained the manuscript from the girl by fraud and deceit. It's even possible that he may have stolen it. Why not call her up on the long distance phone, Jimmie, and find out whether she is aware of the fact that her story is to be published in the *Echo?*"

"I tell you I've tried to get her on the telephone several times during the past week and that she won't talk to me," declared Demstreet impatiently.

"Well, try once more, Jimmie. It can't do any harm."

With a gesture indicative of hopelessness, Demstreet reached for the telephone on his desk.

"Hallo, Central. Give me New York, Columbus 96,000," he said, and after a long wait, "Hallo, is this Columbus 96,000?

"Is Miss Jessie Caxton there? Oh, is that you, Jessie? This is Jimmie—Jimmie

Demstreet. I'm calling up from Jadestown. I've been trying to get you all the week.

"Do you know that the Jadestown *Echo*, run by my cousin Fred Hamilton, announced to-day that it is going to publish your story, 'Her Struggle for the Right,' beginning with to-morrow's issue?

"What's that you say? You do know it? Then Hamilton is publishing the story with your permission, eh? Oh, you did give it to him? That's what I wanted to know, Jessie. I just wanted to make sure of that fact.

"What's that you say? You don't see that it is any business of mine? I'm mighty sorry to hear you talk that way, little girl. Do you think it is—er—exactly friendly on your part to write stories for my rival's paper? Oh, yes, of course, you've got a perfect right to do as you please; I'm not disputing that; but I'd like to know what's the trouble, Jessie. Why have you done this thing? Why haven't you answered my letters? I wish you'd tell me what I've done to merit such —Hallo there! Hallo, Jessie— Well, I'll be hanged."

He slammed the receiver viciously into its rest and turned to Farriman, his face white and distorted.

"She rang off!" he cried hoarsely. "She cut me off in the middle of a sentence. Now perhaps you're satisfied, Dick, that it's all over between us."

"Well, if she's as rude and unreasonable as all that it's probably all for the best that you're through with her, old man," declared Farriman. "So she admitted that the announcement in Hamilton's paper is correct, eh?"

"Yes. She told me she sent the story to Hamilton to publish, and she gave it to him without pay, too. She refused to discuss the matter with me, telling me that it was none of my business and that she had a perfect right to do as she pleased. Her voice was as chilly as an icicle."

"But what could have caused her to assume this attitude toward you?" exclaimed Farriman. "Haven't you any idea, Jimmie?"

"No; except that it's just as I told you—that cad Hamilton has won her away from me."

"But how did he manage it, Jimmie? He's been in Jadestown ever since you came here, hasn't he? What chance had he to woo and win her?"

"I don't know how he did it," sighed Demstreet. "Probably by some shady method. He's as crooked as a bent pin. I only know that somehow he *has* succeeded, and that I'm the most miserable fellow ever born. I don't care what becomes of me now. I've a good mind to throw up the whole thing and go back to New York."

"And let Hamilton win your grandfather's fortune? Don't be an idiot, Jimmie."

"I don't care a fig for my grandfather's fortune now," declared Demstreet. "I'd just as soon be a beggar as a millionaire—without Jessie. I'm sick and weary of everything. Besides, what's the use of trying? I know I shall lose in the end. That rascally cousin of mine is too strong for me. He's bound to triumph."

"For Heaven's sake, Jimmie, brace up and be a man!" exclaimed his friend indignantly. "You must not talk that way. Where is your spirit? I thought you had good fighting blood in you. Are you going to be a miserable quitter just because you've been thrown down by a girl? For shame, old pal. I thought you were made of stronger stuff."

"It's all very well for you to talk, Dick," sighed Demstreet. "But you can't understand what a knockout blow it is to me to find that that girl has gone over to the enemy. Why, I'd have staked my right hand on her loyalty to me."

"All the more reason why you should go on fighting," declared Farriman. "You've got to make the *Banner* win, Jimmie. You've got to beat that rascal Hamilton. Think what a fine revenge it will be to keep him from getting any of your grandfather's money. That thought alone ought to encourage you to keep up the fight."

"You're right, Dick," declared Demstreet with sudden animation. "That rascally cousin of mine must not get that fortune. He's triumphed over me in love, but he sha'n't win out in everything. I'll show him, and *her* too, that I'm still full of fight. If she marries Fred Hamilton she shall marry a pauper. I'll show 'em."

"That's the way to talk, old fellow," exclaimed the friend approvingly. "You're showing the proper spirit now. There's no reason why you shouldn't win this fight if you keep right at it. And besides, old man, hard work is the very best antidote for an unfortunate love-affair. It will help you to forget about that girl."

Johnnie, who had been seated in the outer office during this conversation, now entered to inform Demstreet that a caller desired an interview.

"Who is it, Johnnie?" inquired Dem-

street wearily. "Can't he drop in some other time? I don't feel like seeing anybody just now."

"Well, this gent is one of our advertisers, boss," said the boy. "It's Bradford. Bradford, the plumber, you know. His account is worth quite a lot to us. He's liable to get mad if I send him away. I think you ought to see him, boss."

"Yes, I suppose I had," sighed Demstreet. "I can't afford to offend an advertiser. I need every cent the *Banner* can earn. Ask him to come in, Johnnie."

Mr. Timothy Bradford entered the editorial room with an apologetic expression on his face.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Demstreet," he began, "but I've come to close my advertising account with the *Banner*. I sha'n't use your paper any more after to-day."

"Why not, Mr. Bradford?" inquired Demstreet anxiously. "Is anything wrong?"

"No. There ain't anything wrong, sir, except that I ain't been gettin' the results I expected from my ad. in the *Banner*—so I've decided to try the *Echo*."

"But, my dear sir, the circulation of the *Banner* is much greater than that of the *Echo*," protested Demstreet. "I assure you that you will be making a most unwise change if you quit my paper for that sheet. Why, the *Echo* is a new paper, with scarcely any standing in the community at all, Mr. Bradford."

"I don't know so much about that," said the visitor. "My opinion is that the *Echo* is coming along pretty fast. It's a new paper, as you say, but it's got a powerful lot of readers already, and it's gaining in circulation every day. Hamilton showed me his books.

"It's a good newspaper, too. That feller Hamilton knows how to get out a paper. It prints more news than the *Banner*. It had all about the new railroad through Jadestown yesterday, and you didn't have a line."

"That was only one isolated instance," exclaimed Demstreet, flushing at this frank criticism. "Every paper is liable to fall down on a story once in a while. Probably in a few days we'll print a big story which the *Echo* won't have."

Bradford shook his head doubtingly.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," went on Demstreet. "I'll make you a generous proposition. I don't want to lose your patronage, Mr. Bradford, so I'll let you advertise in the *Banner*, in future, at half the usual rates. How does that strike you?"

"It don't strike me at all," replied Bradford with a grin, "because I've already signed a contract for a year's advertisin' in the *Echo*, and Hamilton is only chargin' me a dollar for the entire year."

"A dollar for the entire year!" gasped Demstreet. "You must be joking, Mr. Bradford."

"No, I ain't jokin'. I'm perfectly serious, Mr. Demstreet, I assure you. You see this man Hamilton is an enterprisin' young feller, and he's takin' my ad. at a nominal price for twelve months—on one condition."

"What's the condition?" demanded Demstreet huskily.

"The condition is that I don't advertise in the *Banner*," said Bradford with a chuckle. "I had to promise him that. It's written in the contract. That feller Hamilton is pretty smart."

"He's a dirty, contemptible cad," cried Demstreet, stung into a display of temper. "I'll get square with him yet."

"You oughtn't to talk that way, young feller," declared Bradford severely. "There's no sense in losin' your temper and callin' names just because you're beaten in a business deal.

"In my opinion this proposition of Hamilton's is quite legitimate and fair. It's done in every business. Cuttin' the rates in order to take customers away from a rival is an established practise and considered quite proper.

"You take my advice, young man, and look out for that chap Hamilton. He's a pretty slick proposition, and he'll put you out of business if you don't watch. I shouldn't be surprised if he takes away a whole lot more of your advertisers. I understand he's been around to-day makin' the same proposition to several of them."

The plumber paid his bill in full and walked out of the office, leaving the proprietor of the *Banner* staring blankly at Farriman.

"Now, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Demstreet. "Could a fellow have a more cunning opponent than that confounded cousin of mine?

"Of course, you see his game, Dick? He's discovered a means of putting the *Banner* out of business at last. He'll have all my advertisers by the end of the week. Those fellows won't stay with me when they learn that they can get a whole year's advertising in the *Echo* for the ridiculous price of a dollar."

"But where does Hamilton come in?"

inquired Farriman, a puzzled look on his face. "I can't exactly grasp that, Jimmie. How does he expect to make his paper pay if he gives away his advertising space for practically nothing. In bringing about the ruin of your paper, won't he also ruin his own."

"He can well afford to do it," said Demstreet, with a sigh. "If he succeeds in forcing the *Banner* out of business he wins our grandfather's fortune. According to that confounded will all my cousin has to do to win is to beat the *Banner's* circulation and profits by the end of the year.

"Even if he makes only fifty cents profit on his own paper, he wins the contest, provided he has succeeded in bankrupting me and forcing me to suspend publication."

"I see," said Farriman. "It's too bad, old fellow. The luck is certainly going against you to-day. Perhaps, however, your other advertisers will stick to you. Bradford may be the only one he has managed to win away from the *Banner.*"

"I'm afraid not," groaned Demstreet. "Here comes Johnnie again. I'll wager there's another fellow come to withdraw his ad."

"Mr. Lushington to see you, boss," announced the boy.

"I thought so," muttered Demstreet savagely. "Lushington, the bookseller, is one of my biggest advertisers. I'll warrant he's come on the same errand as Bradford. Send him in, Johnnie."

"How do you do, Mr. Demstreet," began Lushington, a bland little man. "I've come to tell you that after to-day I shall not continue my advertisement in the *Banner.* I want to settle for what I owe you."

"I suppose you're going to transfer your business to the *Echo,* eh, Mr. Lushington?" inquired Demstreet with a bitter laugh.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Hamilton has made me a remarkably generous offer and I have decided to avail myself of it. While it is true that the *Echo* has not quite as large a circulation as the *Banner* at present, I consider it a great, growing newspaper and therefore a fine advertising medium. I trust there is no hard feeling, sir."

"Oh, no, none at all," replied Demstreet with a hollow laugh. "Good day, Mr. Lushington."

After that there were several more visitors to the office of the *Banner.* All of them came on the same errand. By the end of the day, Demstreet's paper was stripped of nearly all its advertising. Only one good advertisement remained, and that was the full-page announcement of Mr. Maurice Steiner, proprietor of "The Square Deal Department Store."

"It's queer that Steiner hasn't been in to withdraw his business," remarked Demstreet to Farriman. "I wonder if it's possible that he's going to stick to the *Banner,* Dick. That would indeed be wonderful."

"A gent to see you, sir," proclaimed Johnnie, poking his head through the doorway.

"Who is it, Johnnie—not Mr. Steiner?"

"No, boss. It's Mr. Southworth, the lawyer. He says he must see you personally on a matter of great importance."

"Ask him to step in, Johnnie. I wonder what *he* wants. It is at least pleasant to reflect that he hasn't come to withdraw an advertisement, for he does not advertise. Ah, good afternoon, Mr. Southworth. What can I do for you?"

"You can do me the favor of accepting this little paper, sir," answered the lawyer briskly, shoving a legal-looking document into Demstreet's hand.

"And what is this?" inquired the proprietor of the *Banner,* regarding the folded paper curiously.

"That, sir," drawled the man of law momentously, "is a summons and complaint in an action to recover fifty thousand dollars damages from the Jadestown *Daily Banner.*"

"Fifty thousand dollars damages!" gasped Demstreet. "What on earth for?"

"For libel, sir," replied the lawyer. "Last Tuesday you printed an article in your newspaper casting serious reflections on the character of my client, Mr. Thomas Dillworth, one of Jadestown's most prominent and respected citizens.

"In that article you stated that my client, Mr. Dillworth, was arrested last Monday night for intoxication and disorderly conduct and locked up in the Jadestown jail.

"That, sir, was a disgraceful, mendacious and absolutely unwarranted attack upon my client. He has never tasted a drop of liquor in his life. He was not arrested last Monday night. He can easily prove that he was not in Jadestown at all on that day—he had gone out of town on business.

"Under the circumstances, he will have no difficulty in obtaining heavy damages against you for libel and I have advised him to bring suit for fifty thousand dollars, which I do not consider too much compensation for the injury you have done to his reputation."

"Good Heavens, Jimmie!" cried Farriman, who had listened to this conversation

with growing horror. "Is it really true that you printed such an article in your paper?"

Demstreet nodded his head gloomily.

"Yes. I printed it. I believed I was printing the truth, of course. I begin to see now that this is some more of my villainous cousin's dirty work."

"Your cousin's work? What do you mean by that, Jimmie?"

"This is how it happened," explained Demstreet with a gesture of great weariness: "Just as we were about to go to press Monday night, a man who represented himself as the chief of police called the *Banner* up on the telephone and told us that Mr. Thomas Dillworth was in the jail charged with intoxication and disorderly conduct. I hurriedly wrote the story and put it in the paper."

"You mean to say that you printed a yarn like that without further investigation?" exclaimed Farriman reproachfully.

"Yes. There wasn't any time to investigate. I have told you that we were just about to go to press. It did not enter my mind that the yarn might get us in a libel suit. I'm not well up in the law. I felt obliged to use the story because I believed that the *Echo* also had it and I did not want to be beaten by the opposition paper.

"It never occurred to me that the man who represented himself to me over the telephone as the chief of police might be an impostor. I realize now that I may not have been talking to the chief of police at all. It was probably Hamilton or one of his assistants who called me up and led me into that cunning trap."

"Well, perhaps if you explain the circumstances to Mr. Dillworth and offer to print a retraction and apology, he will be satisfied to withdraw his suit," suggested Farriman, looking at the lawyer anxiously.

The latter smiled and shook his head.

"No, gentlemen. My client will not be satisfied with an apology and retraction. He feels that his reputation has been injured fifty thousand dollars' worth, and he intends to get the money.

"Of course, if you wish to save my client the expense and trouble of going to law he may be willing to compromise for a smaller sum. We don't want to be too hard on you, Mr. Demstreet. If you wish to settle this case out of court, I believe my client will be willing to accept thirty thousand dollars to drop the suit. I'll leave you to think over this proposition."

As the lawyer strode out of the office, Demstreet turned to Farriman with a ghastly grin.

"Things are certainly coming my way, aren't they, Dick?" he said huskily. "My girl has gone back on me; my advertisers have quit me, and now I'm sued for fifty thousand dollars. I stand a mighty swell chance of winning out with the *Banner* now, don't I?"

"Poor old Jimmie!" sighed Farriman sympathetically. "I'm so sorry for you, old man."

"Mr. Maurice Steiner is outside, sir," announced Johnnie, poking in his head once more. "Shall I send him in?"

"Sure. Send him along," retorted Demstreet. "I've been expecting him all day. He's come to take out his confounded advertisement, of course. I'm prepared for him.

"How do you do, Mr. Steiner?" he said calmly to the pompous proprietor of "The Square Deal Department Store." "Kindly do me the favor to remove your hat while you're in this office. You need not bother to speak. I know what you've come for. You wish to withdraw your advertisement from the *Banner*, of course."

"Yes, sir," replied Steiner, flushing at Demstreet's rebuke, "I've come to withdraw my advertisement from the *Banner;* but that isn't the only reason I'm making this important call.

"I've come also to tell you that I want you and your confounded paper to get out of this building to-morrow morning. Do you understand?"

"No, I don't understand," retorted Demstreet, eying the visitor with surprise. "What right have you to order me out of this building?"

"The best of rights, sir," said Steiner with a triumphant leer. "I own this building. I purchased it yesterday. Your lease expired yesterday, and I don't care to renew it.

"I haven't forgotten about those oil-paintings, young man. I've been waiting patiently for my revenge, and now my opportunity has arrived. I have purchased this building from its former owner and I can do as I like with it.

"I want you to get out by to-morrow morning. If you don't go out peaceably and quietly, I intend to avail myself of my legal rights and throw you and your whole blamed outfit into the street."

(To be continued.)

A Hair-Raising Experiment.

BY LILLIAN BENNET-THOMPSON.

A Wonderful Opportunity for Investment, with Investigation Invited and No Trouble to Show Goods.

MR. T. CALDWELL FLESEMEN, promoter, sat in his sumptuous office in the Sad-Iron Building, his feet on his desk, and a large black cigar between his lips.

Mr. T. Caldwell Flesemen was well satisfied with himself and with life. Why should he not be? Had he not amassed a comfortable fortune? Had he not acquired a reputation for business acumen and shrewdness such as falls to the lot of few?

His recent venture, in acting as intermediary between an impecunious inventor and a wealthy firm who desired to purchase the product of the former's brain, had been, to say the least, successful. At that very time a substantial check was reposing to his credit at the bank, and he had earned alike the blessings of the inventor and the sincere thanks of the firm that had finally purchased the contrivance.

Satisfied? Of course.

Mr. T. Caldwell Flesemen inhaled a quantity of strong smoke, drawing it deep into his lungs, and languidly spread out the morning paper. He passed rather hurriedly over the election news, having already decided upon the man who should receive his vote. The stock-exchange reports were of more than passing interest, and he digested them thoroughly before passing on to the "Business Opportunities" column.

Half-way down an item caught his eye, and he perused it with more than his usual care, muttering to himself at intervals and puffing violently on the black cigar. Then he read aloud:

> WANTED—A purchaser for the patent of a hair-restorative. All rights guaranteed; will sell outright. Ocular demonstration given, and perfect satisfaction warranted. The greatest discovery of the age. Investigation solicited. Address J. E. SLOCUM, HOME CORNERS, MAINE.

"It might be well for me to look into this," mused Mr. Flesemen, knocking the ash from his cigar into the very ornate ash-tray on his desk. "If I remember rightly, it was through a newpaper advertisement that I first got in touch with Easyman, and was enabled to make a very good thing of his work. Yes, I shall look into it, by all means."

His stenographer answered the call-bell, and in a few minutes a letter was despatched to Mr. J. E. Slocum, of Home Corners, Maine, with a politely worded request that he call at Mr. Flesemen's office at his early convenience, for the purpose of discussing terms and possibilities of his discovery. And the writer was faithfully his.

In the course of a few days an answer came, stating that Mr. Slocum would take great pleasure in calling upon Mr. Flesemen, and would bring with him a sample of the Great Restorer, as he had named his new discovery. And he was very respectfully Mr. Flesemen's. Mr. Slocum followed his letter almost immediately.

When, on a certain bright morning, the small office-boy brought in a rather soiled bit of paper on which was written in a decidedly ragged hand "J. E. Slocum," Mr. Flesemen ordered the caller shown in immediately.

In view of the fact that Mr. Slocum had just invented or discovered, or both, a hair-restorer of marvelous efficacy, Mr. Flesemen was considerably surprised to see a rather tall man, dressed in garments of, to say the least, remarkable cut, with absolutely no hair on the top of his head!

Around the ears was a thick fringe, above which the circular bald spot shone forth like a small white oasis in a desert of black locks. And he was selling a hair-restorer!

Mr. Flesemen felt considerably aggrieved to think that he had wasted time with such an obvious fake, and was prepared to be coldly distant in his manner.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Flesemen?" was the stentorian greeting of the visitor, in response to the frigid nod which was all that Mr. Flesemen vouchsafed. He stretched out a hand incased in a very ill-fitting glove and seemed surprised at the rather faint pressure with which his vigorous grip was received.

Mr. J. E. Slocum, of Home Corners, Maine, was possessed of a voice which re-

minded one of a steam calliope under emergency pressure. Mr. Flesemen almost jumped out of his chair when it fell upon his ears, and glanced apprehensively toward the window, as if he feared that the dead of the next county might be disturbed by the unwonted clamor.

"Now," continued Mr. Slocum, after he had seated himself in a chair near the desk and accepted one of the cigars which Mr. Flesemen tendered, "I'm a business man, and you're a business man; and I guess the best thing we can do is to get right down to business without wasting any time beating birds out of the bushes. I've got a good thing to sell, and you're looking for a good thing to buy. I can prove that it's good, and that's all you want, I guess. Eh, eh?"

Mr. Flesemen puffed slowly on his cigar and nodded vaguely. Mr. Slocum continued:

"Now, it's taken me years to complete the formula for the Great Restorer, and I tell you what, it's going to make a sensation when it's put on the market. It will positively grow hair on perfectly bald heads—perfectly *bald* heads, mind you—and will increase the growth of any one's hair something wonderful. It don't have to have even thin hair to start on; it takes a smooth surface and grows hair on it.

"Why, Mr. Flesemen, if you'll believe me (or whether you will or not, for that matter), the other morning I opened the bottle I had in the house, and what do you suppose I found? Eh, eh? Why, sir, *there was hair growing on the cork!* Now, mind you, I don't say the Restorer put the seeds of the hair there, but they must have been in there somewhere, and the Restorer just grew 'em, sir—made 'em shoot up like flowers in spring!"

Mr. Flesemen suppressed a smile.

"Why don't you put it on the market yourself, Mr. Slocum?" inquired he.

"Aha! There's the rub! The truth of the matter is, I can't afford the expense. If I could have raised the necessary I'd have put it up long ago—that is, when I first got it in shape—and never have advertised for a buyer for the formula. Anyway, I don't know how these things are done. But I'm in a tight place, and I need the money; I want to sell the Restorer for the best price it will bring, 'cause I can't wait until the people see what a good thing it is. These things take time. If I didn't want the price right off the bat, I'd never try to get rid of a thing that is bound to be worth millions to the man that can promote her right. Eh, eh?"

Mr. Flesemen nodded reflectively.

"Of course, it is quite within the range of possibilities that your discovery may be valuable, Mr. Slocum," he said; "but worth millions—pshaw! Nonsense, my dear man; nonsense! And it is going to cost a mint of money to put a thing like that on the market. There are so many fakes just now."

"Well, this ain't a fake," rejoined Mr. Slocum hastily. "It's the best ever. Why, man, it just simply can't fail to go. And then you'd be richer by a lot than you are today, and I'd have the money I need to tide me over. Of course, I don't intend to *give* the formula away. You realize that, don't you? Eh, eh?"

Mr. Flesemen stirred uneasily in his chair. Really, this foolish habit of asking three or four questions at the end of each sentence was very annoying. Then he prepared to launch his thunderbolt.

"Of course, I am not questioning your word, Mr. Slocum," he said with an expansive smile that approached more nearly to cordiality than anything he had yet accomplished; "*but,*" he continued with that admirable caution that had given him his enviable reputation, "but, if this preparation will do all that you claim for it, why is *your* head so e-e-er—why is *your* hair so thin?"

Mr. Slocum leaned forward impressively.

"My dear sir," he said, "*this* is why. I have proved entirely to my own satisfaction that the Great Restorer will actually grow hair. *But* I have not proved this fact to *your* satisfaction. I am bald, as you have observed. I have been bald for some years. I propose to make the test of the Great Restorer upon my own head; and seeing, you cannot but be convinced. In other words, when we succeed in making a dicker, I'll engage to grow a crop of hair on my bald spot, not in several months or years, *but in a week.*"

He leaned back and, lighting his cigar anew, paused to observe the effect of his words. Mr. Flesemen was visibly impressed. He pursed up his lips and nodded slowly.

"A good idea," he said musingly; "a very good idea, I may say."

"Isn't it?" said Mr. Slocum genially. "I tell you what, I know how scary you city fellows are about buying a pig in a bag, and I says to myself, says I, 'I'll put up proof that'll hold all the water they can pour into it, and I'll take all the risk. I'll put the stuff on my own head and grow my own hair, and then there'll be no questions asked that can't be answered right there.'

"And there's another point. You don't take any risk. I take it all. That's the reason I came to you, Mr. Flesemen, in place of going to any of the other men that wanted to hear about the Great Restorer. They say you're honest, and honesty is all I want, and a square deal."

"Well," said Mr. Flesemen, blowing out a thick cloud of smoke, "I suppose there is no reason why we should not settle this as soon as possible. I'm a busy man. Mr. Slocum, and I have reserved to-day for you, to the exclusion of other interests. Now, suppose you demonstrate to me, first of all, what your Restorer will do, and then we can talk about terms."

"No, no, Mr. Flesemen," exclaimed Slocum hastily, "that won't do at all! We'll arrange terms first, always providing that the Great Restorer will do all that I say it will—and what I say I can prove—and then we'll make the test.

"You see—well, I might just as well tell you what my pressing need of money is. There's a mortgage on the old farm, and it has to be lifted next week, or the place will go. The term has run out, and the holder won't renew; and if I don't pay in full before the first of next month, the farm will be sold. I couldn't bear to have strangers in the old home, so you can see why I'm anxious to get this thing settled, and also why I can't wait until I can raise the money and do the boosting myself."

"We-el," hesitated Mr. Flesemen, "I suppose it might be done. It is just as well to get these things settled as soon as may be. And that really is an excellent idea of yours, planning for a demonstration on your own head."

"Isn't it?" said Mr. Slocum. "You see, the old farm is all I have left, and I can't bear to see it go. Mother, father, brothers, and sisters—all gone, and now they want to take the old place away from me—it's hard."

There was a suspicious quaver in Mr. Slocum's voice, and he wiped his eyes with a florid bandanna handkerchief.

"Yes, yes, I dare say," Mr. Flesemen replied hastily. He hoped sincerely that Mr. Slocum would not give way to emotion: it would be intensely disagreeable.

"Now, you say you will grow hair on your head in a week's time," he went on. "If you can do this, and I decide to buy the Restorative, what would you consider a fair price for all rights therein—title, formula, patents, and everything connected with it, even to the using of my name as inventor?"

"Fifteen thousand dollars," said Mr. Slocum promptly, stowing away his handkerchief, "and dirt cheap at the price."

Mr. Flesemen gave a well-feigned start of surprise.

"Are you mad, my dear sir?" he exclaimed. "While I do not for a moment doubt that you have an excellent thing for sale, yet you can easily see that your price is exorbitant. Fifteen thousand dollars! 'And cheap at the price!' It would, indeed, have to be a veritable gold-mine to warrant any such terms as that."

Mr. Slocum was explanatory; Mr. Flesemen was firm. After considerable further discussion, they succeeded in compromising on ten thousand dollars, cash down, to be paid on the day that the Great Restorer was found to merit its name. With mutual good wishes they parted, arranging to meet again the next day and make the trial of the Great Restorer.

Promptly at the appointed time, Mr. Slocum was shown into Mr. Flesemen's office. In one hand he carried a small bottle, of which he took the greatest care, and, after exchanging greetings with the promoter, proceeded at once to business.

"The great beauty of the Restorer," he remarked, as he rubbed a small quantity of a brownish liquid on his shining pate, "is that it does not require an awful lot to start the growth of hair. A judicious application twice a day will produce a luxurious crop on a perfectly bald head.

"You see," he went on, holding his cranium down for Mr. Flesemen's inspection, "that at the present time there is no sign of hair on the top of my head, the place where the wool ought to grow. Wait!"

He put the cork into the bottle, the bottle into his pocket, and took up his hat.

"In a week I shall return, Mr. Flesemen," he announced, "and," with a dramatic wave of his hand, "then you will see what the Great Restorer has done for me, and what it can do for thousands. You will be hailed as the greatest benefactor of the human race to-day, not excepting anybody, and your name will go down to posterity along with the inventors of the telephone, the telegraph, and such things. I shall now say *ow river*, Mr. Flesemen, and I trust that you will doubt no longer. In a few days, at most, you will be convinced."

For the first time Mr. Flesemen was able to break in upon this flow of eloquence.

"I shall be only too glad," he remarked politely, "if this compound will do all that

you say. If so, you will find me ready to fulfil my part of the bargain. Good day to you, Mr. Slocum."

Exactly one week later, Mr. Flesemen received another rather dirty bit of paper, bearing the name of Jeremiah Slocum. Immediately after Mr. Slocum was shown into the official presence, and, with a smile, extended his hand to Mr. Flesemen.

But the latter gentleman was too astounded to do more than lean back in his chair and gasp weakly. For he looked upon a transformed Slocum.

A luxuriant growth of heavy black hair covered his caller's head; the bald spot was no more. Even the patches over his ears had widened and thickened, and had so transformed him that for a moment Flesemen was unable to recognize him.

"Why—why—why—is it really you, Mr. Slocum," inquired the promoter faintly.

A broad smile overspread Mr. Slocum's face.

"It's your humble servant," he answered, taking the chair beside the desk. "I told you so, didn't I? What do you know about the Great Restorer now? Isn't it all right, eh, eh?"

His voice reassured Mr. Flesemen, who, mistrusting the evidence of his own eyes, doubted for a moment that he was looking upon the same man. But there was no mistaking the clarion tones of J. E. Slocum, of Home Corners, Maine.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" he murmured. "I never dreamed of anything like that in my life."

Then suddenly Mr. Flesemen remembered that he was but poorly sustaining his reputation as a driver of good bargains. This was not business, to let the other fellow think he had an indispensable commodity. Mr. Flesemen was himself again.

"Don't you think, Mr. Slocum," he said, "that you might be willing to take less than ten thousand dollars for this patent? It seems to me, upon mature reflection, that you are asking a very large price. By the time the thing is sufficiently advertised to draw the attention of the public, I shall be largely out of pocket, and it will take some time before I even begin to get back the money I have paid out for it."

The beaming smile left Mr. Slocum's face in a flash.

"Not on your life!" he said gruffly. "Ten thou. it is, or no deal. Why, great Heavens, man, don't you know I can sell this thing for three times that sum, if I can take the time to look around? Why, you're getting the greatest bargain of the age. I named my price and you agreed to it. And I don't propose to come down one cent. That's final. Take it or leave it.

"You've seen what the Restorer will do, and you admit that you are surprised to think that anything will do the work as this does it. Now, if you don't want to buy, just speak up, and I'll take my pigs to another market."

Mr. Slocum had risen from his chair, taken up his hat, and now stood with his fingers clasping the handle of the door. Mr. Flesemen saw a fortune slipping through his fingers. This was taking a leaf out of his own book, and he did not relish it at all.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Slocum," he said smoothly. "No offense intended. You must understand that it is business policy to try to get things as cheaply as possible. While all I have said is perfectly true, yet I realize your position in the matter, and considering that you have taken considerable trouble to place this thing before me in the right light, I shall certainly not repudiate our agreement. Now, if you will let me have the formula, I will give you a certified check for the amount agreed upon. Will that be satisfactory?"

The mollified Slocum sat down again.

"Yes," he said, "that will do; but you'll have to get somebody to go around to the bank to identify me. I don't know a soul in this town."

"Easily arranged, Mr. Slocum, easily arranged," replied Mr. Flesemen. He deemed it wise not to irritate further the excitable gentleman from the country, so, without more ado, they adjourned to an attorney's office, where the contract was signed, sealed, and delivered, and Mr. Flesemen, in exchange for a check of ten thousand dollars, became the proud possessor of the Great Restorer, warranted to grow hair on totally bald heads in a month's time or less.

Mr. Slocum had explained that in some aggravated cases it took longer than in those where the trouble was of shorter standing.

"After the formula is tested," said Mr. Flesemen, "I myself will go with you to the bank, and identify you, so that you can get the check cashed. Of course, they do not know you in New York, and it will be necessary for me to vouch for you."

Mr. Slocum waved a fleshy hand.

"That will suit me perfectly," he said. "And in the meantime, will you honor me with your company at dinner? I shall be gratified, sir, gratified."

Mr. Flesemen would; and they proceeded

to a hotel, where Mr. Flesemen enjoyed a large dinner at the expense of Mr. Slocum. It may be remarked in passing that Mr. Flesemen dined not wisely, but altogether too well.

Dinner over, Mr. Slocum paid the bill, and called for some cigars. The brand the waiter brought did not suit him at all.

"It's a pity," he said loudly, "that a gent can't get what he orders. I'll see the manager about this. 'Scuse me a minute, Mr. Flesemen."

He stormed out of the dining-room, leaving a ripple of laughter behind him. He was *so* eccentric, said the ladies, as they watched the tall, angular figure, with the wonderful hair.

Mr. Flesemen settled himself back in his chair and gave himself up to the enjoyment of his cigar. A fine deal, he reflected. A very fine deal. He was to be congratulated. A mint of money in it. He chuckled.

The ash grew on Mr. Flesemen's cigar, but he did not notice it. His head nodded once or twice; he blinked uncertainly. But he was very comfortable.

Mr. Slocum was gone quite a long while.

In a cozy little apartment on the upper East Side two men bent their heads over a small table, on which reposed a cheerful-looking bottle with a gaudy red label, several glasses, a siphon, and numerous bank-notes of various denominations.

A casual observer would have seen, perhaps, a slight resemblance between the men, no more. But close investigation would have revealed the fact that except for one essential thing, it would have been difficult to tell them apart.

Feature for feature, their faces were the same; when they spoke, their voices, of an astonishingly heavy quality, were exactly alike.

The difference was in the hair. One was entirely bald on top, with a thick fringe over the ears. What there was of his hair, was of a beautiful and brilliant brick-red. The head of the other man was covered with a heavy thatch of coal-black hair.

"Nice, easy money, Jed," remarked he of the bald spot.

"It was so," agreed the other. "Easiest I've got in a long time, Jerry. But I never thought the guy would fall the way he did. And him a promoter!"

"Well," said Jerry, "I've heard tell there's nothing the devil likes better than a cock-sure opponent."

"Something in that," assented his companion. "He thought he had me right about gettin' identified. He never tumbled to the old duffer that drew up the papers for us. I just told him me friend was too busy to go to the bank with me, and that there was an X in it for him. He never stopped to ask no questions; you couldn't see him for dust."

"How did you shake the old duck?" queried Jerry.

"Just walked out and left him. He was thinkin' how much money he was goin' to make. Gee! I wonder what his nibs'll say when he finds out what's in the Great Restorer? I never heard tell sulfuric acid and kerosene was good to grow hair, did you?"

Jerry grinned.

"S'pose he'll take a trip out to Home Corners lookin' for you, Jed?" he said.

"Might. But I guess he'll agree he's spent enough money on me. It cost him a lot more than it did us. All we blew in was a tenner to the shark and a good dinner to the mark. It was a shame to take it, Jerry; a shame to take it.

"Now, you better go and get the dye out of that red mop of your'n. It comes out easy as rollin' off a log. That chap that sold it to us was sure onto his job. And then we'd better beat it for a healthier climate; New York never did agree with me none too good. Besides, every cop in the city'll be searchin' for a raven-tressed gent about your build. Here's lookin' at you, son."

And then they solemnly pledged the health of Mr. T. Caldwell Flesemen and the Great Restorer.

SERENADE.

NE'ER a star unveils her light;
Dark and cheerless is the night;
Dark my longing soul till thou
Lend thine ear unto my vow!
On my fond love, pleading now,
Smile, my lady!

Catherine Young Glenn.

When Liberty Was Born.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "The Spy of Valley Forge," "From Flag to Flag," "On Glory's Trail," etc.

A Story of Early Boston, Showing How a Famous Battle Came To Be Known by the Name of the Hill Where It Wasn't Fought.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE story, told by Roger Sessions, opens in Boston in the early spring of 1775. Sessions, just turned twenty-one, son of a rich farmer in Wilbraham, has come to the city on a commission for his father and to see the town. Somewhat of a boor at the outset, he is taught a lesson in politeness by Mistress Marjory Winthrop, with whom he had by chance collided in the street. Later on he sees a redcoat of King George's army deliberately snatch a handsome fan from a man coming out of a goldsmith's-shop, makes after the fellow and, with his superior strength, drags him back to the scene of his crime, where he demands that somebody take the fellow to the lock-up. In the midst of the excitement Sir William Howe of the British army appears, and calls Sessions a Yankee rebel for daring to lay hands on one of his majesty's soldiers. But a different face is put on the matter when Mistress Marjory, who has been attracted to the spot, suddenly recognizes the fan as hers, and Howe orders fifty lashes for the trooper.

Sessions has received a slight wound in the arm in his tussle, so Paul Revere, the goldsmith, takes him into his shop and binds up the hurt. To him Sessions announces his intention of remaining in town, going to the barracks and enlisting as a recruit in his majesty's army, but on Revere's representing to him that his recent rough handling of the trooper would insure him a flogging if nothing worse, he decides to accept Revere's offer of a position with him.

A stanch Tory, only his gratitude for what the goldsmith has done for him prevents Sessions from going to the authorities with a report of what he considers certain treasonable utterances of Revere's. By chance he stumbles on a meeting of Colonial conspirators and entrusts the report of it at Government House, to Marjory Winthrop, who later uses Roger as the man who unwittingly gives the signal to Paul Revere to start on his famous ride. Then, for the first time, Roger knows that she is not a Tory like her father, storms at her for having made of him a traitor to the king, and then recalling that Revere had ridden by the lower road, starts off with the intention of intercepting him by the upper one.

CHAPTER IX.

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE.

So, through the night, rode Paul Revere.
So, through the night, went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm.
A cry of defiance and not of fear!
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore.
Longfellow.

THE April moon hung high above the eastern hills as I drew near the crossways where the two roads met.

I had not spared whip nor voice, and the white steed I rode had responded gallantly to the summons.

But the upper road was still deep-mired from the breaking up of the winter frosts, and the going was heavy. The lower road was firmer and more traveled.

So it was that, as I topped a rise of ground, I heard a thunder of hoof-beats through the stillness of the night.

Along the lower road, and flashing past the junction of the two, galloped Paul Revere. He was bareheaded. His thin hair flew loose in the wind. His great gray charger was already foam-streaked, but was going as gaily and powerfully as if his journey had but just begun.

I had lost my wild race by a bare two hundred yards!

I had staked all on reaching the crossways in time to halt Revere and to silence the warning that should set the Minute Men and the Concord folk upon their guard.

And I had lost!

I shouted a furious command to him to stop. Through the quiet of the night my voice boomed uncannily.

Revere turned in his saddle, without checking his horse's pace. Our eyes met, and even at that distance I knew he recognized me.

"Halt!" I bellowed.

He waved his hand at me in greeting, but thundered on.

"Halt!" I roared again, whipping out the pistol at my belt. "Halt, or I'll bring you down!"

The moon's rays glinted blue on the pistol-barrel. Revere must have seen the weapon, must have heard and caught the import of my threat. Yet he did not draw rein. In fact, he turned his back on me and honored me with not another glance.

I fired. The man was out of range. I could not bring myself, in cold blood, to pull trigger on my friend and employer.

So I shot in the air, hoping to scare him into halting. His horse, as well as my own, leaped nervously forward as the reverberation of my shot split the stillness of the spring-time night.

Then, with a dogged resolve not to be beaten at my self-appointed task, I drove spurs into my steed's foaming flanks and darted onward in pursuit.

Revere was a heavy man, heavier by many pounds than I. His weight might well wear down even so powerful a beast as the gray charger he bestrode. With luck, I might overhaul him and by main force turn him back, ere he could reach Concord.

So, settling down in my saddle, I resumed the mad race.

But, struggle as he would, my white horse could not cut down the furlong's distance between himself and the gray. The deep-mired state of the upper road had told sadly upon his strength. He could barely keep up the space between ourselves and Revere.

Still, I kept on. At any time Revere's mount might play out; or, striking some inequality in the road, might stumble and fall. The chase seemed well worth while, on even so slight a chance of victory.

So, through the warm, moonlit night, heavy with the breath of spring, we galloped; our horse's hoof-beats waking the echoes from sleeping hill and dale. A strange race, with a strange goal.

Ahead of us, at last, lay a broad farmstead. Its low-lying, scattered buildings shone white under the moon. At sound of our noisy approach a dog barked. Then another.

Into the dooryard of the main dwelling dashed Revere. With his clubbed riding-crop he pounded upon the nearest window-shutters.

A sleeping voice from within growled some incoherent challenge.

"*The British are coming! Wake!*" trumpeted Revere.

And he was off again as I came almost alongside. On again we sped, he drawing more and more ahead of me.

At every farm or clump of houses he halted momentarily to repeat that loud call of warning. And each time the delay almost sufficed for me to overtake him.

But my horse, if speedier than his, lacked the gray's wondrous staying powers. Urge him as I would, he began to lag.

And now, as a larger group of houses loomed before us, I redoubled my vain efforts to catch up with the gray charger. For I knew we were drawing near to Medford. Once let a town of that size be aroused, and the mischief was not to be lightly quieted.

Down into the main street of Medford dashed Revere, just as the discordant bell of the town hall crashed out the stroke of twelve. A sleepy watchman with lantern and staff plodded out into the roadway, droning drowsily:

"Twelve—o'clock—and—all's—well!"

Then he caught the hammer-beats of our horses' hoofs. Like a giant fantom, Revere bore down upon the startled old man.

"Scrymegeour," hailed Paul, calling the watchman by name, "'tis Revere! The British are coming! Ring the alarm-bell!"

He swept on down the quaint old street. I spurred my horse toward the watchman to forestall his warning. But with a marvelous agility the old fellow had already scurried into the town hall.

As we left Medford the clangor of the big bell followed us. For miles its peals rolled forth through the midnight hush. From far ahead of me I could hear Paul Revere laugh exultantly at the sound, like a boy new released on holiday.

So on for another hour we rode. My horse was panting aloud and stumbling from sheer fatigue. Even the matchless gray was beginning to feel the terrific strain.

But for that and for the occasional halts at farm, village, and hamlet, where the warning was shouted, I should have lost him.

I can shut my eyes now, a half century later, and see Revere's broad shoulders, low-bent head, and flying hair, as he rode on his mighty errand of liberty.

I can hear his deep, magnetic voice in the oft-repeated cry, "*The British are coming! Wake!*"

The long, white, moonlit road, the budding trees, the clustered villages, and the tireless galloping rider are stamped forever in my memory, as they are in that of the grateful land he saved.

Once, I remember, his horse's flying hoofs struck a red spark from a road-bed flint. And as I toiled wearily after him the fanciful thought came to me that Revere was striking a spark whose resultant flame might not be quenched by oceans of brave men's blood.

Now, I know that the spark was liberty. Then, in my blindness, I called it treason.

Through Lexington we tore at one o'clock. And, as Revere thundered over the bridge and on to the broad patch of village green, he raised his cry of alarm.

"Some drunken roysterers," snarled a voice from the upper window of a house. "Less noise there!"

"You'll have noise enough before long," cried Revere as he dashed past. "*The British are coming!*"

We had scarce left this village behind us, when, as ever, in our wake broke forth the clamor of alarm-bells and cow-horns.

On toward Concord we sped. For another half-hour I managed to keep my steed going. Then, with a final plunging stumble, he came to a standstill, and stood with lowered head and heaving shoulders, refusing to budge another inch.

In vain I shouted and urged. The poor brute was spent. He could not travel another yard.

I had long since lost sound of Revere's progress. He had passed on out of sight and hearing. Yet at this point I might do worse than to describe in a word or so, as I heard it later, the rest of his famous ride.

He was joined presently by two rebel patrols—one William Dawes and Dr. Samuel Prescott. Together the three spurred toward Concord. But at Lincoln, ere they reached their destination, they were halted by a group of British officers, who, suspecting their errand was one of sedition, made all three prisoners.

But Dr. Prescott swerved aside, leaped his horse over a wall, and escaped. He rode on to Concord and gave the alarm.

Revere and Dawes were marched back a mile or two toward Lexington by their captors; and then, for lack of evidence to warrant their detention, were set free.

As I said, I set forward afoot, when my horse broke down. But soon I halted. I was on a wild-goose chase. How could I hope now to catch up with Revere? And, even if I should, the mischief was done.

The whole countryside, from Boston to beyond Lexington, was already aroused. From a dozen distant points the frantic pealing of alarm-bells reached my ears. Here and there glowed the red glare of signal fires. From everywhere came a faint buzzing sound as of countless voices.

And somewhere between me and Boston a column of British infantry were marching toward Concord, their cursing officers already aware that the country before them was awake and seething.

There must come a clash when that advancing red column should meet with its first resistance. And, turning about, I set off at a run in the direction of Boston, to be present at whatever excitement might befall.

It was only as I retraced my steps that I saw how fully the rebels were aroused. In every farmhouse lights were tossing. Men were running from opened doors and across fields, gripping long fowling-pieces, scythes, and other rude weapons. Now and then a farmer horseman, gun athwart saddle, pounded past me at full speed.

At each village the bells were tolling, and groups of armed men were forming in rude military order.

The Minute Men were out. True to their name, they were prepared on the instant to meet the British invader.

At one roadside house I saw a weeping woman strapping with trembling fingers a musket bandolier across her shirt-sleeved husband's shoulders. At another, three boys, scarce old enough to be out of the nursery, were hotly disputing as to which should carry the one gun their household boasted.

Again I passed a woman in widow's weeds, hurrying along, dragging a blunderbus far too heavy for her strength.

As I reached Lexington gray dawn was breaking. The moon had paled before the onset of day. And a weird, shimmering half-light overhung the world.

On Lexington's village green a thin line of men was drawn up. Some were half dressed. Others were appareled in some attempt at military fashion.

There were less than forty of them in all. A big, hatless fellow in shirt-sleeves was trying to harangue them. But the hoarse jangling of the meeting-house bell drowned his voice.

A half-grown schoolboy, astride a bareback farm horse, lumbered around the curve from the direction of Boston, crossed the bridge and drew up awkwardly in front of the little crowd of militiamen.

"Cap'n Parker!" he called, hailing the the big bareheaded leader.

The latter ceased his speech to the men, and hurried toward the rider. The meeting-house bell was hushed. The plow-boy's words came fast, and almost incoherent with eagerness.

"They're coming!" he cried. "They'll be here in another five minutes. I rode alongside in the field for more'n a mile. There was a hedge, and they couldn't see me. When they found the country was awake, Colonel Smith, their leader, split his force in two. He halted with one body, and he's sent back to Boston for reenforcements. But he sent six hundred men on ahead with Major Pitcairn. An' they'll be here in—"

A bugle call, then a military order, could be heard down the road beyond them.

"Best fall back," suggested some one. "There's less than forty of us here. We can't make a stand against six hundred. Fall back till we can join some of the other Minute Men companies. Then—"

"And leave Lexington to be burned to the ground?" retorted Captain Parker. "Not we. Here we are, and here we'll stay. Here at our own home. Boys, don't fire unless you're fired on. Remember Hancock's order that the regulars must fire the first shot. Let them fire first. *But if they want a war, let it begin here and now.*"

The handful of ill-armed men gave him a cheer. At his command they lined up in martial formation to face the bridge.

The growing morning light fell upon their resolute faces. Not a qualm, not a trace of swagger, no hint of nervousness or doubt could I detect.

Calmly, unafraid, this pitiful little line of untrained men were preparing to face more than ten times their number of the best-equipped troops of Europe. And not for fame, or for gain, or even because they were cornered. Simply to defend what they believed to be the right.

And as I watched I felt a mist spring unbidden to my eyes. My heart beat quicker.

These men were no traitors. They were heroes. And they were of mine own land, of mine own blood. A sudden feeling of keen, all-engrossing pride in their heroism filled my mind and heart.

Around the turn came a line of red. Then another. Then a third. The British regulars, marching in files of eight, debouched onto the straight bit of roadway leading to the bridge and to the green. In the gray of early morning their scarlet coats blazed forth vividly.

At the column's head rode a dark, thick-set officer in major's uniform. I knew him at a glance for that same Major Pitcairn who had so sneered at my provincial bearing and at my news on the night of the Government House ball.

I glanced back at the single ragged line of patriots drawn up on the green. Surely, at sight of this avalanche of redcoated regulars they must scatter and flee? But they stood as firm as their New England hills.

Across the intervening road and on to the bridge strode the regulars. Then they caught sight of the pathetic little patch of men drawn up to meet them. And, despite strict British discipline, a guffaw of laughter burst from the red-clad files.

"Silence in the ranks!" snarled Pitcairn. "Halt!"

The word was caught up by the subalterns, and was passed along. The scarlet column came to a standstill scarce a hundred feet from the handful of patriots. Pitcairn spurred his horse forward until he seemed about to ride Parker down, as the latter stood, cutlas in hand, in front of his men.

"Disperse, you rebels!" bawled the British major. "Disperse to your homes! In the name of the king!"

The line of Minute Men stood firm, expressionless. Pitcairn, wheeling his horse, dashed from between the two lines. Drawing up at the meeting-house steps, where his plunging mount dislodged and scattered a handful of frightened women and children, he drew his sword and waved it.

"Present! Aim!" he shouted.

The front rank of regulars dropped as a man to one knee, bringing their long-barreled muskets to a level. The men in the next rank aimed above their kneeling comrades' heads.

"*Fire!*"

A crashing report, like that of a single enormous gun, blared out on the still air of dawn, reverberating over hill and plain.

Yes, and that shot's report resounded to Boston, to New York, to Virginia, and to far-off Georgia; to England itself. Across the whole world it rang.

And as long as true manhood and love of freedom endures, its echoes shall never die.

CHAPTER X.

THE SHOT HEARD ROUND THE WORLD.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British regulars fired and fled—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,

From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,
Chasing the redcoats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

Longfellow.

FROM the leveled muzzles of the redcoats' guns rolled forth, with that volley, a pall of gray, fluffy smoke that filled all the space between them and the thirty-odd Minute Men.

And through the smoke-reek I could hear Captain Parker's fearless cry to his farmer-militia:

"*Fire!*"

A rambling, ragged volley answered his command.

A front-rank grenadier lurched forward on his face. A second-rank man tumbled against his next-in-line. A soldier farther back and to one side dropped his musket and bent double over a shattered wrist.

Then a whiff of down-wind blew the smoke aside. And my eyes fell upon the line of Minute Men. Eight of them were lying sprawled on the young grass. A ninth was staggering backward into the arms of a frantic, bareheaded woman who had run forth from one of the houses that faced the pretty little church.

The gallant little line had been crumpled and shattered. Full a quarter of its members were wounded or slain. The road to Concord lay clear and unopposed before the six hundred redcoats.

"March!" yelled Pitcairn.

The bugles took up the cry. The ranks reformed in marching order, the wounded grenadiers were swung into stretchers, and the ground shook with the tread of rhythmic, tramping feet.

The momentary check was at an end. On pressed the victors, unheeding the ravage they had wrought.

But a man (travel-stained, dusty, wild of eye) had sprung forth from the group of pallid onlookers on the meeting-house steps. Raging like a wild beast, he had darted among the slain, had caught up a fallen Minute Man's musket, clubbed it, and with a growling cry had hurled himself at the flank of the marching British column.

Three farmers seized him and dragged him back from the certain destruction his blindly insane act courted. Yet he was a giant in strength. The combined efforts of his three friendly captors could scarce restrain him.

He struggled furiously to tear away from them and to attack the indifferent passing redcoats single-handed.

"Let me free!" he screamed hoarsely, battling with the farmers who so kindly restrained his futile madness. "Loose your hold on me, I say! They are *murderers!* They have killed my countrymen! They marched against them, fifteen to one, and mowed them down! Oh, you craven *cowards* to let the red demons escape in safety like this! *Free* me, I say!"

Others of the Minute Men clustered around him, and by sheer force of numbers drew him out of danger. He still fought like a maniac, cursing the British, scourging the hero Minute Men for cowards.

Then, as the last of the British troops plodded by, the lunatic came slowly to his senses. And—shame on me to confess the babyish madness!—he was *I.*

Yes, *I!*

I, Roger Sessions, loyal Tory, son of a loyal Tory. It was I (in the blind fury bred of the massacre I had just witnessed) who denounced King George's troops as murderers and demons, and who sought to die killing them.

I wonder if, at this point in my tale, you who read will lay aside these pages with a sneer and say:

"Pooh! This is a sorry hero, after all. First he prated against liberty, and now, for no reason at all, he turneth rebel and hateth the loyalty he once practised. We will have no more of him!"

All that you may thus say of me is quite true. I make no defense. I state but the facts. I am, indeed, a sorry hero. Forsooth, I doubt me if I be a hero at all.

But I pray you cease not on that account from reading further into my story. For, though you may well despise *me,* yet the tale I tell is one that no true American can afford to despise. It is the tale of Liberty's hallowed birth, and of the events that made you all free men. Wherefore, read on, I entreat. The story of Liberty can never grow stale.

Many to whom I have told of the sudden change that turned me from rabid Tory to more rabid patriot, have shrugged shoulder and laughed their disbelief.

But a few others (who can read men's hearts as you and I read books)—General George Washington himself among the rest—have found nothing strange in the transformation.

It was Washington who, on a later day,

explained it to me, saying mine was but one of hundreds of like instances in the early times of the Revolution.

Men who, by birth and training, deemed themselves loyal Tories, often realized, at sight of their brutally slaughtered fellow farmers, that they were, first of all, *Americans;* and that the blood-brotherhood of their own countrymen was far thicker than the water of a vague allegiance to an English king on whom they had never set eyes.

Be all that as it may, there I found myself clutching a musket, a bullet-pouch, and a powder-horn, and imploring thirty ill-armed Minute Men to let me lead them forthwith against six hundred British regulars!

As my brain cooled, none could have been so amazed as was I by my own madness. Yet, with calmer mind, my new-found patriotism did not lag.

I joined myself to the little party of survivors, resolved to strike at least one blow for liberty that day. And the chance was at hand.

Though the meeting-house clock marked only the hour of five, yet from everywhere farmers and Minute Men were flocking into Lexington.

Down roads and lanes and across fields they came; singly, by twos and threes, and by dozens. The village green was choked with grim-faced, armed men.

No thin line of desperate, hopeless defenders now; but hundreds of militiamen, farm-hands, and shopkeepers. White-haired, bent grandsires, and beardless schoolboys stood shoulder to shoulder. Muskets, fowling-pieces, horse-pistols, blunderbusses — every conceivable weapon—bristled from those ill-formed, homespun ranks.

There was no confusion, no shouting, none of the disorder and clamor that marks a mob. Orderly, calm, deadly, the rough battalion formed itself.

A tall, old man in ministerial garb mounted the meeting-house steps overlooking the thronged green and the road beyond. He stretched forth his hands in brief prayer. Every head was uncovered.

Then, with a deep-muttered "*Amen*" from hundreds of throats, we formed into line, shouldered our weapons, and marched off down the Concord road in the wake of the British phalanx.

It was not long ere we came upon traces of their passage. The whole countryside was buzzing like a monster swarm of furious bees. At every crossroads new throngs of Minute Men and farmers joined us. We were too late to check the British attack upon Concord, but in ample time to avenge it.

Colonel Smith, Pitcairn, and the six hundred regulars, after leaving Lexington, marched upon Concord, meeting scarcely any opposition. But Paul Revere's ride had done its work.

Like so many beavers, the Concord patriots had been toiling for hours. And the carefully hoarded stores of provisions and arms were well hidden.

When the British reached Concord they found they had come upon a fool's errand. And furious enough they were at their outwitting.

Four hundred and fifty Minute Men were drawn up in front of Concord liberty-pole to check the British onslaught. They were headed by old Major Buttrick. Captain Isaac Davis (leading spirit among the farmer militia) had just marched in with a company of volunteers.

At the first volley from the British, Davis and many of his company fell dead. Buttrick shouted:

"*Fire!* For Heaven's sake, *fire!*"

Before the rifle-blast of the Concord patriots the advancing British wavered and fell back. They could make no headway against that force of quiet, coldly determined patriots. Here was a mere handful of thirty-eight defenders, as at Lexington.

Yet the British were too strong to be crushed. The patriots could but hold their own. The redcoats found and disabled a few old cannon; destroyed one or two barrels of flour that had not yet been hidden; set fire to the court-house, and hacked down the liberty-pole. Then they turned back toward Boston.

But it is easier to thrust one's head into a hornet's nest than to draw it forth again unscathed. Any fool may walk into a trap. But to walk safely out of it again calls for more wit and luck than Smith and Pitcairn possessed. The real excitement of that most glorious of days was but just beginning.

Back fell the British in good order; moving with stately tread, in solid phalanx, like some mighty, inhuman, irresistible machine of destruction.

And then, to the attack we rushed—we, the men of Concord and Lexington!

From every roadside stone wall we poured a deadly hail of lead into the prim red ranks. Not a bush, a tree, or boulder, or farmstead outhouse but hid a homespun-clad sharpshooter.

We were the men of woods and fields;

men trained from childhood in the use of firearms; men who could drop a tiny squirrel from the loftiest tree-top, or stop the course of a distant deer in full flight.

Against such home-bred marksmanship what chance had the slow-moving mass of British infantry? Here was no case where undisciplined men were lined up and forced to fire straight in front of them at a scarce-understood word of command. We were hunters, all of us, from our youth up. And now our guns were trained at will on man's most thrilling quarry—his fellow men.

Still in every memory lay those huddled victims of the Lexington green. The dead face of Isaac Davis and his fellows was fresh in the farmers' minds. Fresh, too, was the recollection of burned houses, of brutal insults, of long years of patiently borne oppression from these same powdered, red-coated British soldiery.

Can you wonder that we leaped forward, mad with eagerness to wipe out the black debt!

The British held to their stiff martial formation as best they might. But from every direction poured in the patriots' bullets. The farmers hung on the column's flanks like flies—here, there, everywhere—as deadly as wasps, and as hard to corner.

Again and again the column was halted, and faced about to meet our attack. But we presented no solid front to their fusillade.

Scarce a man could be found on whom to train their muskets. But from wall, fence, copse, and boulder our leaden messengers sang. And as the march would be resumed, we again flocked to the charge.

The British officers shrieked and cursed. But to no avail. Here was a lurking, deadly foe, such as no British force had encountered since the Braddock massacre a score of years earlier.

Human nature could not stand it. Mortal nerves could not endure that ceaseless volley which could not be effectively returned. The column, from a stately walk, broke into the "double quick."

But they could not shake us off. Across the fields we streamed, to confront them at each new turn of the road.

As snow melts and breaks up under the pelting of spring rain, so the British ranks dissolved beneath our hot rain of bullets. From steady, stately march to orderly quick-step; from quickstep to wild, terror-stricken run. From that to panic rout.

Soldiers hurled away muskets and haversacks and rushed in a mad pell-mell scamper for safety, like a huddle of stampeded sheep. Never before were Britain's proud infantry in such rout.

In vain did the officers seek to restore some semblance of order. In vain did they shout to rally their stricken men and try to beat them back into line with the flats of their swords.

The terrified redcoats ran over their own officers in the frantic attempt to escape the leaden death that everywhere clung about them.

Could this jostling, screaming horde of scrambling fugitives be the massive war-machine of an hour ago? Could the scared wretches that choked the lanes and roadways be the veterans who had guffawed aloud at eight of our puny force of Lexington Minute Men?

We discarded caution now and pressed in upon our fleeing foes, doing fearful execution.

Back through Lexington poured the stricken redcoat rabble. And at every step the panic grew more frantic!

Out through the streets, across the historic village green they fled. I verily believe, in another ten minutes the whole scourged, fear-crazed pack must have surrendered to us.

But just beyond the bridge were massed a strong regiment of British reenforcements, Lord Percy at their head. In hollow square they were formed, and at every side of the rectangle bristled level guns and bayonets. As well have charged the stone wall as that formidable defense!

We halted in surprise. For we had not thought of the reenforcements which Colonel Smith had earlier summoned out from Boston. Our chase seemed at an end.

Into the safe enclosure of the bayonet-edged hollow square staggered the exhausted redcoat fugitives, flinging themselves upon the ground from sheer fatigue.

There they lay in the dirt, panting like tired dogs, their tongues hanging out, their chests laboring heavily, their once-spruce uniforms torn and mud-caked.

Our pause of astonishment was brief. In renewed rage at seeing our prey escape, we hurled ourselves upon the hollow square.

Yes, and we, the ill-armed farmers of Massachusetts, beat back that solid array of infantry; beat them back by sheer courage and ferocity, so that they turned in retreat toward Boston.

They were too strong, and we too weak, for us to demoralize them and drive them before us like sheep as we had done with

the advance body of six hundred. Nevertheless, they could not hold their own against us.

We hung on their flanks and blazed away at them from behind every bit of cover. Under our galling fire (to which they responded fiercely, but with wofully poor effect), the whole British force retreated.

Keeping good order, but nevertheless in full flight, they made their way back to Boston.

On that first day of the Revolutionary War, the British lost full 273 men against our loss of 93.

I had taken scant account of my own actions. Firing with scarce a miss, halting to reload, then running on again to the chase, I had worked with a sort of mechanical, unconscious precision.

But now, I saw a homespun lad rise from behind a bush to fire. He caught his toe on a root, and fell prone. A half-dozen British skirmishers sprang from the ranks to seize him.

I was nearer to the boy. I sprang forward, jerked him to his feet, and swung him back out of peril. As I did so, a redcoat clubbed his empty musket and struck for my head.

I ducked nimbly. But the blow still fell glancingly across my skull, half stunning me.

My hot musket dropped to earth and I reeled, for an instant, helpless. Before I could recover, a dozen hands had seized me. A rope pinioned my arms, and I was thrust forward between two files of grenadiers.

I was a prisoner. The first American prisoner in the Revolutionary War.

CHAPTER XI.

NEAR THE NOOSE.

In an anteroom of Government House I cooled my heels. With bound hands, I sat huddled on a hard bench. A sentinel paced up and down in front of me.

Truly, distinguished treatment for one farm-bred rebel! But, as I was the expedition's sole captive, I supposed they were seeking to make the most of me.

My recollections of the march—or retreat—or flight—back to Boston, were hazy. I recalled being hustled along between a couple of hurrying ranks, and menaced with bayonet-points when I tried to break free.

My head, at first, hummed and throbbed from the tap the grenadier's musket-butt had given it. Later, when my mind cleared enough to note things more calmly, we were beyond pursuit and were tramping into Boston.

Rumors of the day's events, in some garbled form, had reached the city ahead of us. For every street we passed was close-lined with wondering, eager people.

And as the populace saw the bedraggled, weary state of the troops, the wide gaps in the ranks and the hundreds of dead and wounded soldiers carried on stretchers, there arose from everywhere an indescribable murmur of exultation that would have been a cheer but for the menace of the regulars' muskets. It was a sound I can never forget.

In time we had come to the barracks, where the redcoats gave gruff, shamefaced replies to their comrades' wondering queries. And I was dragged on, by a captain's order, to Government House.

In the stuffy, twilit cubbyhole of an anteroom where I was placed, I could hear distinctly through the thin partition a furious conversation from the general's study beyond. The talk was apparently at full height as I arrived.

"Scrape me raw!" Gage was fuming, "but 'tis a black disgrace to England's arms! And I wonder at you, my lord, that you can stand there so dashed cool and tell me of it."

"Why not?" drawled a calm, pleasant voice that I recognized as Lord Percy's. "There is scant use in glossing over the truth when we chat among ourselves. Of course, when your excellency sends report to England, it can be put in whatever light you may choose."

No light can gloze over the wretched truth," retorted Gage. "Is there no palliating circumstance, man, that will help us save our face? Try to think!"

"We were thrashed," replied Percy. "That is all. Thrashed by a swarm of shoddy backwoodsmen. My own command was but driven hither in good order by them. As to Pitcairn and Smith, their six hundred were forced to run a monstrous fast foot-race."

"Before a gang of provincial louts!" growled the general. "Oh, the shame of it! What will Howe say when he comes back next month? He and the coffee-house wits will gibe and lampoon us till we be sore to the bone. Have we *naught* to show for the affair? No list of their killed? No arms or luggage or prisoners?"

"Some of them were slain," assented Percy. "But scarce one to our three, I fear. As to arms and luggage, we captured none.

Though we left plenty of our own along the route. Prisoners? I doubt if we took any.

"Captain," he called to a man farther down the room, "does your report say aught of prisoners?"

"The full report is not yet in, my lord," answered the man addressed. "But I ordered that any captives who had been taken should be brought to Government House for disposal before they were sent to the cells."

"Have them in, then!" roared Gage. "Have them in, I say! As many of 'em as can be crowded into the room! I'll wait for no court martial, but hang the whole pack as felons, assassins, and traitors to the king's majesty."

"But, your excellency," protested Lord Percy, in a lower voice as the captain departed upon his errand, "surely, as prisoners of war, they—"

"Prisoners of war?" rasped Gage. "There *is* no war! These be traitors who took up arms against their king and who murdered our troops in cold blood. They shall hang, even though there be a full thousand of them."

I heard no more. The sentry before my door entered the anteroom, pulled me roughly to my feet and pushed me, bound and helpless, before him down the corridor to the general's study.

The sunset's rays lighted the long apartment. Save for a military secretary writing at a table near the farther window, Gage and Lord Percy were the only persons in it.

The general's eyes fell balefully upon me. I squared my shoulders and met his gaze firmly.

I had been brave enough that day. But now, the thought of the vile felon's death that awaited me turned me strangely sick. Yet, I made shift to appear indifferent as I faced the angry Englishman.

Gage's wrathful gaze shot past me through the door, then at the guard sergeant who stood on the threshold.

"Well! Well!" he snarled. "Where be all the rest? Bring 'em in! Am I to be kept waiting like—"

"May it please your excellency," faltered the sergeant. "There *are* no others."

"*What?*" bellowed Gage.

"Only one prisoner was taken to-day, your excellency," answered the sergeant. "There he is."

Gage went purple. He gasped like a new-caught fish. I half thought he would fall into an apoplexy.

"His majesty's best regiments have been trounced by a parcel of yokels," he sputtered, whirling on Percy. "And all we have to show for it is—*this!*"

He pointed in dramatic contempt at me, as he gulped forth the words. Percy's handsome face grew red in an effort to choke back an unbidden smile.

"So it seems, your excellency," said he gravely.

The general pounded on the floor with his cane until the walls reechoed. And again he fought for speech.

"Oh, monstrous! *Monstrous!*" he managed to pant thickly at last.

His goggle-eyes roamed the room in frantic, helpless fury. At last they rested once more upon me.

"Take him away!" he roared to the sergeant. "Take him away and hang him! I'll send the warrant at once by an orderly. String up the murderous traitor. He—"

But Lord Percy, who had hitherto glanced but casually at me, looked again, as Gage spoke, and this time, of a sudden, more closely.

"Pardon, general!" he broke in now. "May I speak with the fellow?"

"If you care to soil your lips by speech with an arrant rebel," acquiesced Gage in sulky surprise. "But to what purpose?"

"Are you not the half-witted provincial who broke in upon his excellency's ball the night before last?" queried Percy.

Night before last! It seemed a century agone.

"I did so intrude," I made answer.

"Into the library where Mistress Winthrop and Major Pitcairn and I were talking?" he went on.

I nodded, perplexed.

"I never forget a face," he exclaimed in triumph, "I recall the whole thing now. Your excellency," leaning toward Gage, "I fear you must e'en forgo the tiny morsel of revenge you promised yourself. This is no rebel."

"How? What?" snapped Gage incredulously. "The deuce you say! But he was caught—"

"He is a nuisance, I am told, and I suppose he were better hanged," went on Percy. "But, for all that, I fear it would be impolitic to string him up."

"Why not? Who dare gainsay—"

"He is no rebel," pursued Lord Percy, "but a sun-crazed bumpkin whom old Simeon Winthrop supports. I doubt if he were within ten miles of to-day's brawling. He is daft on the theme of rebel plots and—"

"How know you all this?"

"From Mistress Marjory Winthrop's own lips," was the reply, "and no longer ago than night before last, at Government House ball. The fellow burst in upon us, in the library, full of some cock-and-bull tale of a rebel conspiracy. We were for throwing him out. But Mistress Marjory intervened. She told us he was her father's dependent and craved our mercy for him."

How clearly did I recall the lie whereby Marjory had explained my presence! And how I blessed, where once I had cursed, it! Gage looked puzzled.

"H'm!" he reflected, half under his breath. "Old Simeon Winthrop is the most important provincial and the stanchest Tory in all Boston. Just now—especially after to-day's reverse—we need all the Colonial sympathy and aid we can win. It would have angered the old Tory, I doubt not, had we strung up his servant. I thank you for reminding me, Percy. Let the crazy lout be lodged safely in the madhouse of the town, and—"

"If Winthrop wished him in a madhouse," suggested Lord Percy, "would he not have clapped him into one long since? I fear, your excellency, we would offend almost as much by locking the imbecile up as by stringing him up. Does it not appear so to you, general?"

"As you will!" grumbled Gage. "Cut the fool's tether, one of you, and turn him loose. But listen, sirrah!" he shouted, once more facing me, "if ever you are seen within the bounds of Government House again, you shall be flogged to the bone. 'Tis enough for me to be surrounded by fools in uniform without adding idiots in homespun to my list. Be off!"

The sergeant loosed the bonds on my wrists, wheeled me about and pointed to the broad stairway leading to the front doors. You may be well assured I needed no second hint. In a trice I was out in the hall and half-way down the steps.

But, as I crossed the threshold of the street entrance, a light touch fell on my shoulder. I turned, startled. Lord Percy was at my side.

"My friend," he drawled, in that quiet, pleasant voice of his, "if you are of godly bent, you may say prayers of thanks this night.

"For your neck was parlous near to the noose, just now. 'Tis lucky I chanced to be there. You are no more crazed than am I. Nor are you a servant of Simeon Winthrop. But since 'twas Mistress Marjory's sweet whim to say so, why, who am *I* to gainsay her? I return you to her with my humblest respects. Tell her so, I pray you. And—you are a plucky fellow. You fought well this day. I saw you. Better luck attend you next time!"

On the last word he was gone; and I passed, marveling, into the street.

I had in a single half-hour witnessed all that was worst and all that was best in British military life of the day.

As I turned my face toward Paul Revere's shop, I suddenly realized that I ached in every bone, that I was utterly worn out, and that the long strain of excitement and hot action had left me strangely weak and unable to endure further hardship.

Also, I was of two minds as to what reception might await me at Revere's hands. When last he had seen me, I had been spurring after him at top speed, flourishing a horse-pistol and shouting to him to surrender or be shot. Scarce a prelude to hospitable welcome, now that I was returning to his house!

But as I came around the corner of Milk Street, I saw something that drove all other thoughts from my mind. Hastening toward me, very evidently on her way to Government House, was Marjory Winthrop.

She did not at first see me. Her glance was downcast and she was hurrying on, oblivious to everything around her and evidently much preoccupied.

Fast as she walked, I noted that her light step had lost the old buoyant gaiety that had carried her, lightly as a feather, over Boston's rough highways.

I also had space to observe that her flower face was robbed of its wonted flush and that there were dark circles under her big, brown eyes. She looked haggard, ill—indescribably miserable.

I halted at sight of her. Here—far more than with Revere—had I good reason to doubt the nature of my receiving any rapturous welcome.

When last I had seen this dainty beauty I had scourged her with the lash of my brutal anger. I had left her crouching, heart-broken, alone, in a ghostly belfry, at dead of night and far from home; while I had hastened away, deaf to her sobbing appeals, to wreak mischief to the cause she loved.

Truly, I can scarce blame my own cowardice that I stood stock-still there, watching her come toward me in the dying sunset,

and daring neither to accost her nor to slink away unobserved.

Then—a bare five yards distant—she raised her eyes. And she saw and knew me.

CHAPTER XII.

I REAP MY REWARD.

YES, she saw and knew me. Our eyes met, and for the briefest instant we stood facing each other, moveless, silent—she, tiny and infinitely graceful in her flowered dress, with that highbred, aristocratic air of hers; I, gigantic in my torn, blood-stained, muddy, blue suit.

Then, with a little cry, she sprang toward me; both her white hands were outstretched; her lovely face was aglow.

"You are free!" she exclaimed, her voice trembling. "*Free!*"

"You—you *care?*" I muttered, utterly dumfounded at the joy that transfigured her.

"They said you were captured," she hurried on, still unconsciously leaving her little hands close clasped in my great rough palms. "And General Gage swore he would hang every prisoner that was taken to-day. I—I—"

"You know, then?" I exclaimed. "You've heard—"

"Yes, I know everything. A hundred others know. And you have won the friendship of every patriot in all Boston. You have—"

"The 'friendship'?" I echoed. "I left here a rabid Tory. I galloped after Revere, to stop him at all hazards from bearing the warning to Concord. I even drew pistol on him at—"

"And, single-handed, you sought to charge the British line at Lexington," she broke in exultantly. "Men say you fought like a demon, that you fired until your rifle was too hot to hold, and that every shot of yours brought down a redcoat. That it was in saving another from capture or death that you were—made prisoner. Oh, the story of your deeds has preceded you. We—"

"'Tis an exaggeration," I mumbled, horribly embarrassed at her eager praise and at the hero-worship that blazed in her big eyes. "They make too much of what a thousand others did far better. I—I myself scarce know how I chanced to turn, in a breath, from Tory to rebel. 'Twas laughable! I—"

"You did not turn so in a breath," she broke in. "You were ever a patriot at heart, though you knew it not. And ever you were but waiting the right hour to find it out. I knew it from the moment, a month ago, when you seized the soldier who stole my fan. So did Master Revere. We knew, and—we waited. Would I otherwise have so employed you to flash the signal from North Church belfry? Yet it pained me sore that in the instant you learned what you had done, your heart did not tell you on which side you belonged. But I knew full well that you must learn it this day when first the British should clash with the patriots. 'Twas for that reason I let you follow Revere."

"You *let* me follow him?" I repeated, half amused, half amazed. "Surely you did all in mortal power to hold me back!"

She smiled up at me through the bright tears that welled in her eyes—and it was a ghost of the gay imperious smile that I had known so well.

"Master Sessions," she said quietly, "in my cloak last night I bore two loaded and primed pistols. Pistol-shooting is not deemed fit pastime for a woman; yet such slight skill at it have I that at fifty paces I can bring down a flying swallow. Think you I need have let you escape to check Paul Revere, had I not wished to?"

"You would have killed me?" I cried, unbelieving.

"I *could* have killed you," she corrected. "But it would not have been needful, even had I wished to stop you. A single bullet through the foot would have done you no lasting harm. Yet it would have ended all chance of your riding last night. I let you go because—I *knew* you would go the way of a brave man and a true American. As, forsooth, you did."

I eyed her in dumb bewilderment. When, I wonder, will the wisest man learn to understand the simplest woman? And what hope, this side of Judgment Day, had a thickhead like myself of coping with the witch brain of Marjory Winthrop?

She laughed at my discomfiture; then she grew grave.

"You have not yet told me how you got free," she said. "News came that you were a prisoner. I was hurrying with all speed to General Gage, to entreat your life—to use in your behalf what poor charm and eloquence I may possess. And now, it seems, you got scot-free through no help of mine."

"You are wrong," I answered. "It was *you*, and you alone, who set me free."

"You jest!" she exclaimed. "I did not—"

"You told certain officers, night before last, that I was a lunatic hanger-on of your family. And—"

"Ah, forgive me!" she pleaded. "'Tis ungenerous to remind me that—"

"And," I resumed, "when to-day's only prisoner turned out to be no rebel at all, but that selfsame lunatic in whose welfare your Tory family is so interested—why, his excellency very diplomatically strengthened his influence with your father by setting me at liberty."

She clapped her hands together like a delighted child, and broke into a silvery laugh of sheer joy.

"Oh, the simplicity of it!" she cried. "The clever, stupid *simplicity* of it! Tell me everything! 'Tis as rare a jest as any of playhouse making."

I told her my story. When I had finished Lord Percy's share in it, she said musingly:

"Yes, 'tis like Percy—or like Howe. Both are strange, whimsical men, who hide big hearts under cynical, dissolute exterior. Had either of them his own way, the fate of the patriots, I doubt not would be far different. But each must obey harsh, unjust orders. So, each obeys in the least brutal way he can. Would there were more like them!"

Down the winding street, from toward Government House, came the tramp of running feet.

Marjory paused to listen.

"These are soldiers," she said. "I know by their tread. Why can they be in such haste? One would think British troops had had enough running this glorious day to suffice them. They run as if they were in chase of some fugitive."

We glanced at each other; and the same thought came to us both.

"It is *you!*" she panted. "It is *you* they seek!"

I drew myself up.

"If it be so," I made reply, "I am too spent and too weary to fly. I must e'en make such defense as I can. For, if they have learned their error about me, then capture means hanging."

"Oh!" she cried in hot remorse. "And I have kept you standing here in peril! Quick!" her eyes sweeping our near vicinity for points of vantage. "Into the vestibule of this closed draper's shop!"

"To be caught like a rat in a drain?" I expostulated, eying the narrow passageway scarce three feet across and three deep.

"Quick!" she repeated in frenzied appeal.

And, as was ever my wont, I blindly obeyed her.

"Kneel down!" she ordered.

And again I obeyed. I looked up, to see her standing listlessly, her back to me, her furbelowed, caped dress and cloak quite filling the front of the short passage.

Oh, it was a ridiculous position for a grown man to be in—and it was a shameful thing to hide, literally, behind a woman's skirts!

Were our scare to be in vain—as seemed more than likely to me now on second thought—a pretty figure I should cut. She would always look on me as a coward, as a skulker who let a woman bear the brunt of danger for him.

At the thought I half rose from my crouching posture. But she heard me, and whispered imperiously:

"Back! They are rounding the corner just above. And I was right. They are soldiers — a provost marshal guard. Young Captain Waytt is leading them. They are searching every doorway and angle—for *something.*"

"Ten to one it is not for *me!*" I retorted, vexed at myself for so slavishly obeying her. "And I—"

"*Hush!*" she commanded in a tense whisper.

At almost the same instant the noise of approaching feet came directly to where Marjory stood. She was waiting, in the front of the shallow vestibule, as though she had just stepped back from the roadway to allow the hurrying file of redcoats to pass.

"Halt!" came the command in the high-pitched nasal tone affected by youthful officers of that period.

The shuffling footsteps ceased. Then the same high voice spoke again, this time in accents much modulated by respect, if not by admiration as well.

"I crave your pardon, Mistress Winthrop, for daring to trouble your ears with so vulgar a matter. But we be sent, hotfoot, in chase for a rebel who by mistake was but now set free at Government House. He was seen to pass into the street, walking slowly. He cannot have gone far."

"A rebel?" lisped Marjory in the silly "die-away" tones much cultivated then by women of fashion. "A rebel? Oh, la, sir! Is there but *one* of the pestilent breed left in Boston?"

"Prodigious witty!" applauded the officer. "No, the town swarms with the pests, and the whole countryside as well; but the special one *we* seek was a prisoner caught in to-day's riots at Lexington."

"Caught at Lexington?" lisped Marjory.

"But, Captain Waytt, I sure heard tell that his excellency was to hang all prisoners taken in to-day's brawling. Why did he not hang this fellow while he had him? Why set him free?"

"'Twas a rare blunder," murmured the captain, sinking his voice so his men could not hear—"a rare blunder. Split me, else! The rogue claimed to be no rebel at all, but a peaceful servant of your father's. And—odd enough—Lord Percy backed the villain's words.

"Percy is near-sighted, and, I doubt not, mistook the man for another. His excellency turns the vile scoundrel loose, mind you, as a compliment to your worthy father. Not five minutes later your father chances to drop in for a dish of tea with Madam Gage. And the general tells of the good turn he has just done him by setting his 'servant' free. And your father declares, in a passion, that he has no such servant at all. So off we are sent to—"

"But while we prattle, he escapes," cut in Marjory, with the tone of one reluctant to bring so charming a narrative to a close.

"'Twas not for prattle that I halted, believe me," the captain protested. "Though Mistress Marjory Winthrop's face might well turn a whole regiment of dragoons from duty. I stopped to ask had you seen such an one fleeing—or loitering—along Milk Street?"

"What like was he?" she queried, all interest. "The street at this hour is so near deserted, and so slowly did I stroll in waiting for my coach to meet me, that I might well have seen him?"

"He is a giant of a fellow, with a shock of yellow hair, and clad in blue clothes of Colonial cut," began the captain; "and he—"

"A handsome, powerful man, of fine carriage?" Marjory caught him up. "I saw him not two minutes agone. And I noted his looks no less than his speed; for he was running like mad. Doubtless he walked slowly till out of sight of Government House, and then—"

"Which way went he?" broke in the captain in eager interest.

"Down to yonder alley. And then he whipped about the corner to the left toward the Common."

"March! *Double quick!*" came the high-pitched orders.

The sound of running martial feet again broke upon my ears and fast died away in the distance.

"Alas!" sighed Marjory in mingled relief and comic remorse. "What am I coming to? I was ever a truthful maid. I scorned a lie and I loathed a liar. Yet here, in three brief days, I have told two *amazing* lies. And both in *your* behalf. The first, I verily believe, that ever seared my lips. And yet—somehow I cannot feel for them the grief I should. There!" in a more businesslike tone. "The last of the searchers has turned the far corner. You are safe for the moment. But what next?"

"I owe you my life, my freedom!" I replied, rising and looking down at her with a gaze that somehow brought the red flush back to her pale cheeks. "I owe all to you. That is the sweetest part of my liberty—of my life itself—that I am in your dear debt for it, Marjory! I—"

She had heard me with glowing face and with parted lips. Her wondrous eyes I could not read. But they had never left mine.

Now, midway in my mad, impulsive speech, a look of utter terror flashed over her face and she screamed.

A hairy, brown hand had reached forward from amid the deepening shadows of the street beyond, and was dragging her bodily away from me.

(To be continued.)

FAIR PLAY.

It seems all very well to laugh at Love
  In the foolish days of youth,
To question the wealth of its treasure trove—
  To doubt that it is the truth.

It seems all very well—but some fine day
  When all the whole world is blue,
Somebody will think of what now you say,
  And then Love will laugh at you.

Flavel Scott Mines.

The Hawkins Gas Annex.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

This Time the Vagaries Incidental to the Annual Dinner of a Volunteer Fireman's Brigade Have Not Been Taken into Account by the Amateur Inventor.

THE ostensible reason was this:

My wife and Mrs. Hawkins, after due deliberation, had framed and unanimously approved the scheme of both our families spending August at the seashore.

Hawkins's country place, high in the Berkshires, adjoins my own; the two houses are big and comfortable; the locality is such that a man may wander when, where, and as he chooses, and still retain the respect of his neighbor.

While at Temmacossett Inn, all hands dress five times a day, deplore the accommodations as compared with those (of the unmentioned five-room flat) at home, and frigidly ignore the poor, animate corpse who will neither do a war-dance at night in a Turkish-bath ballroom, nor yet don a bathing-suit and convert himself into a human sauté on the blistering beach by day.

However, the ladies had determined that a little change was necessary this year. So it was settled.

And now for the real reason:

The demoniac Somethingorother which undertook the chastening of my soul, about the time I first met Hawkins, had grown irritable at the impending hot season; it was going to vent its irritability on me.

I had no suspicion of it then. Nay, I whistled blithely as I walked down the train platform at Hawkins's side, that beautiful early afternoon in June.

Everything was bright and warm and wholesome. We had left our offices to run themselves for the rest of the day; we were on our way to Temmacossett Inn, scouting, to reserve the best rooms in the place for August, spend the night in one of them, and return early in the morning, refreshed by a breath of sea-air.

Where is the inn located? Perhaps you could not find the name of the town on the map. Suffice it to say that the Temmacossett Inn is several thousand miles nearer New York than the planet Mars, and at the same time is within nothing like comfortable walking distance of the city.

Through the summer, they run nice trains down there. They put on cars with big seats and wide windows that almost resemble a real "parlor" car; and into a pair of the seats Hawkins and I dropped, just as the train started, and stretched our legs, for the car was otherwise empty.

The sun was low when, after endless jogging along, the intelligent train sighted the large bumper ahead, and, realizing that the end of the line had been reached, stopped. We descended and looked around for the imposing original of the Temmacossett Inn picture in the pamphlet.

In our immediate vicinity there was sand, six trees, if you counted the small bush to the left of the station, sand, the smashed roofs of two houses, and more sand. Also there was the whirring of a big automobile, labeled "Temmacossett Inn Bus."

It was a pretty ride, that two miles—I think. The bus, with its tremendous tires and its massive motor, presented us with perhaps a peck of sand per second, mainly on the face and chest; but here and there we found a pretty glimpse of sparkling water; and at last the across-the-Sahara-by-camel business stopped and we rolled up a hard road to the Temmacossett Inn.

Beautiful it certainly was. Hardly more than across the road at the end of the lawn lay the surging ocean. To the rear lay woods—not a primeval Canadian forest, to be sure, nor yet an Amazon River jungle; but woods enough to make an effective green background.

"Ever see a prettier seashore place?" the inventor demanded, with an air of proprietorship.

I had not.

"Looks better inside than outside, too!" commented Hawkins. "Come in and I'll show you."

"I thought—"

"And I want you to meet Carvel—the boss of the outfit. He—"

"But I thought you'd never been here before?" I hazarded. "I thought you didn't know anything about it."

"There are lots of times when a man with a head like yours only thinks he thinks," Hawkins observed placidly. "Come and see Carvel—and don't make any asinine breaks!"

Had the tide been going out instead of coming in, I think I should have thrown him into the sea. As it was, I merely tagged behind.

As we reached the wide porch, the big door opened, and a majestic man in a frock coat emerged. His professional smile appeared as he saw the inventor; and Hawkins grabbed him by the hand and shook it fervidly.

"Mr. Carvel—Mr. Griggs!" he said briefly.

And then, as our hands were outstretched, he seized Mr. Carvel and drew him away, gently but firmly.

"You sit down there, Griggs. You come with me a minute, Mr. Carvel."

And they disappeared within, while I dropped into a wicker-chair and took breath.

Plainly, they had subject matter for conversation. Ten minutes and neither had appeared. Then, as a diversion, the door opened and another tall man strode out—a different sort of man.

In fact, a very different sort of man, for this one wore an aristocratic countenance and a haughty mien. More than that—and I know woolens—his navy-blue trousers, with their wide red stripe, could not have been bought for less than twenty-five dollars; another fifteen might possibly have paid for his vividly red flannel shirt, and if done by a professional worker, the huge black "D. H." embroidered on the shirt-bosom meant another five.

He wore heavy shoes of custom make; he displayed a massive gold badge with "D. H." and "F. D.," and endless fancy scrolls upon it; and as if the jaunty cap were not enough, there depended from the back of his carved leather belt a massive, glittering fireman's helmet!

All in all, the one or two hundred dollars' worth of raiment strolling toward the beach and leaving the aroma of a perfect cigar behind it, caused my jaw to sag. It was a fireman of some sort, but—and another was coming!

This one emerged, in clothes quite as expensive, although somewhat different in design and differently lettered. And before the door closed, a short, pompous individual, with eye-glasses and iron-gray side-whiskers, tramped after him.

He must have been a personage, indeed, for his dazzling gold badge was only a trifle smaller than a soup-plate, and bore the word "Chief" in letters that could have been read at a hundred yards! Further, he carried a gold horn; I am not sure about the diamonds, but they must have been there, somewhere or other.

And then they came in twos and threes and fours and fives; until something like three dozen of the most exquisitely clothed firemen I ever saw were talking away, out there on the beach!

At the end of them came Hawkins and Mr. Carvel. The latter paused behind the screen-door, and I thought I heard him say anxiously:

"Are you quite certain that it is—er—all right?"

"You have my *word* for it, sir!" replied the inventor, in a tone that would have cheapened a ton of bullion dumped at Carvel's feet.

Mr. Carvel vanished. Hawkins cleared his throat and approached me with:

"We'll look at the rooms now, Griggs!"

I dragged my gaze away from the resplendent beach.

"Hawkins," I said dazedly, "is this a hotel or is it Fire Headquarters?"

"It's a hotel," replied the inventor. "Come."

Somehow, involuntarily, my eyes shot back toward the beach, and I pointed.

"Do you see 'em, too?" I asked.

The inventor drew a long breath.

"You—blasted defective!" he hissed. "Can't you get out of your own little two-cent sphere without making a blithering idiot of yourself? That crowd is composed of delegates and chiefs of volunteer fire companies of three counties! They're holding a convention here. Now, come!"

"Well, they're—"

"They are practically all millionaires!" said Hawkins, with a trembling effort at patience. "They are—and they represent—owners of some of the most valuable country estates in the land. They are here in their uniforms to discuss various matters which you would not understand; and if their presence offends you, they will all, doubtless, apologize in advance! Now, come!"

I went.

They were nice rooms. With a good table included, they were worth fully one-third what Mr. Carvel asked for them, which astonished me. To be sure, the floors were bare and merely stained, and here and there one could peek out at the ocean through the wall;

but uncarpeted floors and good ventilation are the first essentials of summer sanitation.

And there was gaslight, too! I sauntered over to examine one of the new fixtures—and Hawkins steered me into the next room. There was another new fixture here, and this time I walked straight for it, despite an inarticulate growl from the inventor.

It was a curious thing, that fixture. I had known it from across the room. The little round disk that covers the spot where the feed-pipe emerges from the wall was particularly curious. It was larger and heavier than usual; it was of polished brass; and on the upper semicircle was cast "Effulgene," while the lower displayed, in quotations, "Just turn on!" and below was a slot with "Deposit one cent each evening."

"What the dickens is 'Effulgene'?" I asked.

"Maker's name, maybe," grunted Hawkins. "Now, see this—"

"Wait a minute," I said. "'Effulgene' must be the name of something, not somebody. And this 'Just turn on!' thing—"

I raised a hand to obey the directions.

"*Stop that!*" screamed the inventor at the top of his lungs. "*Do you want to blow up the whole place?*"

My hand flew away from the fixture. I turned amazedly on Hawkins.

He was mopping the perspiration from his brow, and his eyes were bulging; and I said:

"Well?"

"Well, how—" Hawkins began violently—and caught himself. "How the dickens do you know that the thing's ready to turn on, Griggs?" he asked weakly.

"Well, is there any reason to suppose—" I began mildly.

"There's just this reason!" snapped the inventor. "You turn on that jet and it's dollars to doughnuts that you'll blow the side out of the house!"

Somehow, my blood began to replace corpuscles with icicles. Slowly and perhaps dramatically, I bore down on Hawkins, as the great, terrible light came over me.

"Hawkins," I said, "is 'Effulgene' a new invention—a Hawkins invention?"

"It certainly is!" replied that gentleman bruskly. "And I—"

"Good-by, Hawkins," I said hurriedly. "It may be cold, hard walking, with the damp evening almost here now, but if there's a telephone at the station and I have the price of a special train in the world—"

He was at the door before me.

"If you try to make a clown of me in this, as you have in a dozen other instances, Griggs, I'll blow up this house, and we'll go together—now!"

I remember my throat getting very dry as I stepped back.

"I can do it and I will," pursued Hawkins. Then he cleared *his* throat, pierced me for a minute—and finally smiled.

"I mean, I will if necessary. It will not be necessary. See here, Griggs. You can understand this. 'Effulgene' is merely a gas of my own invention—an illuminating gas which lights at simple contact with the air—which gives a candle-power per burner one hundred times as great as gas and more than fifty times as great as electricity—which costs one cent per night per burner! You see, that slot's a scheme of my own, too. The delicate mechanism of the burner is best operated temporarily by a penny—and pennies or oil-lamps will be served free at the office if any one kicks!"

He stopped for breath.

"Well, I—"

"Oh, Lord!" Hawkins snapped his fingers and laughed. "You've nosed it out as usual. Come and see the Effulgenerator itself!"

"The—"

"The Effulgenerator—generator of effulgence—that's all. Come down the back stairs."

The good old spell must have been upon me. I obeyed.

Down we went, to the ground floor and lower still—until we stood in the boiler-room of the cellar. There was a cold steam-heating boiler there, in one corner. In the other corner sat a humble-looking man, with both eyes on the center of the apartment.

And the object of his fixed gaze? The Effulgenerator, of course; that huge, black, brilliantly enameled iron box in the center could be nothing else than a Hawkins invention, damnably deceptive in its harmless exterior.

It was just a sort of unornamented, large-sized iron safe, with a small pump or two beside it, and a row of pipes running into and disappearing in the ceiling—

"— and Effulgium, as I call the new element which I have discovered and identified alone," Hawkins was babbling modestly, "Effulgium and a solution are the sole materials from which Effulgene is generated. The boxlike case is merely a small edition of the ordinary gas-reservoir, made infinitely stronger because of the tremendous pressure developed by Effulgene. Controlled auto-

matically by the pennies at the different burners, Effulgene is manufactured as needed. When the lights are turned off, of course, we try to have the supply low. Then we open that large pipe, running outdoors there. and the few cents' worth of Effulgene burns itself out in a moment, in the open air."

"And suppose it caught the side of the house?"

A hysterical little giggle escaped the man in the corner. Hawkins turned on me.

"I do not think it would be sufficiently brutal to injure the house, even if it 'caught it,' as you term it. Come up-stairs, Griggs."

I said nothing as I followed. I chanced to look back, and I saw the dubious man wagging his head with decision, and quietly putting on his hat and coat, as he folded up his overalls with one hand.

Mr. Carvel was rubbing his hands in the office, and smiling at Hawkins as we approached.

"Of course, the house is full to-night, where we expected to have it empty," he said. "But I have placed a penny in every burner, Mr. Hawkins. And now, I think, we'd like to have a little light here in the office. Shall I tell the gentlemen—"

"Let there be no ceremony, sir!" said Hawkins modestly and wisely. "Where shall we have the first light? Over the desk here?"

"That will do, I think."

The inventor stepped over swiftly and turned the little key, without a word.

And I'm blessed if a brilliant triangle of dazzlingly white flame did not pop from the tip of the burner, flutter for an instant, and then settle down to as thoroughly beautiful a light as could be fancied!

"Well, by George! I'm—I'm amazed!" gasped Mr. Carvel.

So was I, more particularly as Hawkins turned on the second light and stood beneath it, unharmed, unruffled, with one hand thrust in the bosom of his coat.

"Shall I light the banquet-hall as well?" he inquired.

"Why—if you would, Mr. Hawkins," said the majestic hotel man, with actual humility.

By way of answer, Hawkins strode off to a door at the far end of the lobby, and a waiter rolled it back. He stepped into the twilight gloom and reached upward, in half a dozen spots.

And, incredible as it seems, that apartment took on a dazzling sunshine aspect that surpassed anything I ever saw before.

A long table was set, the entire length of the room. A small one, for two, had been laid in the corner, and Hawkins indicated it with a smile.

"Ours, Griggs," he observed. "The convention gives its annual banquet at the larger one in an hour or two."

"In a minute or two," Mr. Carvel corrected smilingly. "It is past seven."

He was right. They began to troop in even then—red-shirted, minus their assorted hats, with shimmering gold and silver fire-shields; and the banquet was on, as Hawkins and I faded toward the smaller table.

"Effulgene is *the* light!" the inventor observed quietly, as a wan waiter brought our clams. "You see, I win five hundred from Carvel to-night, Griggs! He bet me that I couldn't accomplish what I claimed. Now he buys the whole equipment and pays the bet, too!"

I was looking toward the diners.

"Why, the man was in the devil's own hole!" the inventor went on earnestly. "Here he's been trying to run a first-class hotel without anything better than lamplights. Skamasset electric people won't carry their line out here for a cent less than twenty-five cents per ki— Griggs! Are you listening to me or to those brawlers?"

"What?" I said.

"I'm going to address them, presently, on the subject of my new Noncompression Extinguisher!" he said impatiently. "But that's neither here nor there. Effulgene—"

But I was watching that banquet; and, incidentally, I kept on watching it.

Courses came and courses went; what each gentleman could not say while actually eating, he said during the waits. And, withal, it was strictly and obviously a fire-fighters' banquet.

An individual fire seemed to exist in each red-shirted body, and if one might judge by the cargoes of fizzly bottles that came full and were carried away empty, every man was at his post and fighting his own fire heroically. More courses came, more bottles with them; an hour dragged into two.

A cloud of smoke went up around the table—and the battle seemed to have been won, for they all leaned back and puffed placidly; and the particular chief who had attracted my attention arose and introduced somebody else, who made a speech. He was cheered to the echo. Another speech was made—and ended in wild applause.

"This is where they've forced me to say a few words," sighed Hawkins, as he arose

with dignity and stepped slowly across the big room.

"Gen-tle-men!" he began above the din.

About three dozen faces turned toward him in surprise. Some merry spirit hurled a lingering cream cake and deftly distributed the cream on Hawkins's hair without touching his face.

A roar went up—and a thick metal ash-receiver landed from somewhere and settled amid the cream with a loud, splashy thud! Another roar went up and several arose—and Hawkins was clutching my arms and hissing:

"You come out this side-door, Griggs. I don't want *you* mixed up in any mess here!"

He got through it first and tried to slam it in my face. When I found him, it was far from the banquet hall. Hawkins was leaning over a basin, scrubbing his hair energetically and making definite statements as to what he would do on such an occasion were he ten years younger.

"We'll go out and talk to Carvel for a while," he announced stiffly, as he found the hotel comb.

We did. We went to a far corner of the lobby and Hawkins talked to Carvel—talked and talked and still talked, while Mr. Carvel dozed gently with an occasional solemn nod when Hawkins emphasized some particular point by banging one palm with the other fist.

And then the diners began to file out, singing cheerily and—well, a trifle loudly. Hawkins scowled as he shifted a little farther behind an artificial palm and remarked:

"Disgrace to the place!"

"They convene only once a year—and they pay for it," said Mr. Carvel benevolently.

Merrily they trooped up the big stairs—wide, winding stairs they were, with a big well in the center for the elevator that had not yet been installed. Merrily they found their rooms; and, save for a noise overhead like a herd of stampeded cattle, all was still.

Mr. Carvel sighed.

"Well, they're up! Shall I have the lights extinguished — partly — in the banquet hall?"

"Certainly. Er—you boy!"

A rather hard-looking bell-boy approached.

"Turn out all the lights but one!" Hawkins directed. "Turn them out slowly."

He did so—and the office lights flared up markedly. And the bell rang and the boy and his companion disappeared as two numbers appeared in the indicator.

"And I think these might go down a little, too?" suggested Mr. Carvel, as he shaded his eyes.

Hawkins stepped to the desk and turned gently at his Effulgene burner. The light went down a trifle, but it roared and sizzled with a sudden viciousness. Hastily, the inventor allowed it full sway again and returned with a nervous smile.

"You see, the—the pressure—the turning out of all those lights at once, you know—well, it has increased the pressure here. That's all. They'll go down in a minute or two."

They did not go down. On the contrary, they grew longer and brighter, and they began to sprout long, uncanny points at the upper ends, as if they were licking at the beamed ceiling.

A quarter of an hour passed. Hawkins's smile, behind his incessant chatter, became like the carved smile of a statue. Carvel, then, could bear it no longer.

"You'll have to put those out!" he cried. "They'll light the beams in another minute."

"But if I turn them off, the pressure will increase everywhere else, and—"

"Hasn't your machine made any provision for—"

"Why, certainly! A completed machine, equipped to take care of forty lights or more, would have the Effulgenerator Assimilator, to take care of all superfluous pressure and condense it for later use. But you told me that we should not use more than three or four burners and—"

"Well—my Lord! Why do they keep on going and going up, man? Why—"

"That's what I can't understand myself!" escaped the genial inventor suddenly. "I—"

And just here the first bell-boy came down-stairs. He was shaking from head to foot with such mirth as rarely gladdens man. Carvel, cool despite the roaring of the burners, stepped forward with a severe:

"Is there anything particularly funny, James?"

The boy looked at him and burst into a new roar.

"Fire me if yuh want to, but I c-c-can't keep a straight face!" he wheezed. "Say, boss! Go up there an' ye'll have a fit!"

"Well—"

"It's the big one in 43 that started it!" he roared. "He spotted the penny-in-the-slot thing just when 45, across the hall, spotted it. Then they got talking about it, and each of 'em bet a hundred he could jam

a thousand pennies down before the other feller!"

"*What?*" screamed Hawkins, as he shot from his chair.

"An' then they chased me an' Harry down to the bar for twenty dollars' worth o' pennies—an' there they were, standin' on chairs an' sliding in the pennies an'—oh! The feller in 43 won by six cents!"

Whereat, he collapsed on the bench and wept.

"Yes, and now that Effulgenerator's making gas for two thousand odd burners—and there aren't fifty to burn it!" Hawkins howled.

"Shut down your plant!" Carvel directed coolly. "Look! That ceiling's beginning to burn now— Shut—"

"But don't you understand that I can't shut it down without—"

Hawkins never finished that sentence.

For just then, the location of the Bad Place was settled permanently. It was on the second floor of the Temmacossett Inn—and it had just been let loose!

There was tramping and shouting and roaring.

"Every burner in the house is doing just what that one's doing!" the inventor observed caustically.

"*Fire! Fire! Fire! FIRE!*" boomed out from the stairway.

The stout chief was coming down three steps at a time, jamming on his helmet at every leap. It was grand in a way, that call to duty.

At least it seemed grand until, without a glance to either side, the chief crashed straight through the screen doors and pounded off down the road, until his "Fire!" died away in the distance.

But they were coming down now in a body—and with good reason, for I could see swirls of smoke issuing from open doors up-stairs. The first of the fire-fighters that I had noticed landed next.

He gave a quick glance around; then he darted at the fire-axes on the wall—seized one—ran straight for the magnificent rosewood hotel desk, and, with a dozen mighty blows, chopped it in two. Then, sliding into the mass of men that were down by now, he knocked one flat with the ax and disappeared through the door.

After that, nothing short of a moving-picture camera could have recorded events in their proper sequence.

I know that the last man down brought a dozen torn lace curtains in his arms, fought his way through the mass and handed them to Carvel, who threw them on the floor.

Another helmeted member—for they were all helmeted now—dashed back into the smoke and reappeared hugging an open suit-case that dribbled all sorts of articles as he pushed for the air.

At the far end, through the open door of the banquet hall, two men with axes were pounding wildly at the table itself. It gave abruptly and they all but vanished in a shower of broken glass.

They were up in a second and chopping out every pane in the room—and when they were through with that they cut, very carefully, a hole in the wall itself and vanished through it.

Then, too, a new face appeared, with an extinguisher and trained it straight on Hawkins and me! A second and we were drenched—and another angry fireman had wrested the thing away from him and was carrying it carefully to the open air, the little length of hose spurting wildly in all directions.

The first man went back and found grenades and hurled them at Hawkins, who caught at them wildly, like baseballs, and smiled a steady, unearthly smile.

Still another individual, who had managed to get two extinguishers strapped over his shoulders, was on his knees, carefully rolling up the rugs and laying them to one side. All in all, despite the peril, it was worth standing still to watch.

But wood was actually crackling now; and from somewhere Carvel had snatched a shining horn and was roaring:

"Get — the — fire-pump! Back — of — hall!"

A dozen men rushed in that direction. They chopped down an open closet door and dragged out a big, four-wheeled box, with a hand-pump in the middle and coils of hose at either side.

"Run—the—hose — to — the — water!" roared Mr. Carvel.

The little fire-engine shot down the corridor like a bullet. Like a bullet, men and all, crashed down the steps and toward the beach—while Carvel, racing after the mob, shrieked:

"Leave the pump here! Leave it here! Take the hose to the water and—"

He might as well have shouted down from the moon. The cart bowled on—and on—and on.

And with a mighty plunge it shot out into

THE MASTER SCHEMER.*

BY ROBERT KEENE.

The Remarkable Project of a Man Who Sought To Benefit the Business World on a New and Decidedly Original Plan.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

DUDLEY MARSH CARTER, who tells the story, is down and out through the wiles of a scoundrel. Sitting tramp-fashion in a city park, he sees an odd advertisement in a newspaper that chance blows his way. Answering it, he meets one Murdock, a man of piercing eyes, who says he will get him a job in Rochester in the same line in which he has already been employed—paper. He will also fix him up with new clothes and pay his fare to the up-State city, in return for which he expects Carter to rob his employer. Horror-stricken at the proposition, Carter starts to leave the place, but Murdock adds half a hundred words in explanation of his scheme, which puts a different face on the matter. So Carter goes to Rochester, where he meets Agnes Deveraux, with whom he falls in love.

He makes a success of his new position, and his sixty dollars a week is increased after a while. Then comes a letter from Murdock, requesting him to change his employers, and go to another paper-house in Rochester — Deveraux & Carruthers, with whom he is to arrange that he shall not draw his salary for six months, then receive it all in one check.

After receiving this check, which is for $1,680, he claims to have lost it and gets Mr. Devereaux to give him another, payment being stopped on the first check. Thereupon he goes to the cashier of the firm with whom he had first worked in Rochester, shows him the first check and, as it is after banking hours, requests as a favor $700 in cash, leaving the check as security. With this sum in his pocket he takes a train for New York; but, frightened by a man whom he suspects to be a detective on his trail, he leaves it at Syracuse and goes to a hotel. He is followed by the supposed detective, who turns out to be a collector from Murdock, to whom Carter turns over the $700 and receives instructions about a new deal.

After his visitor has departed, feeling the need of a smoke, he steals down-stairs to the cigar-stand, and is startled at the foot of the bottom flight by meeting the last person on earth he expected or wanted to see just then.

CHAPTER VIII.

I RUN AWAY.

THE person who had accosted me was none other than the girl I loved, whose father I had been so near to victimizing—

Agnes Deveraux!

It seemed an eternity that I stood, limp and cowering, against the banister-rail of the stairway. In reality, though, it could have been no longer than a second that we confronted each other in silence.

When I left her home town only a few hours before, I had wondered if we would ever meet again. In fond imagination, I had even pictured what that meeting would be like, should good luck ever ordain it at some distant date.

But this—this was not at all as I had conjured up the occasion in my mind's eye.

That I should encounter her that very night—when I was almost fresh from the robbery I had committed back in Rochester—this was just a little more than I could bear with equanimity!

What if she knew me now for what I was? What if the news of my deed had already come to her ears!

But that was impossible. She could not know—yet—just the sort of man I was.

So I felt my courage returning to me. She did not know—could not know!

For, to be in Syracuse now, she must have left Rochester at almost the same hour I did. So, even if the alarm had gone out on the very heels of my crime, she would be in ignorance of it.

"How do you do, Mr. Carter?" she repeated now, as we stood there face to face.

"Why, Miss Deveraux!" I exclaimed. "The sight of you surprises me—quite pleasantly, to be sure, but disconcertingly nevertheless. Pardon the presumption of the question, but—what on earth are you doing here?"

"Why shouldn't I be here?" she laughed. "Certainly I have as good a right to be out-of-town as you have, haven't I, sir?"

"Undoubtedly!" I smiled back. "Do you want to know how I happen to be here, that you put the matter up to me as you've just done?"

* *Began June* ARGOSY. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

the Atlantic, disappeared for a moment and bobbed up again in the moonlight, with a dozen men clinging to it and swimming away from shore—just as Mr. Carvel reached the beach and, tripping at the edge of the surf, sprawled headlong into the foam!

And Hawkins and I were alone in the place. The inventor gripped himself.

"Griggs!" he yelled. "This place is on fire!"

A yard of blazing timber crashed at his feet, as if in contradiction!

"Impossible!" some idiotic impulse sent from my lips.

"And we'll put it out!" screamed he. "We'll shut down that generator or—"

I ducked wildly to the open space under the stair-well, as a new consignment of burning wood went down. I looked up—and looked down again quickly, for tongues of fire were reaching out over the railings now.

"There's the door!" Hawkins bawled. "The thing's under out feet, Griggs, and—"

I don't know why. I stared at that floor.

And as I stared, the floor opened suddenly and a great, black square seemed to be rising. I slipped and fell on it and Hawkins fell on me—and something roared and an indescribably terrible radiance came from everywhere.

Did you ever land in a tree, while descending from one of the planets?

There is nothing like it. A nice, crisp, thick young tree, strong and fresh in early summer is—unspeakably perfect in its way.

I know. Because, some years after looking at that awful light, I dropped out of just such a tree, like a ripe pippin! And Hawkins, lacking originality for once, chose the same tree and landed beside me with a thud.

Far off, a great blaze was illuminating all creation; we, however, were in a nice, shady dell. We had returned to earth by way of the woods.

I think I hoped that Hawkins was dead, just then.

He was not. On the contrary, he sat up within a few seconds and asked:

"Were you blown up, too, Griggs?"

"No, I just ran out here to catch you," I replied, as I felt the place where my hair had been shortly before and realized that both shoes had been mercifully left to me, whatever force had taken all of my coat but the collar.

"Are you—hurt?" the brilliant inventor pursued solicitously.

"Why—what nonsense!" I screamed, as I straightened up and tried with one hand to count how many vertebræ had been fractured.

"Well, I don't believe there's a bone left in my body!" sighed Hawkins as he rose to his feet and shook himself. "Wasn't it a good thing we were standing over the Effulgenerator itself, right under the big skylight? If there'd been a solid roof there, we'd have been killed."

He squinted through the bushes. Then he emitted a little wail.

"Griggs! I do believe they're dragging that thing out of the sea! Let's get out of this! They'll think we're dead, anyway!"

Perhaps they did, at the time.

By dawn, Providence led us to a rough-and-ready fisherman, just cranking his little motor-boat for the day's work. We bought his whole supply of clothes for five times their original value, and contrived raiment that would pass the police book of rules; we were conveyed to the opposite shore of—another State; there we consulted a physician. I went home by train. Hawkins, in a private section and with a nurse, went to the Berkshires. He is there still.

They have not subpœnaed him yet, for he remains nailed in his room and cook sends up his meals on a little elevator, constructed with a ball of twine and a market-basket. Perhaps they will not even sue him, for I understand that Carvel is not a vindictive man; and when the courts settle whether that insurance clause about using gas for illuminating purposes applies to Effulgene or not, Carvel may be satisfied to let the matter drop. Effulgene is certainly a gas, and it was illuminating to a degree.

Last week, Dr. Brotherton chopped me out of the plaster cast—for they dressed me in plaster of Paris after a day or two and took me to the country—and they let me drive over, very slowly, with him to see Hawkins.

The inventor was in a window, and I greeted him with a remark concerning Effulgene. He screamed and dropped senseless, and Brotherton had to climb through the window to bring him to life again.

When he came down once more, and we were driving homeward, he told me that Hawkins had begged him, weeping and on his knees, never to say that word Effulgene.

So there is one happy certainty: Effulgene has cast its first and last effulgence on this weary world. Effulgene, unless somebody else is mad enough to invent it over again, is dead for all time.

"Why," she said slowly, "I'll admit that I was as much surprised to see you. What *are* you doing in Syracuse?"

"I'm here on business," I answered promptly. "Personal business—er—by that I mean, something of my own affairs, and not those of your father's business, which has called me away quite unexpectedly and urgently."

"I see," she nodded.

"And now," I went on, "how about you?"

She drew herself up with an exaggerated assumption of importance.

"I'm here on business, too!" she announced.

"You?" I cried. "What business have you that brings you here, miles from home—and alone?"

"Oh, but I'm not alone!"

"You're not?"

"No."

"And your escort is—"

"My father!"

Deveraux here with her! Great guns! I *was* in a nice pickle, for a fact!!

Suppose he should see me? Suppose he knew what I had done?

"You see," she ran on lightly, dropping her affected pose of being seriously weighed with care, "I was only teasing when I said that *I* was here on business. It is my father who has business in Syracuse."

"And did you accompany Mr. Deveraux on this trip just to keep him company?" I inquired.

"Not wholly," she answered. "You see, the whole thing is like this. Father has a business acquaintance here—Mr. Olcott—who has a daughter, Lollie. She and I have been great chums for years—visiting back and forth, and so on, you know.

"Well, when father told me where he was going, I wanted to come along to see Lollie. I teased and teased him to take me with him, and at last he consented. So we caught the first train, and came on here. It was father's plan to spend the night at the Olcotts."

"But—why are you here in this hotel, then?" I questioned. "What happened to change your plans?"

"It's the funniest thing!" she laughed. "When we got out to the Olcott place, we found the house was closed up—tight as a drum. We rang the door-bell of one of their neighbors to find out what had become of the family, and they told us the Olcotts had all gone to Florida to spend two months. Wasn't that provoking?

"Of course, we hadn't wired or phoned we were coming. Having known the Olcotts so long, it was customary for us to drop in on them whenever we felt like it, without warning. And they returned the compliment in Rochester.

"So we came over here to this hotel. We are going to dinner right now, too; I'm bound for the dining-room, on the floor above, where father is waiting for me!

"You must join us!" she added. "I know my father will be as pleased as I shall be to have you become our guest!"

This was a twist to the situation I hadn't anticipated—though I might have done so easily enough!

"Thank you," I blurted out, "but—but I—"

"Oh, don't say 'no'!" she protested.

"But—"

"You haven't had your dinner yet?"

Like a fool, so fuddled was my brain with the maelstrom of my thoughts, that I let slip my best chance to get out of the situation by gasping:

"No."

The next minute I could have bitten my tongue out for the mistake.

"Then there's no reason why you can't join us!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "Except that you don't want to?"

Did I want to eat with her, sit beside or near her, for an hour or two? Does a lost soul want to crawl back into heaven when the pearly gates swing ajar after he's been dispossessed from the promised land?

But I could not accept this gift of the gods—now.

It would call for just a little more nerve than I possessed to sit at table with her father. He might not be onto me as a crook; there might be nothing worse to expect from him than a rigid investigation of why I had left the office that morning and not returned.

Even that, slight thing to go through with as it was, I might escape. Deveraux, the president of the concern, with more weighty things than the superintendence of a mere matter of office detail, might not even know that I had been absent almost the whole day.

No, I might go through with a meeting with him all right. But there was something else that made it impossible for me to accept the girl's invitation.

I was not fit to be seen with her.

I must refuse to join her in the dining-room for that reason. She should look back and remember that I had avoided being seen in her company.

"I am awfully sorry," I said, adding, in a burst of invention: "I have very pressing business with a gentleman around the corner. I am late already for my appointment with him; if I disappointed him, it will mean the loss of a great deal to a number of people besides myself.

"So, for that reason, I must ask you to excuse me. Believe me, though, I'm more sorry to have to postpone this pleasure than you can possibly be."

"Then, if you get your interview with this man finished in time," she suggested, "perhaps you can arrange to join us before we are quite finished dining?"

"I hardly think it's likely," and I shook my head.

"Please try."

"If I possibly can get back in time," I promised, "I'll see you up-stairs."

I stood aside to let her pass.

"This wretched 'business'!" she said as she brushed by me. "It's all you men seem to think about nowadays."

"You wrong us," I answered, with a meaning glance at her face, which had so often glorified my dreams.

I turned and walked rapidly across the lobby and out into the street. For only a minute I stood there, carefully occupying a position out of range of the nearest street-lamp.

Then, satisfied that Agnes would by now be out of the way, I returned hastily to the hotel. Slipping swiftly into an elevator, I rode up to the third floor.

And as quietly as I could contrive I stepped into my room, closing and locking the door behind me.

In the dark I sat down on the edge of the bed and took my head in my hands—facing the problem of what to do next.

Firstly, I must not let Agnes Deveraux nor her father see me again before they left Syracuse. They would be on their way back to Rochester by eleven o'clock that night at the latest, I figured.

Meantime, I must stay out of sight—that was all. Right here in this room was the best place to do that. Due to the fortunate fact that the telephone in it was out of order, I could not be reached by the desk clerk.

By keeping the lights out, too, I would be supposed to be out by anybody who knocked at the door of the room.

It did not conduce to my very large pleasure to sit there in that dark room, waiting for the interminable passing of those three hours.

Once my heart bounded into my mouth as footsteps paused before my door and a knock sounded on the portal. With bated breath I waited in silence for the messenger—whoever it was—to depart. After another tattoo he did so.

For the remainder of my wait I was undisturbed. And at last I rose, yawning wearily, as a clock somewhere near boomed out the hour of eleven.

The Deverauxs must be gone from the hotel by this time—and now I was going to leave.

I had planned the whole thing out. I should have to take to my heels and run away.

For I could not stay here in Syracuse to carry out the plot of the Master Schemer as I had undertaken to do. The presence of my Rochester friends here that evening had made that impossible.

If I did remain till the next day, and the news of my crime came to Deveraux's ears on the morrow, he would instantly inform the authorities sent out to capture me that I was here.

Now, the game that I had to play could be carried out just as well in any other town of near the size of Syracuse. I determined to light out for—Utica, say. That would be an ideal city to carry out Murdock's plan. I would go there, I made up my mind as I turned away from the desk down-stairs, after settling for my few hours' occupancy of my room.

I went to the railroad station and bought a ticket for Utica. I had a half-hour to wait till my train left.

And then I was off. Reaching Utica in due course, I put up at a second-rate hotel of small size, and, having quizzed the clerk about the business standing of certain tradesmen in town, I set out upon my unpleasant job.

Before the imposing front of one of the largest jewelry-houses in the city—so I had been informed—I stopped. After a few moments taken to tighten up my nerve under cover of an idle survey of the show-windows, I moved up to the entrance of the store.

Then, as unconcernedly as you please, to all outside appearances, I marched straight inside.

CHAPTER IX.

LAYING A NEW TRAIN.

"Good morning, sir!"

A most polite gentleman so addressed me

from his position behind the row of show-cases near the door of the jewelry-store which I had entered.

"What can I do for you?"

I stopped before him, surveying him with an assumed air of rather bored indifference.

"I want to buy something for my wife—something in the nature of a birthday present," I announced leisurely. "It must be something pretty nice—though I'll confess I haven't much of an idea of what I want."

"I see!" The salesman placed the tips of his fingers on the woodwork ledge of the show-case at either side of his deferentially bent body. "Just leave the matter to me! Shall I show you something in brooches—pendants—rings?"

I seated myself comfortably on one of the leather-topped stools in front of the display-case.

"Show me what you have—anything worth looking at in the way of rings," I answered carelessly. "If you've anything good, I'll make a selection."

He drew out a tray of set gems.

"These are beauties!" he exclaimed. "This one in particular—fourteen three-quarter carat diamonds in a princess setting around a genuine ruby—is superb, sir—superb!"

I could not do else than agree with him in his estimate of the trinket. Beyond a doubt, it was a magnificent piece of work—as fine as I had ever seen.

"How much is it worth?" I asked, twisting the ring critically between my fingers and the light which fell over my shoulder from the door behind me.

He took it from me, glanced at the code-price red-lettered upon the little attached tag, then dropped the jewel back into my waiting hand for my further inspection, with the brief reply:

"Twelve hundred dollars."

I nodded coolly as I heard the price—which, as it happened, amounted to just exactly nine hundred dollars more than I had in the wallet then reposing safely out of sight in the inside pocket of my coat.

"Twelve hundred dollars?" I repeated speculatively.

"Yes, sir."

"I'll take it," I said calmly.

The man behind the show-case could not keep the glitter of joy out of his eyes. I felt honestly sorry for him.

"Now," I went on, "I want something else. You spoke of brooches, didn't you? Yes—show me what you have in that line."

He fairly seemed to fly to a show-case quite close to the one from which he had produced the diamond-and-ruby ring I had ordered. And he bobbed back again with almost equal alacrity, a sparkling tray of jeweled ornaments resting in his hands, which well-nigh shook with eagerness.

"Here," he said, fumbling—so I imagined—for the most expensive brooch in the lot. "Here is something that is splendid, gorgeous—simply beyond words!"

He flashed before my eyes an emerald-and-diamond lizard neck-pin, scintillating almost blindingly with its heavy incrusting of gems, the whole thing nearly four inches long and a full inch wide across the shoulders of the reptile.

"It is indeed a beauty—surely everything you claim for it!" I murmured, really and truly awed by the splendor of the thing.

"I should say so, my dear sir!" he cried enthusiastically, rubbing his hands briskly together. "It is the handsomest that we have, or ever have had, in stock. And it is a bargain—a very great bargain, indeed!"

"I don't care much for bargains," I informed him bruskly—seeking to do all I could to drive in further the impression I had already created of wealth and importance in my dealings with him.

"No," I continued, "when I buy anything, I look first, last, and always toward quality—never, by any chance, in the direction of price. That is a consideration which I never allow to worry me under any circumstances, understand!"

"Quite right!" he caught me up with ingratiating swiftness. "Quite right, sir, I assure you! You have proved true, no doubt, the rule that the best is the cheapest in the long run. Experience, beyond a chance of mistake, has taught you that a dollar will buy just so much quality; that the more dollars you spend, the more value you will naturally receive in return. By saving money, you stint quality, which produces dissatisfaction—"

"Yes, I know!" I broke in. "But—about this brooch."

"That," as he veered into the track toward which I had steered him, "is what proves an exception to the rule whose knowledge I have just approved in you, sir. This ornament is a bargain, as I have already informed you. And one you will make no mistake in availing yourself of."

I examined the bauble again.

"How much?"

His eyes sought the ceiling.

"Just exactly an even three thousand dollars!"

I mentally totaled the cost of the ring and the lizard pin. The two together came to the sum of forty-two hundred dollars, flat.

I had eight hundred dollars yet to go. That is, if I carried out to the letter Murdock's instructions.

"I'll take this," I said—"and the ring, too, of course."

I let my eyes rove over the store for an instant. In it I made careful note of the faces of the two other salesmen. And, as I looked around the shop, I put my hand into my pocket as though to pull out the money with which to pay for the stuff I had bought.

The man before me was quick to avail himself of my action, and the chance of my seemingly speculative glance at the establishment.

"Isn't there something else?" he asked hastily. "Something for yourself now—you've purchased such fine presents for your wife, that surely you can afford to treat yourself to a little something attractive with a clear conscience, I should think."

I shook my head—though slowly, subtly indicating thereby that my decision might not be irrevocable.

"I'd like to show you what we have that would be suitable for you yourself to wear!"

"Well, I don't know!" I hesitated. "I guess—no, I don't need anything just now."

"How about a watch?"

"I've a good one already!"

"A scarf-pin?"

"I never wear one."

"A nice diamond ring—that's the ticket; the very thing for you, sir!"

"No," I said, looking at my hands. "I guess I don't need anything like that, either—"

"Just a second!" interrupted the man. "Let me show you what we've got!"

In the twinkling of an eye he had snapped a trayful of gentlemen's rings on the showcase.

"Here—try this on. It's a beauty. Pure blue-white, three carats, and absolutely—guaranteed—flawless!"

I slipped the gem on my little finger—which happened to be the right size.

"A perfect fit!" exclaimed the jeweler, quick to take advantage of the accident.

"How much?" I demanded.

"Only seven hundred and fifty dollars!"

That was near enough to make the total of my purchases here amount almost to the five thousand dollars out of which I had been instructed to fleece my second victim.

"All right," I said. "I'll take this, along with the others. Figure up how much I owe you!"

He made the calculation.

"The two rings and the pin," he announced, "come to just—to just four thousand and nine hundred and fifty dollars, sir. Am I correct?"

I nodded, taking out my wallet with its contents forty-five hundred dollars short of the total of my purchases.

Looking within the pocketbook—holding it so that he could not see inside—I fingered the few bills reflectively for a moment or two, while a tiny frown of worry grew between my brows.

"Four thousand, nine hundred-odd—almost five thousand dollars," I mused speculatively. "Well—I find I haven't that amount with me in cash."

The salesman's face fell slightly as I made the announcement.

"I shall have to give you a check for that figure, I'm afraid," I went on.

Without looking at him, I drew out the pocket check-book I carried, doing so with as great pretense of complacency as I could muster. Of course, I had drawn out of the bank in Rochester all the money I had saved there. But I still had the check-book.

The man behind the show-case straightened up as I produced the book of worthless blank drafts.

"Ahem!" he coughed. "I'm sorry to have to remind you, Mr.—er, sir, that we can't sell this jewelry to you, an absolute stranger to us—"

Imperiously I held up my hand for silence, the while I fixed him with my eye.

"I'll give you a check," I explained, "and you can hold the things I've bought till you find out that the draft is good!"

What was there to lose under an arrangement like that? I saw that he followed this obvious course of reasoning, arriving at the conclusion that he would risk nothing by it.

His smile broke out propitiatingly once more.

"Ah, I see—I see!" he said, beaming. "Under those circumstances, a check will be perfectly satisfactory to us!"

I unsheathed my fountain pen.

"A ten per cent discount for cash is usually allowed," murmured the man.

I made as though I did not hear his suggestion. It emphatically did not accord with my plans to make a discount of the amount for which I intended filling in the blank check to which I had opened the book.

"To whose order shall I make this payable," I asked, pen poised above the blank line on the pink slip before me. "This store, or its proprietor in person."

"Write it out to my order, if you please," he said, adding his name. "I'm the owner here."

He neglected—with greedy purpose—to mention the matter of a cash discount again. And I filled out the check to his order for the full amount of fifty dollars less than a round five thousand.

The name I signed to it was not my own—"Oliver P. Simmons" was the *nom-de*-gold-brick which I adopted in this case, it being the first that shot into my mind.

"There you are, sir!" I said, tossing the slip toward him over the glass top of the show-case. "You'll find that made out all right, I think."

Stuffing pen and check-book into my pocket, I rose to take my leave.

"I'll call back for the rings and pin I bought in two or three days," I informed him. "And, by that time, you will have satisfied yourself that the check I've just given you is good."

"Thank you, sir!" he returned effusively. "Thank you very kindly!"

Escorted to the door, I left the shop in style!

CHAPTER X.

"STOP THIEF!"

I WALKED down the street, looking for a good place to hide where I could watch the front door of the jewelry-store.

Just the thing I was after presented itself to me in the form of a doorway, next to a large plate-glass window jutting out for a foot beyond the front of the shop. The doorway led to a photographer's establishment above-stairs.

I did not know how long my vigil would be likely to last. It was to endure, however, until some one of the members of that jewelry concern came out to go to the bank—as I was sure they would do before long, to put my check through on a test of its validity.

I had fixed in my mind the looks of all three of the men I had seen behind the counters there—the owner, of course, and his two clerks, as well.

How long would I have to wait? Well, not more than three hours at the longest, anyway; it was half past eleven, and the banks closed at three o'clock.

Twelve struck on the steeple of a high building near by. Then half past.

And, promptly on the single stroke of the half-hour, the door of the jewelry-shop opened. And out stepped a man.

It was the little, bald-headed jeweler himself.

In his hand, I saw, he carried a bank-book. Going out to lunch, probably, he meant to drop in and deposit my check with whatever other increment his business had netted him that day.

Swiftly I set out after him, folding up another check which I had just made out with fountain pen and check-book while I stood in the photographer's doorway.

"Just a moment!" I panted, clutching him by the shoulder at the very minute when he had his foot raised to step inside the foyer of the bank I had seen him enter.

He wheeled on me.

"Why—hallo!" he exclaimed startledly, staring into my red and perspiring face. "What's the matter—why all this very evident hurry?"

"Have you deposited that check I gave you yet?" I demanded.

"No." He held up the pass-book in his hand. "It's in here—I was just going to put it to my account this minute."

"Then I'm in time!" I cried.

The man stared.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," I explained hastily, "but I've made a mistake—given you a check that's no good!"

Now his eyes bulged indeed!

"What—good Heavens! What do you mean by that, Mr. Simmons, sir?"

"Listen. I gave you that check in perfect good faith. It was only through a bit of absent-mindedness that I overlooked the fact that I haven't got enough money in the particular bank on which it is drawn to cover it.

"But I've plenty of cash on deposit in another institution. So—you give me back my check and I'll hand you another one for it, drawn on the bank that is abundantly able to cash it."

There was nothing for him to question in the simple transaction I suggested. He drew out the check from the leaves of his bank-book.

"Here," I said, bringing into light the check I had prepared while I stood in the doorway watching the jeweler's store. "Here is the check I will trade you for that one you have there in your hands.

"You will see that it is for the same amount, and drawn on a blank from the

same bank that I gave you before. Only I have scratched out the name of the bank printed at the top and written in the name of the depository where I have more than enough money to make these figures good.

"I made this check out in this way when the realization that the one I had given you previously was no good came to me—as it did, not five minutes ago, while I was in a friend's office near by. Thinking that you might have already deposited the draft I gave you, and wishing to save the time and bother of writing out another if you had, I had this one all ready for you.

"I was on my way to your place, hotfoot, when I saw you turn in here at this bank. So I ran after you, and here we are!"

I held out my hand to him as I finished speaking. I wanted the original check he was fingering, together with the duplicate which he held somewhat doubtfully.

"Everything's all right, old man!" I cried. "I'll admit that what I'm asking you to do isn't just exactly regular—you not knowing me, and all.

"But, think a minute! How can you lose anything, even if these two checks turn out not to be worth a red cent?

"You've still got your jewelry; I'm not asking you to give that up to me until you've unquestionably satisfied yourself—yes, beyond a doubt—that the check I've given you is O. K. So come—make the trade with me, and the whole matter will be straight as a string!"

Convinced, almost against his will, that he stood to lose nothing by granting my request, he reluctantly returned me the check I had first given him.

"Now, we're all right!" I exclaimed. "And I won't keep you any longer from making the deposit you were bound for when I interrupted you!"

Glad to get away, he hurried off in the direction of the receiving-teller.

While I, equally glad to be rid of him, hastened away in the direction of the paying-teller's cage.

At a wall-desk near his window I stopped. One look at the check I had just received from the jeweler was enough.

He had indorsed it. Carelessly, as most business men do, he had thought to save himself time by putting his name upon the back of the draft before he left his place of business to bring his deposit to the bank.

I hastily wrote the name "Oliver P. Simmons" under the jeweler's signature and presented the check to the paying-teller.

One look at the thing, and he pushed it swiftly back into my hands.

"I can't cash that for you!" he said shortly. "You'll have to be identified."

In turn I shoved the check back to him over the ledge of glass.

"I am identified, my friend!" I answered quietly.

"How so?"

"Look on the back of that check. There's the indorsement of one of your depositors. He's a friend of mine. I drew that check, expecting him to cash it for me. He couldn't—having made a bargain-purchase of a number of diamonds with the money which he promised to have ready for me.

"He was awfully sorry, but he couldn't get around here with me for the purpose of identifying me. But he said it would be all right if he just put his indorsement on the back of this—which he did."

The teller didn't say anything — just looked at me. I thought then of a bold stroke which might incline him to believe my story in case he was hesitating on the grounds of doubting my integrity.

"Here—you can telephone to the gentleman. Find out from what he tells, and his description of me, whether everything I've said is all right!"

I was practically safe in making this bluff, for I knew that the jeweler was out.

Even if the paying-teller did telephone, he could get no information further than that fact. But I made the suggestion not with the expectation that he would follow it, but with the hope that my making it would give the semblance of fearless truth to my request.

And the bluff unmistakably "worked."

"I guess everything's all right!" he said, accepting the check. "How 'll you have it?"

"Large!"

With beating heart, I watched him count out the money—his trained fingers seeming, to my anxious eyes, to fumble and halt over the task most dreadfully.

"Correct!" he announced at last, slapping the bills down in front of me.

I didn't stop to verify the count. Cramming the money into my wallet, I walked away from the window—walking, when I was half crazy with the desire to run!

I only hoped I wouldn't meet the jeweler before I got safely outside—

There was a sudden commotion of some sort behind me. I wanted to turn my head to investigate it, but I dared not look behind. And then—

"Stop thief!"

The cry rang out sharply behind me. I heard the sound of rushing feet coming in my direction.

There was only one thing for me to do. And I did it.

I broke into a run.

"Crash!"

First crack out of the box I had run into somebody. Somebody who wrapped his arms about me—and who spun away from me, the next instant, at the end of my fist in his face!

I was out of the building and into the street now.

"Stop thief!" was frantically yelled by my pursuers.

I wondered who it was I had knocked out of my road back there in the vestibule of the bank? Was it worth the risk to turn my head to see?

I took one impulsive look back over my shoulder—

And then, with a startled gasp, I whipped my head around and ran on faster than ever before.

For well up in the van of my pursuers was a well-known face and figure—albeit the countenance in question was now contorted almost beyond recognition by a bleeding nose which marked the lodging-place of my blow.

But, even if this disfigurement made resemblance doubtful, there was no room to doubt the identity of the owner of the voice that bayed out loudly in the rear of my flight:

"Stop thief!"

I knew the man leading the pursuit of me—

And I had rather it was anybody else on earth!

(To be continued.)

Some Trouble About a Name.

BY ANTHONY WRIGHT.

A Peaceful Encounter in Church Leads to Certain Threatening Episodes Later On in a Hotel.

I LOOK forward to Sunday. It's a pleasant change from a week at the office. Besides, I've been one of the ushers at our church for the past eight years. It's a very agreeable duty. Church always seems to me like a big mixed club. The people are nice, and one meets so many interesting, earnest men and women with whom one would not otherwise come in contact.

George Bernard Shaw goes to church for rest. I go for a change, and because I like the atmosphere of the place. The length of my service as usher attaches me even to the building itself. The prayer-books and footstools are old friends of mine.

Besides, I'm always encountering old familiar faces belonging to those of the parish who have moved away or been absent from town. It's always pleasant to meet an old friend, and as I'm a bachelor, it takes the place of home life, in a way.

Well, a few Sundays ago my astonishment was great when I encountered in a new arrival the face of a very old friend. I hadn't seen her in six years.

"Why, how do you do, Miss Brown," I said in a low tone. "You are quite a stranger."

"Not Miss Brown," she smiled. "I'm now Mrs. ——."

I didn't catch the name; I was so embarrassed by my lapse of memory that I paid no attention to her explanation; for the moment I had instinctively called her "Miss Brown" I remembered hearing that she had been married recently.

"Why, of course. I quite forgot," I declared in some confusion, not wishing her to think that I had taken so little interest in her life after she had left our parish as to forget that important event. "Mr. —er—" I stumbled over the name I had failed to catch and went on quickly, "er—your husband isn't with you?"

"No, I am quite alone to-day," she said. "I just slipped in to see the old familiar place. He is home with a toothache."

"I'm so glad," I answered perfunctorily, meaning that I was glad she had returned to look us up, and catching my mistake just in

time to add, "I'm very sorry your husband is ill."

By this time I had shown her to a seat, and was leaning over the arm of the pew for a moment to make her feel that she hadn't been forgotten.

"You must come soon and see us. We're here for a week only; stopping at the Arlington, on Fifty-Seventh Street, you know. Come Tuesday or Wednesday evening."

"Thanks, very much. I shall be glad to meet your husband," I replied, noticing that my aisle was becoming congested, and I must return at once to my work.

"We'll expect you," she whispered, and I turned to resume my ushering duties.

The sermon was interesting, and I forgot all about meeting the former Miss Brown until the congregation had all filed out and I was putting on my hat and coat.

Then it came back to me suddenly. It was a surprise and pleasure to see her again. We had been such good friends for several years in the church, and I wanted to hear how she had been getting on. Besides, I wanted to see her husband; find out what sort of fellow he was.

I made a memorandum in my note-book to call upon her Tuesday evening. Then I went home to my lonely bachelor dinner, and immediately forgot all about the incident.

Tuesday evening, however, on consulting the note-book, I found my engagement, and dressed for the call. It would be wisest to telephone her, I thought, as visitors in New York are apt to be very busy, though she had told me that Tuesday and Wednesday evenings would be free.

So I went to the phone in my room and called the Arlington apartment-hotel. I got the operator on the wire and began:

"Hallo, will you give me Mrs.—"

Then I paused and considered for a moment. It had just occurred to me that I didn't know her husband's name. I should have asked her to repeat it when I failed to catch it that day in church.

But it was too late now. The hotel operator was already crying in my ear in an imperative tone:

"Well, what is it? Whom do you want?"

I felt like a fool. It was an embarrassing situation. I started again to stammer "Miss Brown" when the futility of it recurred to me, and I racked my brain for the name.

"Do you want the Arlington Hotel?" came the sharp voice of the operator at the other end of the wire. "What's the matter? Do you want the Arlington?"

"Ye—e—es," I answered haltingly.

"Then, *whom* do you want?"

I must make the best of it. I was appearing very ridiculous, and while the operator could not see my blushes, I felt very uneasy and foolish.

"Is—is there a lady there who used to be Miss Brown?" I asked tremulously.

"What's her name now?" came a sharp query.

"I don't know," I admitted falteringly. "Can't—can't you find out for me?"

"We don't keep the pedigree of our guests," she answered tartly.

"But it's important. I must—"

My voice snapped off; I heard an ominous click, which warned me that the hotel-operator had impatiently hung up.

It was frightfully annoying. I felt like going right over to the hotel and complaining to the management about the discourteous treatment. Then I flushed up as I suddenly recalled my own unenviable position.

I had made an ass of myself. I was really the one to blame. I couldn't expect to take up the operator's time with such aimless discourse.

The predicament was unusual, to say the least. Here I was, all dressed and anxious to call upon an old friend whom I knew was with her husband at the Arlington Hotel, expecting me. The only obstacle was that I didn't know her new name.

It suddenly occurred to me that I might go personally to the hotel and look at the register. Then I remembered that the Arlington was one of those apartment places where no public book was kept, but suites of rooms rented by the week or longer, the same as they would be in any ordinary apartment-house. Besides, how was I to know the name, even if I saw it?

I might go to the manager and ask him the names of all the people in his building, and try to gather from the date of their arrival the married name of my friend. But I doubted that I would learn anything, even if the manager was willing and could give me the information.

No, there was no chance to find out through the proprietor of the hotel. I would have to ferret the thing out myself. I even thought wildly of hiring a detective to look into the matter.

I simply must see the former Miss Brown. My standing in the church demanded it. I could not neglect her after her expressed interest and my certain acceptance of her invitation to call.

Besides, I wanted to see her. She was a young woman with a marked grace of manner and an elusive beauty that had always captivated me.

Then I got an idea. There was young Keaton, a dentist, who lived in the Arlington. I had forgotten all about him. He was quite an admirer of mine, a member of the church, and I had been able to send several people to him. He was grateful, and would be willing to do a service for me.

All this thought took time, and I finally gave up the idea of calling on the former Miss Brown that night. It was lucky that she had said I might come Wednesday as well. The choice gave me a chance, and I was determined to see her.

So I called up Keaton, and explained to him my predicament, giving a full description of the former Miss Brown, and asking him to make inquiries about her in the hotel. He enjoyed the peculiar situation, and was quite enthusiastic about helping me, so I left it wholly in his hands.

The next morning I received a telephone call at the office.

"Mr. Keaton wants to speak to you," said somebody at the other end of the wire, and in a moment my dentist friend's voice sounded through the receiver.

"Hallo," he said, "can you come right over to the police station at Fifty-Eighth Street?"

"What is it?" I asked in some alarm, having hoped that he had some news to tell me concerning the former Miss Brown.

"I'm in trouble," he replied; "can't explain it over the wire. Come at once."

In feverish haste I put on my hat and coat and rushed over to the station-house. There was Keaton, sitting dejectedly before the desk-sergeant. An irate gentleman was talking with an officer, and beside him stood a piquant-featured little woman, richly gowned, who looked very annoyed.

"What is it, Keaton? What's the trouble?" I asked breathlessly.

He turned to me with a relieved expression, and then indicated the lady.

"Is this the former Miss Brown?" he asked.

I looked at the woman. She partly answered the description I had given Keaton, but only partly.

"Good Heavens, no!" I cried.

"It isn't?" he demanded, grabbing my arm and looking at me with wide eyes.

"No. I never saw the lady before," I hastened to explain.

"Well, you'll have to explain it to the sergeant, then," replied Keaton hopelessly. "This woman's husband had me arrested for following her. I thought she was your friend, and followed her in the hotel last night and this morning, to wait for a chance to learn her married name for you. She answers the description."

"Good gracious, Keaton!" I exclaimed. "This is an awful mess. I'm sorry I let you in for it."

"It's my own rashness," he replied. "But you've got to get me out of it. I was so certain I was on the right track. Please explain it all and set me right. I've told them you would explain."

It was rather difficult, and I didn't like to relate the purely personal incident, but its dénouement forced me to do so. With some trouble I convinced the magistrate of Keaton's innocence, and he was discharged.

The enraged husband and the annoyed lady took the release in poor spirit, and went off grumbling. I walked back to the hotel with Keaton, assuring him that I was exceedingly sorry he had got into this trouble on my account. He smiled and said it was an interesting experience, now it was over.

"I've got just one more clue to your former Miss Brown, then," he said, as we stopped in front of the Arlington.

"What's that?" I inquired.

"She may be the lady in the rooms across the court from mine," he replied, entering on a description of this second lady.

"It sounds like a description of Miss Brown," I replied. "If we could only make sure of it you could remember her face, and ask one of the hall-boys or the man at the desk her name."

"Exactly," he enthused. "Supposing you come up to my rooms now, and we'll wait until she appears at one of the windows across the court; then you can identify her, I'll find out the number of her suite, and I'll get her name from that."

"Good idea," I replied, and we went to his rooms directly.

For half an hour he sat at his window, looking across the court, but was unable to see the lady in question. I leaned over his shoulder and watched, too.

Suddenly a pair of curtains was thrust back in a window opposite, and a young lady was framed for a minute between them.

"That's the one!" cried Keaton enthusiastically, turning to me.

"But she's not the former Miss Brown," I answered with great disappointment.

The lady opposite stared across at us, and then deliberately pulled down her window-blind.

"Whew!" I gasped. "I guess it looked rather impudent for us to stare into her rooms."

"Well, we've got to find your friend," he replied.

"Of course," I answered dismally; it began to look as though my chances weren't very good.

We talked it over for some minutes, and then I started to return to my office. Just as I was leaving Keaton's telephone rang, and I waited to say good-by while he answered it.

I couldn't hear his conversation, as he closed the door; but he came back in a minute or two, very red and looking quite confused.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"That lady across the court we were staring at called up the manager and complained. He just phoned to me and asked me to be careful. He's heard about my being arrested this morning for following the other woman."

Things began to grow serious again. I didn't like to bring all this trouble to Keaton, but he was so anxious to help me out that he overstepped his bounds.

"You'd better give up the search. I'm sorry I've caused you so much annoyance," I told him.

"I explained to the manager," he answered with a sickly smile. "I won't give up till I find out the married name of your Miss Brown. You've done a good deal for me, and it's up to me to reciprocate."

"But you mustn't get into any more trouble," I warned him.

"I've just been unlucky," he assured me, and started to go down to the street with me.

As we walked along the hall I saw the elevator-door open, and a woman tripped into the car. She had on a sealskin jacket and a black hat with big plumes. As she turned to enter the elevator I caught a glimpse of her profile and sprang forward.

It was the former Miss Brown. I dashed toward the shaft and rang the bell, but the car had already gone down.

When Keaton came up to me I asked him if he had seen the lady, and he replied that he had. Then I told him who she was, and he was utterly astonished. The meeting was accidental and very lucky, as now he knew the former Miss Brown by sight and could inquire about her to better advantage.

A second elevator came down at that minute, and we stepped in. I hoped to overtake the former Miss Brown on the main floor and see her personally; but for fear of missing her, I told Keaton to rush to the desk when we got down and ask the clerk in charge the name of the lady who had just gone down in the other car.

So, when we reached the main floor, I dashed at once to the front entrance and looked about for the familiar sealskin coat and black-plumed hat, while Keaton stepped over to the desk.

I saw several carriages whirling away from the door, but the former Miss Brown was not in sight. Evidently she had disappeared in one of the vehicles before I reached the entrance.

Disappointed, I turned back and joined Keaton at the desk. He was standing beside a tall, broad-shouldered fellow with a frowning face and questioning the little wizened-up old clerk.

"Yes," he said as I came up, "the lady with the sealskin jacket and black plumes in her hat. Her name before she was married was Miss Brown."

"Oh, I know whom you mean," said the clerk suddenly. "That's Mrs. ——"

At that moment the broad-shouldered man standing beside Keaton turned abruptly and glared down at the dentist.

"What do you want to know the lady's name for?" he demanded in a tone of authority.

Keaton turned to him irritably, looked him up and down, and replied: "I didn't know that my conversation concerned you."

"Well, it does," answered the other in a full, manly voice, turning about and facing the dentist squarely.

"May I ask in what way?" queried Keaton abruptly.

"I am her husband," was the reply.

Keaton went white, and I trembled with excitement. It was a dramatic situation.

"I am her husband," continued the other, "and if you want any information, I would be pleased if you would come to me directly for it."

"I—I just wanted to—" Keaton made a sickly attempt at an explanation, and then his eyes suddenly rested on me. He had not noticed when I came up.

"There," he said, pointing to me. "There is the gentleman who is interested."

The big, broad-shouldered fellow wheeled abruptly and faced me. I could see that he was thoroughly angry.

"Well," he demanded, "what is it you wish to know?"

My tongue was frozen in my mouth. The suddenness of his question unnerved me.

"I—I would have found out if—if the lady hadn't gone down so quickly in the elevator and—" I began to explain..

"What is this all about?" cried the other. "I want to know what affair this is of yours? Have you any business with my wife?"

The loudness of the speaker's tone attracted the manager of the hotel, and he came up and eyed Keaton suspiciously.

"I wanted to call upon her," I declared.

"Well, of all the nerve!" replied the big fellow, glaring at me.

"Oh, I know her," I hastened to explain. "She used to go to our church. I'm an usher there. I saw her, after six years' absence, last Sunday. She said she was staying here, but I didn't catch her married name. That's why I couldn't keep my engagement with her last night."

The husband's jaw dropped. I felt that my explanation was necessary, and yet it was very embarrassing to make it before the curious clerk and the suspicious manager.

"You aren't Mr. Jackson, are you?" cried Miss Brown's husband, a light of understanding beginning to shine in his eyes.

"That's my name," I replied with a relieved smile.

"My wife was expecting you to call last night," he went on, the angry look slowly fading from his face. "So you couldn't come because you didn't know her married name?"

He began to smile, and I felt much easier as I explained to him how I had set Keaton on the trail and the trouble he had got into.

"Well, this is funny," laughed the former Miss Brown's husband. I didn't even know his name yet. "Alice will appreciate it so much."

"It has been a rather peculiar experience," I admitted. "She mentioned her new name; but I didn't catch it, and forgot to ask her to repeat it."

"She'll be back in a minute. She took a taxi to buy something. I was waiting here for her return. She won't be very long now."

A minute or two later the lady in question came in. She was greatly surprised to see me, and we all went to their rooms while I explained the whole thing all over again for her satisfaction.

"It's awfully funny," she laughed. "You know, Hal is very sensitive these days. He's been having trouble with his teeth. I can just see him flaring up at you two. The ache has made him so grumpy, I can't drive him to a dentist. He wouldn't even go to church with me Sunday on account of the toothache."

She looked at him in playful reproach. My friend Keaton suddenly became interested at the mention of teeth.

I saw my chance to repay him for some of the trouble I had caused, so I told her that he was a dentist and I could vouch for his work. The introductions had been rather sloppy. I had merely presented the lady as "the former Miss Brown," so I found it difficult to carry on a conversation. I didn't yet know what her husband's name was.

I recommended Keaton highly, and the former Miss Brown's husband seemed glad to get hold of a dentist on whom he could rely. In spite of the pain he suffered, he had persistently refused to go to an unknown practitioner. Things turned out rather luckily. The job was a profitable one, and this relieved my anxiety concerning the trouble Keaton had got into on my account.

We talked things over pleasantly for some time, and related all the exciting details, to the great enjoyment of the pair.

"I told Hal it was funny you didn't come last night. You are so punctual, Mr. Jackson," the wife said.

"Well, it couldn't be avoided," I replied.

"Of course; you didn't remember my married name," she replied.

I thought I caught a twinkle in her eye.

"No, I didn't know your new name," I laughed awkwardly.

"How funny!" she replied, and she exchanged a smile with her husband.

"*And I don't know it yet!*" I cried suddenly.

"He doesn't know it yet," laughed her husband at the same moment.

I thought they had gone crazy. I couldn't see anything very funny about that. It sounded like the chorus of a comic opera to me.

"He doesn't know it yet!" I was tempted to write a song about it, the thing was drilled into my head so thoroughly.

"Well, what *is* your name?" I demanded impatiently.

"*Brown,*" she said simply. "It's such a common name; I suppose it never occurred to you that I could marry a man with the same name as my own?"

"*Brown,*" I replied dully, heaving a sigh as I recalled all the trouble I had been to to find out what I already knew.

IN THE WRONG SHOES.*

BY GARRET SMITH,

Author of "On the Brink of 2000," "Riches Thrust Upon Him," "A Peck of Trouble," etc.

What Came of a Friendly Attempt to Smooth the Path for a Railway Seat-Mate Temporarily Incapable of Looking Out Satisfactorily for Himself.

CHAPTER XX.

MORRIS APPLEBY AGAIN.

AS Morris heard the announcement set down at the close of the previous chapter, his heart sank. He had withstood all the various surprises that had come upon him in the last three weeks without at any time giving way to complete discouragement, but now, just as he saw the end in sight under serene skies, to learn that, after all, he was to be disgraced—this robbed him of all his courage. Dully he listened while the board president arraigned him.

"You have been very clever, young man," went on Mr. Graham; "surprisingly so. Just how you worked it all is not yet clear. But I wish to compliment you on your unbounded nerve. There have been a number of things that have puzzled us since you came, and some of the board seemed to think you ought to be looked into; but I didn't get real suspicious till this afternoon, when I met Mrs. Richardson, the president of the W. C. T. U., who caused you so much trouble the first week you were here.

"She had just met on the street the young man whom she saw intoxicated with you on the train that night. She recognized him instantly. Now I learned at the barber-shop that that young man had been to see you at our house, and Mrs. Graham tells me that he came with an uncle of yours, or at least a man you called your uncle, and was introduced as your cousin.

"Now, you will recall that you told us you had never seen this young man before the night you met him on the train. That showed at once that you had been lying to us about the circumstances of your coming here. I went right over to see Mr. Porter, of the board, and when I told him my story, he said he'd been suspicious too. He showed me the signature you wrote in his daughter's album at school the first day you were here. I got the letter supposed to have been written by you to us before you came here and compared the signatures. There was not the least resemblance between them.

"Then Mr. Porter and I recalled some of the things you told us at the board meeting, and some of the changes you made in the studies after writing so differently. Then I called up Mr. Kennedy, the school commissioner, asked him what he thought about it, and he said that, from what he saw when he visited the school the first day you were here, he was convinced you knew nothing about teaching. So we grew pretty suspicious, of course.

"We went over to see Miss Mercer at the school, and put it right up to her strong. She seemed set on defending you, we could see that; but before we got through with her she as good as confessed you were another fellow, and not David Grant at all. Now, what did you do with the real David Grant whom we hired? We've given you three weeks' pay for one week's work, and we find out that it didn't any of it belong to you. As soon as you are able to get out of bed you will have to account for this before the law."

With that, Mr. Graham turned on his heel and left the room.

Before Morris had time to think over this climax of misfortune a letter from Jack Henderson was brought to him. It was as though fate had arranged the finale with a view to making it as ironical as possible.

DEAR APPY:

Everything straightened out all right in Brandenburg. I took the written statement Grant gave me to the chemical company, saw the manager, and he was perfectly satisfied. I explained how you had been laid up all this time with a broken leg, and smoothed over the Milton Center end of the story, so there'll never be any come-back from there. He said he would expect you back on the job to which he had appointed you as soon as you are able to use that game leg. Says he will write and apologize for their hasty judgment, and allow

you full salary as atonement, for the time you've been away.

I also saw your father and mother, and fixed it up with them. They were overcome with remorse, and wanted to rush right out to your martyred bedside, but I choked that off by explaining, as well as I could, how necessary it was to keep you out of sight till you were able to leave Milton Center. I smoothed over the high-class impersonating you've been doing on that little bucolic stage, so as to make it fit in with the old gentleman's idea of rectitude.

So cheer up. Hope you will get well soon, find the little girl, bring her back with you, and, according to the formula of Mr. Grimm, Anderson & Co., "live happy ever afterward."

This was the letter Appleby had been looking for.

But what good would it do him now? To be arrested at the climax of all the notoriety of which he had lately been the center, and convicted of fraud, would undo all the rehabilitating his good friend Henderson had accomplished.

At that moment Dr. Spencer came in for his evening call. At sight of him Appleby's heart leaped.

He had not taken the good doctor into his confidence as yet, despite the semidisclosure he had made to him and the old gentleman's promise to stand by him. Now he poured forth the whole story to a wondering but sympathetic listener.

When he had finished, Dr. Spencer arose and without comment left the room.

For an hour Morris lay wondering what had been the effect of his revelation on his medical friend. Had the story proved too strong for him after all, or would the doctor in some way prove the sincerity of his friendship by protecting him at this critical point?

As he lay there in the half-light, moodily watching the sunset through the west window, he heard the door softly open behind him. There was a light step. As he turned a hand was placed on his forehead.

"Eloise!"

For a full moment neither spoke another word. To Appleby it was the sensation that comes to one just at the moment of waking from a delightful dream—the moment one realizes he is dreaming and exerts a supreme effort of will to prevent the awakening.

But here was no dissolving vision. Above him, bending down, was the living face of the lost girl. It was a very pale and trembling Eloise indeed, but a real one beyond a doubt.

Then the face came nearer, and there was another moment of silence. An instant later the girl stood straight beside him, and now the face was not so pale. Then Morris found his voice.

"Eloise! Eloise! Where have you been all this time? How could you worry us so?"

"Well, you know, David, you gave me a pretty bad scare that night I went away. I thought you didn't care for me any more, and you said things I couldn't understand. I was afraid your poor head had gone crazy for sure at last. Yet, what you said hurt me so I just went out and walked and walked and tried to think it all out.

"I went way out into the country and got all mixed up on the lonesome, winding road, and then it grew dark and that awful storm came. The lightning frightened me so I guess I must have got a little crazy. I just wandered around in the rain all night, and early in the morning found a farmhouse where they let me in, and I was all worn out then and felt pretty sick.

"They were good people there, and I made them promise not to tell anybody where I was for three days. The idea just came over me I'd stay hid, and find out whether you really cared, after all, when you found out I was lost. Then finally I called up Dr. Spencer, and had him bring me to his home after dark, so people wouldn't know I was back, because I was still very unwell, and couldn't bear to have people calling and inquiring about me.

"The dear old doctor told me all about how badly you felt and how much you really cared, but wouldn't let me see you till now. He's just come over to the house and said you needed me right away, that you had a great surprise for me. What is it, David? Tell me all about it."

How could he tell her? Appleby lay for a moment with closed eyes, breathing a prayer for wisdom. Would the shock of disclosure kill her love for him? The thought of the disgrace to which he was soon to be dragged made him hesitate to claim from her the sympathy for which he so much longed.

"Eloise," he said at last, "I do care for you, more than Dr. Spencer has ever been able to tell you, more than I can tell you myself. If, after you understand what I am going to tell you, you still care for me as you do now, after I get out of this trouble I am in I'm going to ask you to be my wife."

She listened, flushed and wide-eyed. There was in her glance mingled happiness and doubt.

"Would you still care for me, Eloise," he went on, "if I were about to suffer a great disgrace, and if I really deserve the punishment I shall probably get?"

For a full moment she hesitated, but there was no doubt in her answer when it came.

"Yes," she said, as her hand stole into his. "I'm afraid I'd care no matter what happened. You can't have done anything very wrong. Haven't I known your ideals of right for a great many years, through those lovely letters you've written me?"

Appleby was stabbed to the quick. He must tell her that he had never written to her in his life. That those letters were from another man, the man to whom she was really engaged. That he was merely an impostor.

For a moment or two he was unable to go on. Then he said:

"But suppose I am not what you think, or just who you think I am?"

Silence again for a moment.

"What can you mean?" she asked.

Then cautiously leading her along a little at a time, Appleby told the whole story of his unfortunate duplicity, modifying, it is true, David Grant's part in it, so as not to seem to be discrediting a rival.

He made the defense of his own motive as strong as possible. Yet he could not help seeing that the tale he was unfolding was proving a shock. She grew paler and paler as she listened, and for some time after he had finished sat with strange face and tear-filled eyes, unable to speak.

"Oh! You are not David Grant! And I am pledged to marry David, and must keep my promise! And—and I love you, no matter who you are."

For an instant she looked at him as one saying a last farewell, then turned and rushed from the room. But as she opened the door, Morris heard her give a little cry of surprise and saw that she had nearly darted into the arms of old Dr. Spencer, who stood there holding her fast and looking at them both with an amused twinkle in his eye.

"Eavesdropping," he said, "is not a very gentlemanly thing as a rule, but when a fat old man undertakes to play guardian-angel, he sometimes finds it necessary to resort to very human tactics. I've heard all the stuff you children have been saying to each other, and here's where I do a little of my fine work in the angel line.

"After you told me your story, young man, I called up your Brandenburg people and found out all about you, and I want to tell you, little girl, that he's all right, if he has been a little foolish. Why, he went through this whole thing just because he thought he was going to save you trouble, and that, too, when he had never seen anything of you but your picture. You just think it over, and get used to calling him by his right name, and dump over that other chap to whom you don't owe anything at all after the tricks he has played.

"And as for this arrest business this young man here's been worrying about, that's been declared off. Old Guardian Angel Spencer has just been slipping a spoke into the wheel of our friends the school-board, and they'll be mighty glad not to say anything more about this thing. I happened to be on the board myself two years ago, and I know two or three little things that Messrs. Porter and Graham wouldn't care to have aired.

"I called those gentlemen up on the phone just now and explained the whole thing a little more clearly to them, so your case didn't look quite so bad. Said I'd personally guarantee the return of the money they'd paid you while you were here, and then gently but firmly explained that if the facts of your stay here ever became public I would also make public these unpleasant little board secrets that I happen to possess. I had both gentlemen on their knees begging me please not to say any more, so don't you people waste any more time. I'm going now and you have my blessing."

"But," interposed the girl, "after all, I'm still engaged to David Grant. What can I do? I must keep my promise."

Appleby's heart sank. He saw around that dainty little mouth some firm lines he had never noticed before. Dr. Spencer saw them, too, and shook his head dubiously.

At that moment came a knock at the door. Dr. Spencer opened it. With an apologetic cough, the real David Grant stepped into the room.

It was a painful moment. It was the first time Eloise Donnell had been face to face with her *fiancé*.

Grant knew the girl from her picture. She recognized him by some mysterious instinct. For a tense moment no one spoke, then Grant held out his hand.

"Cousin Eloise," he stammered, "let's shake hands and call it square. I know the whole story and I won't stay a minute. I know who you really care for, he's won you, and he deserves you. I didn't. I am not robbing you of anything by breaking our en-

gagement, because that legacy didn't turn out to be so very big after all, according to Uncle Philip, and—and—" he wound up hesitatingly—" I find that after all I'd never forgotten an old schoolgirl love of mine, and if you want to, you may congratulate me, because I've just been around to the little Methodist parsonage and been married to Katherine Mercer."

Eloise Donnell gasped, then, overcome with the reaction, sank into a chair, convulsed with tears. The two men nodded a silent good-by to Appleby, and quietly stole out.

For a long time the only sounds in the room were the sobs of the girl. Then slowly she grew calm, and the waiting Appleby saw her gazing out into the fast fading light, deep in thought.

"How about it, little girl?" he ventured at last.

"Let me think," she replied. "I must learn to know you all over again. I'm going back to my old Dixie home, and rest a little and get used—to—to a new name. You may write to me if you want to—I loved you for what another man wrote—can you do as well for yourself, Da—M—Morris?"

Appleby saw a little flickering light in the brown eyes, part mischief, part the old love-flame. Then, without another word, Eloise was gone.

And the heart of the real and acknowledged Morris Appleby was at rest.

THE END.

UP IN THE GALLERY.

BY LEE BERTRAND.

High Hopes Brought Low by the Altitude of Their Seats at the Play, with a Train of Consequences that Could Not Possibly Have Been Foreseen.

ALLISON bounded up the three flights of stairs with joyous impetuosity.

"Pet," he cried excitedly to his wife, who stood awaiting him at the door of their four-room flat, "I've got some good news for you—a grand surprise."

"Is it the long-looked-for raise of salary at last, dear?" she inquired eagerly.

The happy expression on Allison's face disappeared at this question. He shook his head ruefully.

"No; it isn't *that*, Florence. It isn't quite as good as all that. I'm afraid that raise is as far off as ever. I've got a little treat in store for you—something that I feel sure will please you immensely—but it isn't anything as big as an increase of salary. Now that you've mentioned that, I hesitate to tell you what it really is. You've knocked out all my enthusiasm."

She sighed.

"I'm sorry, dear, to have hurt your feelings. I wouldn't have mentioned the raise, only from the happy look on your face I felt sure you'd got it at last. What is the good news you have to tell me, Arthur?"

"I suppose it isn't anything to get excited about, after all," he said dispiritedly. "It's only a visit to the theater. I've got a chance to take you to a show to-night. It's the play you so much wanted to see, too—'The Martyrdom of Mary.' That isn't such good news, after all, is it? If you really expected such a big piece of luck as a raise, I guess this will hardly please you at all."

They had entered the flat by this time, and he threw himself dejectedly into a Morris chair. He was no longer happy. His wife's words had brought back to him a realization of the fact that they were wofully hard up and engaged in a continuous and disheartening struggle to keep the wolf from the door on a salary of twenty dollars a week.

He had been so overjoyed at the prospect of being able to take Florence to the play that he had temporarily forgotten all about his troubles until his wife's disheartening question recalled them to him.

Mrs. Allison, observing what she had done, inwardly reproached herself for her lack of tact and eagerly sought to make amends.

"Of course I am pleased to hear your good news, my dear boy," she said. "It *is* a grand surprise. I wanted to see that play so much. All my friends have been to see it, and I couldn't help feeling envious of them. I am so glad you are going to take me. How did you happen to get the tickets, dear?"

"I haven't got the tickets yet," he replied, somewhat mollified, "but I've got a pass,

which is just as good. A fellow I know is a friend of a man who is a friend of a fellow that knows the dramatic critic of the *Evening Bulletin*. The critic gave his friend a pass, and that friend gave it to the friend of the fellow who gave it to me."

"A pass!" cried Florence, clapping her little hands delightedly. "How nice! I'll hurry through with the supper, dear, so that we'll be ready in plenty of time."

"Yes; you'd better hurry," Allison suggested. "We've got to get dressed, too."

"I suppose I'd better not put on my best things. The seats will be up in the gallery, of course, and we'll be conspicuous if we dress up too swell," said his wife, with a sigh she could not repress.

"Up in the gallery, indeed!" cried Allison, his good spirits suddenly returning at his wife's words. "I guess not, little girl. A press pass always calls for orchestra stalls. We're going to have the best seats in the house, so you can go ahead and put on the very best glad rags you've got, little one, and I'll don my evening clothes. We're going to the theater in style to-night."

She threw her arms affectionately around his neck.

"That's fine and dandy, boy!" she cried. "I do love the theater so much; but I don't mind confessing that I'd almost prefer to stay home rather than have to sit up-stairs. I suppose it's vain and silly on my part, but I just can't help feeling that way."

Her husband nodded his head sympathetically. He understood fully why it was difficult for her to be reconciled to the necessity of having to view the play from a seat up among the gallery gods.

Before her marriage to him she had been used to all the luxuries with which a wealthy and indulgent father could supply her. It had been no rare treat to her in those days to go to the theater, and her father's money had enabled her always to have the best seats in the house.

She had married Allison against her father's wishes, with the conventional result that the stern old man had refused to have anything more to do with her, and now even a seat in the gallery was something that she and her husband could not afford to indulge in very often.

"Well, there won't be any family circle perches for us to-night," he exclaimed happily. "As I said before, little one, we're going to the show in style—thanks to the dramatic critic of the *Bulletin*."

"I'll hurry with the supper now, dear," replied his wife, "and then, since we are to sit in orchestra seats, I'll put on my white *crêpe de chene* dress—the one with the blue bows, you know. You always say that I look like a duchess in that gown."

"Not like a duchess, deary—like a queen!" declared Allison fondly. "Honest, all you need with that dress is a crown to convince anybody that you are of the blood royal."

She laughed joyously at the compliment, and they were so happy that once more they forgot they were poor.

When Mrs. Allison appeared in the dress of which she had spoken, she certainly did look very charming and distinguished—so much so that her admiring husband had some misgivings about the propriety of riding with her on a common Subway train.

He felt that the occasion demanded a taxicab at the very least; but, unfortunately, the condition of his finances would not permit of this extravagance, so they had to use the Subway after all.

"Anyway," declared Mrs. Allison optimistically, "the Subway has its advantages over a taxicab. There is less chance of an accident, and no danger of being held up by a policeman for speeding."

When they arrived at the Calumet Theater they found a long line of people drawn up in front of the box-office.

It was the last performance of "The Martyrdom of Mary," one of the theatrical successes of the season, and it looked as if everybody who had not yet seen the play was anxious to purchase a ticket for this closing performance.

Allison took his place at the end of the long file of waiting men and women. When his turn at the box-office window came, he handed the ticket-seller the little slip of precious pink paper on which was written "Admit two —Account New York *Bulletin*."

The man in the box-office snatched the pass from Allison's extended hand, examined it carefully as though he questioned its genuineness, frowned, and threw two coupons almost savagely upon the little glass slab in front of the window.

As Allison picked up the tickets he could not help wondering why the ticket-seller's manner should be so churlish. He did not know that the fellow had the reputation of being the meanest-minded theater treasurer in New York.

This young man hated a "deadhead." Although it was nothing out of his own pocket, it positively pained him to have to give away theater tickets for nothing when others

were paying for them. Whenever a pass was presented at his window he always handed out the coupons with a misanthropic scowl.

He was feeling in a particularly bad humor this evening, and hence his attitude toward "deadheads" was even more ungracious than usual.

However, Allison did not waste much time thinking about this man and his mood. He seized the coupons, and, going to his wife's side, walked with her to the entrance and handed the checks to the man at the gate.

The latter glanced at the little blue pieces of pasteboard and shook his head.

"You're at the wrong door," he said. "You want to present these coupons at the gallery entrance."

Allison turned pale.

"At the gallery entrance!" he gasped. "Surely not. You must be mistaken. They are orchestra-stall coupons."

"No, they're not," retorted the ticket-taker. "They're marked 'Family circle' just as plain as can be. Step aside, please. You're blocking the way and preventing people from going in."

He handed back the coupons to Allison, and the latter looked at them and saw that the other was right.

"This must be a mistake," he whispered to his wife. "The man who gave me the pass told me that they never give anything but orchestra seats on press courtesies. The fellow in the box-office must have handed me these gallery seats by accident. You wait here in the lobby, pet; I'll go back and call the matter to his attention."

He had to take his place at the end of the line again, and the orchestra had already started the overture by the time he had once more reached the box-office window.

"Say, old chap," he said, "I guess it was an oversight on your part; but you've given me gallery seats."

"Well, what about it?" snapped the peevish young man behind the glass slab.

"I handed you a press pass," explained Allison, and I understand that a press pass calls for orchestra seats."

"I'm not responsible for what you understand," declared the ticketman. "Those are the only seats I can give you. It's no use arguing about it. Please don't block the window. You're delaying people who want to *pay* for their seats."

"But my pass was given to me by the dramatic critic of the *Bulletin*," protested Allison. "Surely he's entitled to something better than the gallery."

"I tell you that's the best I can do for you," snapped the other impatiently. "We're all sold out down-stairs and in the first balcony. This is a heavy night. I can't do any better for you."

Of course, this was only the fellow's meanness. As a matter of fact, there were several unsold tickets for orchestra stalls, and he was really supposed to honor a press pass with such seats; but it suited his humor to take this churlish stand even at the risk of getting into trouble for it from his superiors later.

"Say, old man," pleaded Allison in a vain attempt to appeal to this despot's sympathy, "I wouldn't mind sitting up in the gallery if I were alone; but I've got my wife with me and—she's all dressed up. She'd feel conspicuous and out of place up-stairs. Won't you do me a great favor by stretching a point and finding room for us in the orchestra. I don't care if it's the last row."

The box-office man sighed with ostentatious weariness.

"Haven't I told you that we're all sold out down below?" he exclaimed. "Can't you get that idea into your head? The tickets I've given you are first row in the gallery. You can see and hear almost as well up there as you could down-stairs. It's hard to satisfy some people."

"It isn't the—" began Allison desperately.

The ticket-seller interrupted him savagely.

"Say! Are you going to stand here arguing all night, my friend? Don't you see that you're keeping people with real money from buying tickets? Why don't you go away? You won't gain anything by being stubborn."

The man next in line to Allison added his protest.

"Why the dickens don't you move and give somebody else a chance?" he snorted. "Do you suppose you're the only one who wants to see the show? Get a move on you."

Several others in the waiting-line expressed their indignation in forcible terms. Allison sighed and stepped away from the window. He realized that it was no use trying to move the tyrant in the box-office.

"Well," inquired his wife eagerly, as he rejoined her, "did you get the tickets changed, dear?"

"No," he answered dejectedly. "That fellow is the meanest man I've ever run across. I guess it's got to be the gallery or nothing for us, little girl. I'm sorry."

"You said we were going to get orchestra stalls, and I—I put on my best dress," ex-

claimed Mrs. Allison, fighting hard to keep back her tears. "I can't sit up-stairs in this gown—I can't do it, Arthur."

"I'm sorry," said Allison again. "If I'd known it was going to turn out this way I wouldn't have brought you here. And you so much wanted to see this play, too. It's too bad."

"Couldn't you appeal to the manager, or somebody in authority over that mean fellow in the box-office?" suggested his wife.

"That's not a bad idea. I feel sure that we're really entitled to down-stairs seats on that pass. That fellow has put us up in the gallery just to be spiteful. I'll interview the manager."

But, unfortunately for Allison, the manager did not happen to be in evidence. He had telephoned to say that he was laid up with a bad cold, the gateman explained.

"Did you ever see such wretched luck?" growled Allison to his wife. "I'm awfully sorry for you, dear. Rather than disappoint you like this I'd buy a couple of orchestra seats, much as we need the money; but, unfortunately, they'd cost four dollars, and I've only got sixty cents. I gave you my last dollar yesterday to pay the milkman."

She sighed.

"It's frightfully unpleasant to be poor, isn't it, dear?" Then, touched by his wobegone countenance, she added hastily: "Pardon me, honeyboy, I didn't mean to say that. The words just slipped out. After all, we're very happy. What do we care if we can't see this old show. Probably it isn't as good as they say it is, anyway. People always exaggerate."

"I suppose it's out of the question for us to make the best of things and sit up in the gallery, eh?" Allison remarked wistfully.

"I think I'd rather not, dear," his wife answered. "I feel so out of place in these clothes. If we weren't dressed up I wouldn't mind. Imagine you sitting up among the gallery gods in a dress-suit and me in a décolleté gown. Ugh!"

"But, after all, what difference does it make?" he argued. "Once we're in our seats we shouldn't be noticed. Isn't it foolish pride, pet? You wanted to see this play so very much, too. Let's be sensible and use the tickets."

"All right," she agreed, none too cheerfully. "If you wish it, dear, I'm willing."

They climbed the three steep flights of stairs which led to the topmost balcony. The curtain had already gone up by the time they reached the latter; and, in order to get to their seats, they had to disturb several persons, who voiced their resentment in plain, unvarnished terms.

"Hey, Chimmie!" exclaimed a dirty-faced boy in the front row in a hoarse whisper. "Pipe the dudes! It must be Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt, I guess. Wonder what they're doin' up here in the gallery?"

"It's a wonder that folks as can afford to sport open-faced suits and low-neck dresses don't loosen up and buy seats down-stairs, instead of coming up here to disturb honest people," muttered a stout woman in a red-checked shirt-waist as she stood up to allow the two late arrivals to pass.

Allison and his wife heard these along with other jeering remarks, and their faces were scarlet as they took their seats in the front row.

They concentrated their gaze on the stage, however, and were soon so much interested in the play that they forgot about their surroundings.

It was only when the curtain had gone down on the first act and the house became lighter once more that they realized they were up in the gallery.

"I do hope that nobody we know discovers us up here," whispered Mrs. Allison to her husband apprehensively. "I should die of mortification. I'm sorry we've got seats in the front row. I'd have preferred to sit farther back. We must be in plain view of everybody down-stairs."

"Oh no," replied Allison reassuringly. "Don't you worry, dear. We're too high up for anybody down-stairs to be able to recognize us. And besides," he added with a bitter smile, "none of the swell people below would bother to look up here."

Suddenly his wife's figure became rigid and she gave his hand a frenzied squeeze.

"Look, Arthur!" she gasped, "see who's in that upper box on the left side. It's Bella Vandam and her husband. Oh, if they should notice us!"

"They won't," declared Allison confidently. "They won't bother to look up at the family circle. Don't worry, little girl."

"But see. Bella has opera-glasses and she's looking all over the house," gasped his wife. "She's bound to spot us soon. Oh, dear, I'm awfully sorry I let you persuade me to come here. If Bella Vandam recognizes me she'll tell everybody about it. She's a regular cat."

"Well, she isn't going to recognize you," said her husband stoutly. "Lean back in your seat, pet, for safety's sake."

"I think we'd better leave at once," whispered Mrs. Allison fearfully. "If that horrid woman should see me I should go crazy with humiliation!"

"We can't go," declared Allison. "That would be a dangerous move. If we stand up we'd be more likely to attract her attention than if we keep our seats. Besides, the house will be dark again in a few minutes and we'll be perfectly safe."

Just as he got these words out of his mouth a most disconcerting thing happened. His wife was so nervous that an ivory fan she carried slipped from her shaking hand and went fluttering to the orchestra stalls below.

In a theater, between the acts, a trifling incident like this always attracts an amount of attention quite out of proportion to its importance.

As the fan was wafted downward the audience roared with laughter and all eyes were turned toward the gallery. Mrs. Bella Vandam swept her opera-glasses around toward the spot where the Allisons sat.

"Good Heavens!" gasped poor Florence. "She sees us, Arthur. Look! She's nudging her husband and he's looking this way, too. They're laughing. Don't you see? They're laughing at our expense. The odious creature! Oh, I wish I was dead!"

"Don't you care, little woman," whispered Allison soothingly. "After all, we've got nothing to be ashamed of. It's no disgrace to sit up in the gallery. We're just as good as those Vandams, even if we are poor. Bella Vandam isn't nearly as pretty as you are and her husband is only a bookkeeper like myself, so she hasn't any reason to put on airs.

"It's true that he's earning a much bigger salary than I, but that's only luck. He happened to strike a good job with a generous firm. I'm just as clever a bookkeeper as he is, and I was way ahead of him at school. Why should we be ashamed just because he can afford to blow in his money on a box and we have to be content with the gallery? Poverty is no disgrace, after all. Let's look at the situation sensibly, pet."

His wife did not answer. Allison's attention was attracted just then by the words of a man sitting at his right. This man was a rough-looking fellow in the garb of a working man.

"Say," he was saying to the young woman who accompanied him, "do you see that guy in the upper left-hand box—that feller with the blond baby beside him, I mean. Well, I know him. His name is Vandam and he's the bookkeeper in the place where I work."

"A bookkeeper!" exclaimed the young woman in a tone of surprise. "I thought he was a millionaire. You'd imagine so from the airs he's putting on. He must have a swell job to be able to afford a box at the theater."

"Yes, he makes good money," said the man. "He draws his fifty dollars every week. That's going some for a bookkeeper, eh?"

"I should say so," assented the young woman. "I never heard of a bookkeeper earning such a big salary."

"It's a generous firm we're workin' for," went on the man. "They believe in payin' their employees well. I ain't got no kick comin' myself. They pay me more money for my work in the shipping department than I'd get with any other firm. They're mighty good people.

"That fellow Vandam won't draw his fifty a week much longer, though," he continued with a chuckle. "He's through with his job next week. I heard the big boss tellin' his partner yesterday that he was goin' to fire Vandam and get a new bookkeeper."

"Gee whiz! What's the trouble with him, Mike?"

"I don't know exactly; but it seems that the big boss has taken a dislike to him. I guess Vandam's been givin' himself too many airs. His head's been pretty swelled lately. We've all noticed it. At any rate, whatever the trouble is, out he goes next week. I heard the big boss say he intends to advertise for a new bookkeeper."

Allison nudged his wife excitedly.

"Did you hear that, pet?" he whispered.

"No; what was it?"

"That man sitting beside me works in the shipping department of Cockran & Co. where Vandam is employed. He just told the young woman he's with that Vandam is going to be fired next week."

"I can't say that I'm sorry to hear it," declared Mrs. Allison vindictively. "It serves Bella Vandam right. Maybe she won't give herself so many airs, after this."

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" whispered Allison excitedly.

"No. What, dear?"

"I'm going to drop in to see Cockran & Co. on my way down-town in the morning and see if I can't get Vandam's job. Fifty dollars a week! Just think of it. Of course they may not be willing to pay me that much

to start with, but I'd soon be getting it. If Vandam can command that salary there's no reason why I can't. I'm just as good a bookkeeper as he is."

"But would it be quite square to try to get his job away from him?" asked Florence, who was the very soul of honor.

"I don't see why not," replied her husband. "Vandam is slated to go, anyway, so it won't make any difference to him whether or not I get his job. And, besides, we've never been good friends. I never liked him. There's no reason at all why I shouldn't try to get his job."

He was so excited at what he had heard that he scarcely paid any attention to the rest of the performance.

When the play was over and they were leaving the theater, they encountered Mr. and Mrs. Vandam in the lobby down-stairs.

"Hallo, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Vandam, greeting Mrs. Allison effusively. "I'm so glad to see you. How did you like the play?"

"Very much," replied Mrs. Allison nervously.

"Where were you sitting?" inquired the other woman innocently. "I didn't notice you in any of the boxes. Did you have good seats?"

"Splendid!" replied Allison's wife quickly.

She was overjoyed to find that evidently Bella Vandam had not recognized her up in the gallery, after all. "It's queer that you didn't see us; but then you have such poor eyes, haven't you dear?"

"We're going to Rector's to get a little supper," said Mrs. Vandam, ignoring this thrust.

"Oh, by the way, dear," she added sweetly, "excuse my asking, but did you recover your fan?"

Without waiting for an answer to this pointed question she walked off, leaning on her husband's arm, leaving Allison's poor little wife scarlet-faced with humiliation and trembling with rage.

"The horrid cat!" she whispered. "She *did* see us up in the gallery, after all. I was in hopes that she hadn't recognized us. She'll tell everybody I know. Oh, I'm so glad that that priggish husband of hers is going to lose his job."

"So am I," declared Allison. "And I'll be more than doubly glad if I can land it."

The next morning, on his way down-town, he dropped into the offices of Cockran & Co., and requested an interview with William Cockran, the senior partner, with whom Allison, being employed in the same line of business, was slightly acquainted.

He was ushered into the latter's private office and, without any preliminaries, he started in to explain the object of his call.

"It occurred to me, sir," he said to the keen-eyed little man who was the head of the big firm, "that you might be contemplating a change of bookkeepers. If so, I would like you to consider me a candidate for the job. I am a first-class bookkeeper, and I have had several years' experience in your line. I can give you good references."

"Now, that's a funny thing!" exclaimed Mr. Cockran innocently. "You've dropped in just at the right time, my young friend. We *are* contemplating making a change in our bookkeeping department. I shall be pleased to consider your application, although, of course, I cannot promise you the job. We shall have plenty of other applicants, I presume. You had better write me a letter giving me full particulars about yourself."

"Very well, sir. I will do so, and thank you very much," said Allison and, considering the interview at an end, he rose and started toward the door.

"One minute," cried the other suddenly. "I want to ask you a question, young man. Weren't you sitting up in the gallery of the Calumet Theater last night?

"Yes, sir," answered Allison, inwardly wondering as to the purport of this unexpected query.

"I thought I recognized you," said Mr. Cockran. "My attention was attracted toward you by the fact that the young lady seated next to you dropped a fan into the orchestra stalls. I have a pretty good memory for faces, and I knew that I could not be mistaken."

"I—I hope that you don't consider that anything against me, sir," stammered Allison uneasily.

"Not at all. On the contrary, I am going to promise you that job right now, without considering any other applications. Provided your references prove satisfactory, you can consider yourself engaged to begin work here next Monday."

"Thank you, sir," gasped Allison, his face a picture of astonishment.

"I suppose you are wondering why I have so suddenly made up my mind to give you the job," said Mr. Cockran, with a smile. "I will explain. It is owing to the fact that I saw you up in the gallery of the Calumet Theater last night."

Allison was too dazed to say anything.

"I admire a young man who is thrifty," went on Mr. Cockran. "I take off my hat to the young fellow who has no false pride.

"Nowadays, I regret to say, the majority of young men live beyond their means and get into debt in order to be able to show off. It is a pleasure to me to be able to encourage a nice, sensible, clean-cut fellow like you who isn't ashamed to be seen sitting in the gallery of a theater.

"I consider the family circle is the proper place for a young man of modest means. It is the best I ever permitted myself to afford when I was starting my career. It is because you appear to be too sensible to waste your money on a more expensive seat at the play when you can see and hear quite well enough in the gallery that I am giving you this vacant position.

"And, by the way, there would not be any vacancy in our bookkeeping department if it were not for the fact that young Vandam, our present bookkeeper, isn't as sensible as you.

"I saw him at the same theater last night sitting in a stage-box as proud as a peacock. I, myself, his employer, and worth a million dollars, was satisfied with an orchestra stall; but nothing less than a stage-box was good enough for my bookkeeper, Vandam.

"My partner and I have been displeased with him for some time past, and the other day we resolved to fire him; but had decided to give him another chance. He lost that last chance last night when I saw him and his wife sitting in that box, a picture of arrogance. I have no use for a young man who gives himself such airs, and who is so disgracefully extravagant. Therefore, he shall go next week, and you shall have his job."

When Allison reached home that evening he burst boisterously into the presence of his wife.

"Hooray!" he cried, "I've got glorious news for you, pet. I've landed that job with Cockran & Co., and all because we sat up in the gallery at the Calumet last night. I'd like to shake the hand of that box-office man for giving us family circle seats instead of orchestra stalls. He did me a splendid turn."

"Yes," cried his wife joyously, "I feel as if I could kiss that fellow for his meanness. He has done us even a better turn than you are aware of, dear. I, too, have some good news to tell.

"It seems that father and sister were at the Calumet last night, and when I dropped my fan their attention was attracted to me.

"Father recognized me, and his heart was touched at the sight of poor little me sitting up in the gallery. He has been around to see us this afternoon, and he has fully forgiven me for marrying you. He has also forgiven you for marrying me, and he wants us both to call on him to-night. Oh, I am so happy."

"We seem to be in clover at last," exclaimed Allison joyously. "Our bad luck has taken wing and an era of prosperity confronts us. Nevertheless, despite our altered circumstances, I think I shall always sit up in the gallery when I go to the theater in future. I like the gallery."

"So do I," declared his wife, tears of happiness in her eyes. "Dear old gallery! I just love it!"

The Man He Knocked Down.

BY J. F. VALENTINE.

A Collision in the Subway that Didn't Take Place On the Rails, and Tumbled Results Round in a Most Surprising Way.

BARRETT pushed the telephone from him, and swinging about in his chair, faced his partner.

"I thought they might phone me," he exclaimed, as he glanced at his watch. "But evidently they have not the slightest idea of coming down on the proposition a cent. And yet, to my way of thinking—

"But it must be worth what they're asking," Hallowell interrupted. "If it isn't, why did you take an option at the figure you did?"

"Because it's worth that price to me. But I learned yesterday afternoon that the place has been unoccupied for the past two years, and also that these brokers have been trying very hard to get rid of it. And I learned, too, that a few weeks ago they offered it to a prospective buyer for a thousand dollars less than they asked me."

"Oh, I wouldn't believe all I heard," the other counseled. "I don't think that's so."

"Why not?" Barrett demanded rather warmly. "They know that Mrs. Barrett and myself are very much impressed with the place. We've spent some time going over it on the different occasions that we went out there—and as we expressed ourselves so favorably, they just piled the price on."

"Then, why worry about it?" Hallowell smiled. "Your option is up at twelve, and wait till after that before communicating with them, and see if they come after you. If they don't, and you still want the place, pay their price and get it."

"Yes, and in the meantime it'll be just my luck to have somebody else come along and take it."

Hallowell swung about to his desk, and his taking up a paper from those that littered it proved that his interest in his partner's contemplated real-estate transaction was over.

"By Jove, I've a mind to pay their price," Barrett exclaimed, after a moment's thoughtful silence. "It's worth a thousand dollars to get just what you want, and if some one stepped in and bought it, I'd never forgive myself. I've just time to get there before twelve, and I'm going to take it."

"A wise decision," the other remarked, without raising his eyes.

Barrett said nothing further, and hastily drawing on his coat, hurried from the office and toward the nearest Subway station, his mind completely engrossed with the thought that he must reach the real-estate broker's office before the time limit on his option had expired.

As he neared the kiosk, he glanced toward the spire of a church, and saw by the clock that he had just about time to make it.

He started down the stairs, and as the roar of an approaching train reached his ears, took the steps two at a time. Suddenly, as he neared the bottom of the flight, a man stepped toward him, his face turned in the opposite direction, and stood directly in his path.

Barrett saw that a collision was inevitable, at the speed he was going, but he endeavored to jump to one side. It was too late, however, and they came together with a force that caused the other to reel, as he attempted to regain his balance.

But in this he was unsuccessful, and he fell in a heap on the stone flooring of the station.

Barrett managed to keep his feet, as he clutched at a railing.

It was all over in the fraction of a minute, and as Barrett regained his equilibrium, he stepped quickly to the prostrate man, who was already making an attempt to rise. But as he leaned over him and was in the act of seizing his arm to help him to his feet, a groan escaped the other, and he fell back in a heap again.

"What is it?" Barrett asked solicitously. "Are you hurt?"

Already the station employees had gathered about them, and were staring, open-mouthed, seemingly totally at a loss as to what they could do to be of any assistance.

"Here, lend a hand, some of you," Barrett ordered. "Help me get this man on his feet."

"You can't do it," the injured one declared, with a groan. "My ankle—it's either broken, or else it's got an awful sprain."

"But you can't lie there," Barrett protested.

"I might as well be here as anywhere else," the man declared.

He stretched himself out on the stone floor, while a look of despair passed over his face.

Already quite a crowd had gathered, much to Barrett's embarrassment, and he motioned one of the station employees to take the man under one arm, while he did likewise with the other. The injured man made no protest, although he groaned repeatedly as they helped him to the stairs, upon which he sank.

"Now get an ambulance," said Barrett.

"I'll go to no hospital," the man suddenly spoke up angrily. "I'm helpless enough as it is, without going to some place where they may take off my leg."

"But you must go where you can get surgical attention," Barrett protested.

"Well, it won't be to a hospital, where the saw-bones take advantage of a poor man, and chop him up to suit themselves."

As the man's bitter words reached Barrett's ears, he glanced down at him, and noticed for the first time that he was very poorly clad, a fact that in his excitement he had failed to observe.

"Then, where would you prefer to go?" Barrett asked.

"Home, of course," the man replied impatiently. "Home, where I'll have to stay for some weeks. I can't work until I'm well again—"

His speech ended in a groan that expressed far more than words could, and as he glanced up into Barrett's face, there was a look of despair on his own that touched the wealthy merchant.

At this juncture a reporter pushed his way through the crowd, and with a few questions learned how the accident had occurred. He took the names and addresses of the parties concerned. As he left them, Barrett reached a sudden decision.

"Call a taxi," he said to a person who stood just behind him.

The fellow dashed up the stairs to the street, and Barrett drew out his watch. He saw it was already five minutes to twelve, and he turned toward the injured man.

"I'll take you home," he informed him.

"In a taxicab?" the man queried, a look of joy spreading over his countenance that caused great wonderment on the part of Barrett.

"Yes, and—"

"I've never been in one of them," the man interrupted.

"Then now's your chance—"

But Barrett's words were cut short by the return of the man who had gone to summon a vehicle.

"It's up-stairs now," the stranger informed him. "Can I help you get him to it?"

Barrett nodded his head. The two slowly helped the injured one to the street.

As gently as possible, they put him into the cab, and Barrett climbed in after him.

"Where to?" the driver queried.

Barrett turned to the other for instructions.

"Seven ninety-four West One Hundred and Nine," was his reply.

Barrett stared at him wonderingly, realizing this was not the address he had given the reporter.

The driver threw on the power, and the machine glided ahead, leaving the crowd at the curb.

Then Barrett faced his seat-mate.

"Is that the right address?" he asked.

The other nodded his head.

"But that isn't the one you gave to the reporter."

A slight sneer came over the man's face as he replied: "You don't suppose I'd give my right address to one of those fellows, do you?"

"And why not? I did."

"Well, if you want them running after you, all right. I don't. That's why I gave him a phony one."

For a moment neither spoke, then Barrett broke the silence.

"I'm awfully sorry for what has happened," he said regretfully.

The man did not look at him as he slowly answered: "That's all right for you to say, but it doesn't help me any."

Barrett looked at him quizzically.

"I don't understand you," he said.

"I mean that I don't see why it had to be me that got hurt."

Then he glanced quickly into the other's face, and there was an angry look in his eyes as he added: "I can't afford to be laid up. If I can't work, I get no pay, and as I've been out of work for a couple of months and just got a job yesterday, I ain't got a cent. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"But it wasn't my fault, any more than it was yours," Barrett protested. "It was simply an unavoidable accident."

"And it's me who suffers for it," the other burst out angrily. "Me, who'll probably starve before I'm able to work again. Why couldn't it have been you? You're rich, and if you were laid up for a few weeks you'd eat three meals a day just the same, while I won't eat any."

There was such a hopeless ring to the man's tone that Barrett was touched deeper than he had been for some time.

"My dear fellow," he began, "you have no right to speak that way."

"And why haven't I?" the other demanded.

"Because, while it was not the direct fault of either of us—"

"It was!" he burst out. "You ran into me!"

"Very well, have it that way," Barrett said in an attempt to calm him. "But whether it's my fault or not, you'll not suffer."

The man's eyes brightened.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean that, in the first place, I shall send my physician to attend you, and I'll settle the bill; and in the second place, I shall pay you your salary during the time you are unable to work."

"But—but that's too much," the other put in.

"Not in the least," Barrett declared. "I can well afford to do it. How much is your salary?"

"Fifteen a week, and I'll probably be laid up for four or five weeks."

"My doctor 'll call on you as soon as I can get him on the phone—"

"Is he high-priced?" the man interrupted.

"Five dollars a visit."

"Now, look here," the injured man rejoined. "You're a pretty decent fellow, and

I'm not going to take advantage of you. There's a doctor only a few doors from where I live—I've had him before—and he only charges a dollar a visit. He may have to come about—" another groan escaped him—"about twenty times, and if it was your doctor, that'd be a hundred dollars right there."

"Yes," Barrett agreed, wondering what proposition would follow.

"Now, if I lose five weeks, that's seventy-five dollars, and the twenty calls that my doctor would make, makes its ninety-five. Now, I may not get out in five weeks—that is, get out so I can work—but I'll take the chance. If you give me a hundred dollars—" he paused an instant, as if regretting what he had said, then added: "Why, it'll be an act of charity. Is that amount fair?"

"It certainly is," Barrett replied, "and I'll do it. I haven't it with me, but I'll send you a check as soon as I get back to the office."

"Send me a check!" the other repeated. "A check for a hundred dollars! Where do you suppose I'd get it cashed? If I asked any one to do it, they'd think I'd stolen the thing."

"Then I'll send you the cash."

"That's the only thing to do—that is, if you really want to help me. This neighborhood is a very poor one, and anybody who flashed a hundred-dollar check would immediately be under suspicion."

By this time the cab was picking its way through the crowds of children playing in One Hundred and Ninth Street, and as it drew up before a tenement a trifle more pretentious than the others about it, the chauffeur sprang to the sidewalk, and assisted Barrett in helping the man into the house.

A knock on the door of an apartment brought a woman to it, and she admitted the three, at the same time asking what had happened. But the injured man told her curtly that it was no affair of hers, and as she left the room, he dropped on a couch, and Barrett turned to the chauffeur.

"Wait outside for me. I'll be there presently."

As the man left the room, the injured one turned his head to Barrett.

"And will you really do as you promised?" he asked slowly.

"Most certainly I will," Barrett assured him. "And I'll bring the money to you myself. To-night, on my way home, I'll stop, and hope to learn that the doctor says things are not as bad as we think. And, by the why, where is his office? I'll stop on my way out, and send him to you."

"Oh, don't bother to do that," the other objected. "My landlady 'll do it for me."

"Then I'll hurry down-town. But you'll see me again within the next three or four hours."

With a few parting words Barrett hurried back to the taxi. He told the chauffeur to take him back to his office, where he hoped to find that the real-estate company had phoned him regarding the property. But it was only a forlorn hope, and he entered his building feeling that he had made a mistake in returning—that he should have gone direct to the offices of the firm which had the sale of the property in their hands.

"Well, did you get it?" Hallowell inquired, as his partner appeared before him.

"To what do you refer—trouble?" Barrett inquired bitterly.

The other looked up in surprise.

"Why, no," he faltered. "I mean the country place you—"

"I did not," Barrett replied emphatically. "Hasn't any one phoned since I left?"

"Not a person," was the reply.

"Then I suppose it's sold," the other lamented. "And I've lost it, all because I bumped into a fellow in the Subway."

"What are you driving at?" Hallowell wanted to know, now thoroughly puzzled by his partner's words and actions.

As briefly as possible, Barrett recounted what had befallen him.

"I'll telephone the real-estate people now," he added as he finished.

"There's a man outside to see you," the office-boy announced at this point.

"Who is it?"

"He says he's from the Subway company, and wants to see you on a personal matter."

Barrett turned to Hallowell.

"Now, what can he want?" he queried blankly.

"See him, and find out," the other curtly suggested.

Barrett nodded his instructions to the boy, and his intended telephone call was forgotten as the stranger entered the inner office.

"I wish to see Mr. Barrett," the man explained, glancing from one to the other of the partners.

"I am Mr. Barrett."

"Did you have an accident at the Times Square Station of the Subway a little over an hour ago?"

"I did," Barrett replied emphatically.

"What did you do with the man?"

"What's that to you?" the other demanded rather warmly.

"Just this. I am one of the railroad's detective force, and as soon as I received a report of the accident I hurried to look into the matter, and went to find him at the address he gave to the reporter. It was a false one, as I knew before I started for it, so I came to see you, thinking you might have taken him home, or had an address at which I might catch him."

He paused only the fraction of a second, but before Barrett could speak he added: "How much did he get out of you?"

"What—what do you mean?" the other queried in astonishment.

"I mean that this fellow is a crook, and is working a new game on the public. We've already heard of three cases, and this one of yours makes the fourth."

"But—but I don't understand," Barrett stammered. "The man was hurt—hurt seriously."

"No, he wasn't," the detective retorted promptly. "I'll explain the fellow's game. You see, he takes his position at the foot of the stairs of some station, watches for somebody who looks prosperous to hurry down them. Then he manages to step in front of them, so as to get knocked over. You know the rest of the game better than I do. But, how much did he touch you for?"

"Why, not a cent," the astonished Barrett declared.

"Not a cent?" the detective repeated incredulously.

"No, but I promised to send him a hundred dollars. He claimed he had no money—"

The detective's eyes suddenly brightened as he interrupted:

"Where were you going to send it?" he inquired.

Barrett told him the address.

"And, now that I recall it," he concluded, "he wouldn't even let me send his own doctor to him. I think I now see his reason for objecting to it."

"Of course, and as long as you haven't paid him any money, you're getting off much easier than his other victims. But, I'll have him within an hour. He'll take the chance of waiting for you to come along with that hundred."

The thought of the property purchase now recurred to Barrett.

"I may not be getting off so easily after all," he said. "I had a business appointment that was spoiled by the unfortunate affair, and—"

"I'll go after him," the detective interrupted, as he edged toward the door. "You'll hear further from me."

As he bowed himself out o the office, Barrett turned to his partner.

"Why, I can hardly realize things are as this man claims," he said.

"It's a pretty clever game, although one that the fellow can't work very long. The authorities would soon get on to it, as they already have done, you see. But it seems to me any one is taking an awful chance in permitting himself to be knocked over, particularly when he has to land on a stone floor. I wouldn't want to risk it."

"But, as I recall it, he didn't fall heavily," Barrett replied. "He dropped in a heap. But even that is risky, when you take into consideration what little there must be in it."

"Oh, there's enough in it. Suppose he only got one victim a week who paid him a hundred dollars, it isn't so bad."

"Well, he didn't get the hundred out of me." Then Barrett sighed as he added: "But even at that, it may cost me quite a little more in the end. That property business, you know."

At this instant the telephone-bell rang, and he placed the receiver to his ear. "Yes, this is Mr. Barrett."

There was a brief pause, then he added quickly: "Oh, yes. You see—"

Hallowell unconsciously glanced over at his partner, and the look on the other's face caused him to continue his stare.

"Is that so?" Barrett was saying. "Yes, I'll take it at that figure, and be down at your office inside of half an hour. Yes, good-by."

He threw the receiver back on the hook, and turned excitedly to Hallowell.

"That was the real-estate firm," he announced. "I'm going to get the place, and I save two thousand dollars by the delay."

"Did they come down?"

"Isn't a drop of two thousand coming down?" Barrett exclaimed. "They evidently thought, when I didn't take up my option, that I didn't want the place, so they've made this inducement. And to think, I might have gone there and paid—"

He stopped short as he was pulling on his coat.

"Say, that fellow I ran into—he's saved me two thousand dollars, instead of costing me a hundred, and if it wasn't that he'd only work the same game on somebody else, I'd

really hope the detective won't catch him. In a way, I ought to reward him for saving me quite a nice sum of money."

"But he deserves to be in jail," Hallowell put in. "And it's only your good luck that he didn't get the best of you. So, we'll hope he gets his just deserts. You'd better get along now and cinch your property."

"I know it," Barrett replied thoughtfully. Then at the door he lingered long enough to add: "It's strange how things sometimes work out, isn't it?"

TAKING IT OUT OF HIM.

BY JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE.

The Remarkable, if Painful, Fashion in which a Commercial Traveler, Down On His Luck, Got On His Feet Again.

YOUNG Will Drake, a new and struggling "commercial ambassador," was stranded in Chicago—painfully stranded. As a traveler for an Eastern business house, he may be said to have made a trip of some brilliancy, from the viewpoint of mere traveling, as attested by his expense account and requisitions; but as a salesman—and the house laid extraordinary stress upon that element of the pilgrimage—he added little or nothing to the archives of his honorable profession, not to mention the coffers of his house.

Business firms can be very cold and unfeeling, and Mr. Drake came very near losing his childlike trust in human nature when the firm replied to his last demand for funds with a curt, scarcely polite letter, to the effect that they had concluded to equip no more expeditions to explore the Middle West, that section being already fairly well mapped. They suggested to him a broader field in the antarctic regions, mentioning that in said quarter he would be free and unhampered by the commercial amenities that had apparently appealed to him so little.

Drake affected to appreciate the humor of their letter when he replied, and reminded them that they had overlooked the slight matter of advancing the necessary funds for his return to civilization. He felt sure, he said, that he could make satisfactory explanation of his apparent lack of success on seeing his principals personally at the home office.

The reply to this communication was even more curt than the preceding outrage: the firm suggested that men of Drake's caliber and attainments were wasted in the East, and they wished to have no part in withdrawing him from the vast West, where the openings and possibilities were so limitless.

Will Drake had made many friends—to use the term as a generality—but beyond smoking his cigars and laughing at his stories, they could be relied upon for very little practical support. He told his tale of woe, nevertheless, to a select two or three, and got real sympathy, which is a commodity not altogether to be despised in a cynical world.

One man even found much humor in the correspondence, and endeavored to point it out to Will, but the latter was on the verge of losing his sense of fun.

He sent a number of carefully worded appeals for aid to relatives in the East (thereby showing his inexperience in a strong light), and he received, in return, several letters of sage counsel. A faithful perusal of them and a careful following of their precepts might have made him, in time, a captain of industry, but he hardly more than glanced at them, and threw them in the waste-paper basket with snorts of disgust unworthy of a dutiful nephew, cousin, etc.

Drake mentioned, very diplomatically, the matter of a loan to the sociable hotel clerk, but regretted it, for the clerk seemed to become almost discourteous, and notified him curtly that all accounts with the hotel had to be settled on Saturdays.

After this unpleasant incident, Will walked away from the desk, and tried to assume an air of easy nonchalance as he strolled about the lobby. He even purchased a new supply of cigars, and proceeded to smoke with some magnificence.

More letters came from the East, and one of them afforded a pleasant change from the general tone; an old friend of his family (not a relative, mind you) seemed still to feel confidence in him, and offered him a clerical position at a salary quite above the nominal class. Drake was moved almost to the point of showing the letter to the hotel clerk, but

he disliked the latter's accusing glances, and forebore the little act of confidence.

A porter of many buttons strode into the lobby, carrying a fat kit-bag, hat-box, and other emblems of luxury. He was followed by one Augustus Benton, stout, stalwart, and palpably opulent. Will Drake knew him well, and hailed him joyously as a deliverer.

Mr. Benton took a suite, and invited his old friend, young Mr. Drake, to call on him and smoke and talk. This Will did without delay, and took the occasion to pour into the ear of wealth his tale of injustice and misfortune.

Mr. Benton, not having lived without similar experiences, listened with cordial sympathy, but he told the young man that while he was reputed wealthy, he really carried a very small surplus of cash—usually just enough for current expenses—and did not like to withdraw any large amounts from his brokers at a time when business exigencies were so precarious.

Will apologized quite abjectly for annoying a man of great affairs with his importunities, but desperately added that a mere matter of fifty dollars would relieve his necessity, and start him on the road to possible fortune. Mr. Benton suddenly discovered, to his really amused surprise, that he had actually not more than thirty dollars in currency about him at the time.

Will added further apologies, and affected an air of friendly sociability to show his old friend that a mere matter of money could not enter intc their friendship to any disastrous degree. They dined together, and after dinner the easy-mannered Benton so far forgot their financial conversation as to call at the desk and cash a check for one hundred dollars, that he might not be without cash in his travels about the city. The hotel cashier respectfully counted out five crackling twenties, and Will Drake eyed them hungrily as their owner crammed them into a pocket, even as a drowning man might look at a boat passing near him, paddled by unresponsive pleasure-seekers.

Still the young man harbored no resentment, but made an effort to show some affection for the old friend of his family. For a while they smoked and walked together, and Will boyishly threw his arm over the shoulders of the older man, and slapped him frequently upon the back, as they talked of home and old times.

Benton decided, rather late, to take in a theater. Drake was in no mood for it, or for accepting further hospitality from the man, so they said good-night, and Benton went to his room to put on a dinner-coat.

Having arrayed himself in suitable finery, the pleasure-seeker transferred his watch and small articles of jewelry from his traveling-clothes.

From his breast-pocket he took his wallet and glanced into it. There were a few small bills. He thought of the hundred dollars, recently acquired. Ah, yes, he had stuffed it into his waistcoat-pocket.

He took up the waistcoat and went through the pockets, finding nothing but a handful of matches, a pencil, nail-file, etc. He stared out of the window at the lighted building opposite and considered. Quickly he went over in his mind the little affair of cashing the check and putting the currency in his pocket. Then he thought with a sickening suspicion of the walk with his young friend, the latter's fraternal embraces and pats on the back.

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed in horror, "that's the worst that's happened yet; that boy's a common, low pickpocket."

He paced the room agitatedly, thinking of Drake's desperate financial straits.

"Perhaps he was really driven to crime by his distress," he decided, with a sudden burst of charitable impulse. "I can't have him pinched; I haven't the heart to do it. But, by gad! he's a common thief! I won't stand for being robbed like that. He's got to be punished."

He sought Mr. Drake in the lobby, in the billiard-room, and about the mazes of the great hostelry. Finally he located him, by telephone, in his room, where the young man had gone for rest and reflection.

"Come in," said Drake in response to a knock.

The door swung open, and a red-faced, scowling Mr. Benton entered.

"Give me that money, you dirty little hound!" he cried ferociously.

"What do you mean?" said Will, turning pale.

"Now, that won't go at all!" shouted Benton. "I want that hundred right away, and I'm going to get it!"

"You get out or I'll have you put out!" cried Drake in angry astonishment. "You're crazy, Benton. I don't know anything about any hundred. You can't come in here and insult me like this!"

"My Heaven!" roared the larger man, "you're a black liar as well as a thief! But I'll have satisfaction! Keep the money, you blackguard, for all the good it'll do you! But I'll have the worth of it out of you!"

And without further loss of time he advanced upon his erstwhile friend, and planted heavy blows in rapid succession upon his face and other available portions of his anatomy. The younger man resisted stoutly and labored to defend himself, but he was of inferior stature, and his knowledge of fisticuffs was worse than limited.

In a couple of minutes after the opening of hostilities the conqueror declared himself satisfied. He stood back, panting with excitement and exertion, and surveyed the results of his handiwork.

Will Drake looked much as though he had been put through a thrashing-machine. His eyes and nose were bruised and bleeding, his clothes and linen were sadly awry, and he had sunk limply upon the floor with all the breath driven from his lungs.

"Guess that'll hold you for a while," wheezed Mr. Benton. "I don't know but it's worth a cool hundred at that."

And he closed the door and went to his own room.

"Never mind the theater to-night," he mused, as he viewed himself in his mirror and carefully arranged his own slightly disordered attire. "I'll sit quiet for a while and smoke a bit."

His cigarette-case was not in his pocket.

"Wonder if he took that, too?" he thought; "it's silver."

He searched about the room, and finally took up the traveling clothes he had recently laid off. In the hip-pocket of the trousers was the silver cigarette-box. Also, there seemed to be something else — something which crackled to the touch.

"Heaven have mercy on me!" he groaned, and dropped weakly into a chair.

Will Drake was washing his discolored and grievously altered face when a bell-boy came to his door and handed him a letter on a tray. He opened it, and read the following astounding communication:

MY DEAR SIR:

I am far too upset to think of seeing you personally. I have no excuse for this evening's dastardly outrage but my own shameful carelessness and ungovernable temper. I shall plead guilty cheerfully to any charge you may bring against me, and I shall offer no opposition to any civil suit you may choose to institute. For the time being, however, I beg that you will condescend to accept the enclosed check for five hundred dollars, in partial reparation for the injuries you have suffered at my brutal hands. Yours, very humbly,

(Signed) AUGUSTUS BENTON.

Mr. Benton, in turn, later in the evening received this:

DEAR MR. BENTON:

The matter of the enclosure of five hundred after the events of the evening, but I assure you that, as a gentleman, I have no thoughts of seeking satisfaction from you by means of the processes of the law. I think the matter has gone far enough as it is, and we may consider it closed.

The matter of the enclosure of five hundred dollars must be considered. I assure you I could never accept it as a gift or a peace-offering, and my first impulse is to destroy the check; but I will wait to give it calm consideration to-morrow, and I may decide, partly through necessity, and partly through consideration of your feelings, to accept it as a temporary loan to be returned to you at my own convenience.

I am, sir, without malice. Truly yours,

(Signed) WILLIAM Y. DRAKE.

FISHERMAN'S LUCK.

BY FRITZ KROG.

The Perkinses Find that Fate Sometimes Works Toward Its Goal by Roundabout, Not to Say Exceedingly Damp, Methods.

"HANK PERKINS! What are you doin' here? Why ain't you out in the fields?"

It was Mrs. Perkins, with her sleeves rolled up past her elbows, her hands on her hips and her apron wet from contact with the wash-tub, who delivered these remarks in a tone of voice that sounded as though she was going to be answered in very quick time and in a very satisfactory manner. Her husband, Hank Perkins, had been caught prowling in a cupboard.

"You needn't lie to me," Mrs. Perkins went on before Hank could make any reply. "I know what you're doin'. You're lookin' fer fish-hooks. That's what. You lazy,

good-fer-nuthin' slouch! Where's your lazy son, Sam?"

Hank opened his mouth, shut it again and swallowed hard.

"Shut up," exclaimed Mrs. Perkins. Hank had not uttered a sound. "Shut up. D'you hear? I know where Sam is. You needn't tell me. He's diggin' worms, that's what. That's all you and Sam think about. Fishin'! And us livin' like hawgs, and razor-backs at that. Here I am a slavin' and a slavin', day and night, tryin' to git somewhere and you dod-gasted, ding-busted scalawags go *fishin'*. Fishin'! I'll show you. Git out o' here!"

Mrs. Perkins seized a broom, but before she had swung it over her head Hank was out of the front door. But he had his fishing-lines in his pockets.

Mrs. Perkins slung the broom after her vanishing spouse and retired to her washing, where she poured tears of regret into the tub over the shiftlessness of man.

Outsde, in the meadow, Hank met his big, raw-boned son Sam, with an old tomato can full of worms in his hand.

"Got the lines, paw?" he asked.

"Yep," Hank replied, "but the ole woman caught me and tried to lambaste me with a broom. She ain't ever feelin' well when she's got washin' to do."

"Pore ole maw," said Sam as the two men marched for the river, "she works mighty hard. And we never do git anywheres."

"It ain't our fault," Hank replied; "there just ain't nuthin' in this farm except the river, and it's good only fer fish."

"Somethin's got to happen pretty soon," said Sam. "Elviry and I—"

"Now, you stop bellerin' about your Elviry," Hank broke in. "Hear? There ain't nuthin' in our house fer no Elviry except hard work and trouble, if she can live on that."

"I could git a job somewheres else," Sam went on.

"You quit bellyachin', you!" his father exclaimed. "You're too young to talk about gals, any ways."

Flick River wound about two miles of its length in the Perkins farm, or rather, it jumped. For this was in the Ozark Mountains and the river was a very turbulent stream.

The place where the Perkinses fished was at the tip of a long, narrow, deep pool just below a waterfall. They baited their lines and, before dropping them into the water, spit on the hooks for good luck. This may have had attractions for the fish, but it was hard on the worms.

For a long time the two men sat on the sunny bank as silent and motionless as two logs. Across the river in the bulrushes a frog croaked, and from time to time a bird rustled in the trees, or sang a song.

"Sh-h-h-h," said Sam presently, "I got a nibble."

"Looks like it might be a channel-cat," whispered Hank.

Down went Sam's cork and he gave his line a mighty jerk.

"Don't that beat all!" he exclaimed when he viewed his catch. "Nuthin' but a derned old water-dog."

"Bad luck," Sam commented. "Kill it. Them things is poison."

This comment seemed true on this occasion, for the late afternoon sun found the fishermen still hoping for a bite. They were very hungry and stiff by now.

"The ole woman will sure make it hot for us," said Hank. "Gimme 'nother chaw."

"There, paw, look. You got a bite," Sam exclaimed as the father, intent on the tobacco, had his eye off his line.

Hank seized his fishing-pole with alacrity. There was no doubt about the bite, for the cork was clean out of sight and the line stretched tight as a wire. Hank pulled until his pole threatened to break, but he could not land his fish.

"Give him play; give him play," Sam yelled.

"There ain't much fight in him," Hank replied. "He's just pullin'."

When Hank found he could not lift his prize out of water, he dragged it ashore. When the thing finally came to view it proved to be a huge snapping turtle, fully two feet in diameter.

"Gosh," said Sam, "that's the biggest turtle I ever seen."

"I reckon he must be near a hundred year old," Hank remarked, "and fitten fer nuthin' but soup, and then we'll have to boil the critter fer a week."

When the two men tried to take the hook out of the beast's jaws, they ran up against a difficult job. The turtle drew his head under his shell, and all the pulling of both fishermen was not enough to draw that head out. The turtle would allow himself to be dragged over the ground rather than put his head forth.

"I'll fix him," Hank exclaimed.

He walked around behind his captive and

knelt on his shell. At the same time he wrapped the line around both hands and pulled. When this maneuver was put in execution, the turtle probably decided that it wasn't altogether fair play and suddenly began to waddle for the river. The bank was steep there, and before Hank recovered from his surprise he found himself in the water tied fast to a turtle making for the bottom.

"Let go the line, let go!" Sam yelled.

"How can I?" sputtered Hank.

There was nothing for it, but Sam had to jump in after his father and haul him out. When it was all over, the turtle had escaped.

"Now," said Hank, shivering and wiping his face, "didn't I say that water-dog would fetch bad luck? I lost a brand-new line, and look at my hands—all cut. I won't be able to work fer a week."

There was probably some comfort in that.

Silently and disgustedly the men gathered in their fishing-tackle and turned their steps toward the house.

"Help! Help!"

This cry came from the pool near the falls. Hank and Sam turned and ran back to the river. There they saw a man struggling helplessly in the water, and near him an overturned canoe.

"Help!" the man cried again.

Sam was the first in the water. An expert swimmer, he had not stopped even to remove his boots. Hank started in after him, but as soon as he saw that his son was handling the drowning man without need of help, he stopped near the shore and waited.

They soon had the stranger on the shore, slapping his limbs and rolling him over and over.

He was a handsome young man, in a brown hunting-suit and laced boots. While Hank and Sam were working over him, they were suddenly startled by a loud halloing. Looking up, they saw a fat little man with a gray mustache running along the shore.

"Hey!" yelled Hank.

"My son! My son!" cried the old gentleman.

"We got him here," Hank replied.

In a few moments the newcomer had joined them. He was very red in the face, hot and excited.

"Dear me—dear me!" he exclaimed. "Is he drowned? I warned him not to try to shoot the falls. But he was an obstinate boy. Now—"

"He'll be all right again," Hank said. "He's openin' his eyes."

The young man looked about him in a dazed way, and then smiled.

"Help me up," he said.

He stood shakily on his feet, and when he tried to make a step found that he had wrenched his ankle.

"You'll never get back to camp in that shape," said his father. "Dear me, now what will we do? And the canoe's all gone to smash."

"You better stay overnight at my house," suggested Hank. "We live right near."

"Thank you, sir; thank you," the old gentleman replied. "We should be delighted."

The party made slow progress. Young Kant, as the strangers had introduced themselves, leaned heavily on Hank's and Sam's shoulders. Near the house the former called a halt.

"I'll tell the ole woman," he whispered to Sam. "She might raise Ned."

Mrs. Perkins's eye fell on her husband as soon as he entered the back yard.

"Where's Sam?" she demanded.

"He's comin'," Hank replied. "He's got—"

"Where are the fish?" Mrs. Perkins asked.

"There ain't any," answered Hank, "but—"

"*But* nuthin'!" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins. "I'll fix you. I bet you didn't even try to fish. You just laid on the bank, that's about what you did. I'm goin' to wallop you right now."

Mrs. Perkins had worked herself up to the point of action, and had picked up a stick, when she caught sight of Sam and the strangers. She stared, with her mouth open.

"What's that?" she screamed.

"The young 'un nearly drownded," explained Hank. "I wanted to tell you, but you had so much to say."

"Why don't you do sumpin'?" cried Mrs. Perkins, rushing to open the gate. "You pore boy! Hank, put some water in the kittle. His foot is hurt."

When young Kant was on the best bed in the parlor and his father beside him in the best chair, Mrs. Perkins removed the boot from the twisted ankle, and, after she had applied mustard-seed and bandages, she rushed into the kitchen to cook "sumpin' extry."

Meanwhile, Hank and Sam stood near the kitchen stove to dry, and told Mrs. Perkins the whole day's story.

"There ain't nuthin' in this world fer us,"

she commented, "but bad luck. I reckon the river must be fished out. And there goes my last can o' peaches, and the frost has killed the buds, so there won't be many fer next year. Git out o' my way! Oh, my!"

From complaining Mrs. Perkins went to weeping; but, in spite of it all, she had a good old country supper ready for the guests. And they enjoyed it, too.

"We have a camp about five miles up the river," said the elder Kant. "My son and I were making a little exploring expedition. H'm, h'm—it struck me as I saw your place —h'm, h'm—that I might want to buy this farm."

"What!" exclaimed the Perkinses in one breath.

"Buy the farm," the old man continued; "now, what would you take for it?"

"Twenty-five hundred and she's your'n," said Hank promptly.

Old man Kant's eyes blared, and he reached in his pocket for his check-book.

"Father," the younger Kant suddenly broke in, "make it twenty-five thousand."

"But, my son—" the father expostulated.

"Come on, dad," said the young man; "these people saved my life, and you ought to tell them why you want this place and what it's worth."

"Why, h'm," Mr. Kant began, "my son is more than right. You did save his life. H'm, you see, my boy there, though he is a bit wild and obstinate at times, is somewhat of an engineer. The river on your farm takes quite a fall. That's worth quite a bit, quite a bit for power."

"Tell it all, dad," urged the younger Kant.

"Well," resumed the father, "and I—that is—we are going to run a railroad through here in about a year."

"Hooray!" exclaimed Hank.

"Won't Elviry's eyes pop out when she hears that!" Sam exclaimed.

"I don't know what it's all about," said Mrs. Perkins, "but I hope there ain't no more bad luck in it."

There was not. In about a year the Perkins farm was the liveliest place in the Ozark Mountains, and Hank and Sam were too busy to think of fishing. By Mr. Kant's advice, they had not sold the farm, but just a right-of-way and the water rights. But the construction-gang scared all the fish away.

The Writing On the Envelope.

BY HELEN A. HOLDEN.

How the Pastime for an Idle Hour Suddenly Assumed Serious Proportions to the Man Who Supplied Munitions for the Game.

THE broad veranda of the Clayton cottage was always popular. It was a general rendezvous for many on their way to and from the bathing-beach.

On this particular morning, some one, by way of diversion, had offered a conundrum.

"The latest thing from the city," Bobby Burns had explained. "It promises to outrival 'How old is Ann?' Business has shut down in many places to take time off to solve the all-important problem."

"That will do, Ananias," Cornelia Clayton spoke up. "However, to prove we are of the city, even if we are not in it, bring forth the weighty question, and we will have a try at it."

"Here it is," and Bobby handed Cornelia a slip of paper, from which she read aloud:

> The Tonawanda Tea Company offers two hundred dollars in cash for the best solution of the problem. One hundred for the second. A gold watch for the next three.

"Two hundred in cash!" exclaimed one of the group. "That would help some. But, Cornie, where's the problem?"

"If you hadn't interrupted," replied Cornelia severely, "we would already have arrived at it."

She continued reading:

> Divide 210 by 50 and leave the "Goddess of History." No more than one answer will be accepted from each person. This contest, open to all, will close July 31.

"That's to-day," some one exclaimed in a disappointed voice. "What's the use of offering us a fortune, Bobby, when it's too late to grasp it?"

"Nonsense," replied Cornelia, "it's fun to do the puzzle, aside from any possible re-

ward. I'll go get paper and pencil, and we'll have a try at it."

"Don't waste extra energy going after anything," Bobby put in. "Save it for the Goddess of History. Here's a pencil."

"And here's paper, such as it is."

Grant Stotesberry pulled from his pocket a pile of old letters. Carelessly he took the top one and handed it to Cornelia.

As soon as it had left his hands he would have given all he owned to have it back again. When Cornelia turned over the envelope, as she might do, and recognized the writing, what would she think, what would happen?

He shuddered at the possibilities. He must, at any cost, recover that letter, and avert the catastrophe.

"Cornelia," he suggested, "you will never have room on that small envelope to figure out that lengthy problem. Hand it back and I'll get you a piece of paper big enough to see what you are doing."

"This is all right." Cornelia was already absorbed.

"To the casual observer," Stotesberry went on, desperate, "your figures would be impossible to translate. Give me the envelope and let me do the figuring for you. I promise to put down just what you tell me."

"Talk about conceit!" rejoined Cornelia. "Now don't interrupt any more, Grant, or you'll be ostracized from the polite society of this porch."

Stotesberry took his dismissal as well as he could, under the circumstances. He got up and walked with quick, nervous steps back and forth.

What a blundering idiot he had been to choose from all the others that one particular envelope to give Cornelia! He had promised, on his honor, to shield her from all possible news of Carl.

Now he had put in her hands not only a reminder of him in the familiar writing on the envelope, but inside a full confession of his guilt. Merciful Heavens, suppose she should open the envelope and read the letter!

That, at least, must be prevented, if necessary by force. With grim determination Stotesberry turned and walked back again to the group on the farther side of the veranda.

He was not quite clear afterward just how it happened. He hesitated whether to demand the envelope again, or deliberately lean over and take it from Cornelia before she had time to remonstrate.

He had an indistinct remembrance of Bobby's voice complaining:

"That's right, Grant, sit down and rest a bit. That clump, clump, of yours over the porch for the past ten minutes has not been exactly soothing. In other words, you make us nervous, and Cornelia has almost got the answer."

While Bobby had talked, Cornelia turned the envelope. The writing of the address came to view.

For a few breathless seconds Cornelia wrote, and then, with an inarticulate cry, she started to her feet. Two red spots burned on either cheek, her eyes sparkled. With a brief apology to the group, she hurried into the house.

"It's too bad for Cornelia to give up when she almost has it," exclaimed Bobby; "but it is rather strenuous work for a hot day. As soon as she returns, let's go on down to the beach."

"You all start on; I'll wait for Cornelia," replied Stotesberry.

As soon as the others had gone, he sat down, limp and exhausted.

"Of all the blundering idiots," he groaned, "I'm it! Each time I've muffed the ball! Why did I stand there like a confounded mummy, and let her carry off that letter to read? If I had only grabbed it! It would have made a scene before the others, but it would have saved her from what she is now suffering."

He crossed quickly to the door and knocked loudly. When the maid appeared he spoke hurriedly.

"Please tell Miss Cornelia I would like to see her. I will wait here on the porch."

He tramped nervously up and down while waiting for the answer.

"Miss Cornelia is busy and begs to be excused," the maid brought back word.

Stotesberry took out his card and hastily wrote.

> Please see me. I want to tell you how sorry I am to have made such an unpardonable blunder.

When the maid had gone to deliver this appeal, Stotesberry sat down again and faced the situation.

He knew, for that matter he fancied every one knew, how matters stood between Cornelia and Carl Haverford. The engagement had not been actually announced, but every one had expected it at any time.

Then suddenly had come the mysterious and unexplained disappearance of Carl. This had happened about a month before.

Carl had failed to arrive on the evening train as usual. At first, the summer colony, of which he had been a popular member, frankly questioned Cornelia. When she denied any knowledge of the matter, they naturally drew their own conclusions.

Cornelia was criticized severely. They were sorry that a girl in so many ways as nice as she should lead a man on so openly, only to throw him over in the end.

Stotesberry alone had known the truth of the matter. Cornelia, in spite of the unfriendly gossip, was as innocent and ignorant of Carl's disappearance as any other of the cottage's guests.

In Stotesberry only, Haverford had confided. About two weeks after his disappearance, he had written from the city, asking Stotesberry to meet him there.

Stotesberry could remember the letter almost word for word.

> If our past friendship means anything to you, prove it now. I'm in pretty deep. Will you lend me a helping hand? I appeal to you, for I am confident you can understand better than any one else what a temptation it was to want it for Cornelia.
>
> I had to have money to spend on her. Then came the big opportunity of making a pile by using what did not belong to me. It seemed a sure thing, but it was the usual story with the inevitable bad ending. If you are willing to help me, meet me in the city at the Belle-Coudaire at four o'clock on Thursday. I want to go West and make a new start. I have perfect confidence in trusting to your honor in keeping this secret. No one must know, above all, Cornelia.

And this was the letter Stotesberry had inadvertently given Cornelia. This was what his honor amounted to!

Why hadn't he torn the thing up as soon as he had read it? It was utter carelessness to have left it with the half-dozen other letters in his coat-pocket.

"I say, Grant, come out of that trance," somebody called to him at this juncture. "Why don't you come on down to the beach? Pretty soon the tide will be too low—"

"I promised to wait for Cornelia, you know," began Stotesberry.

"But Cornelia's gone off somewhere in the motor," broke in Bobby. "Saw her not ten minutes ago, whizzing along with Aunt Margaret. Jiminy, but they were going as if they were after something! You don't mean to say Cornelia skipped out without letting you know?"

"She probably thought we had all gone on down to the beach." Stotesberry had no intention that Bobby should even suspect anything wrong. "I suppose she just went out through the back door and the garden to the garage."

"What's the matter, old man?" Bobby suddenly took a good look at Stotesberry.

"Headache," replied Grant laconically. "Guess I'll wander along up to the inn."

Refusing Bobby's kind offer to accompany him he hurried off. His stay at the inn was brief. He was soon on his way to the station.

"There's a 12.40 out to the junction," he reflected. "I don't know what train I can catch from there into town. If I could only have saved Cornelia from this wild-goose chase! In her agitation, of course, she never thought to look at the date of the letter. It said Thursday, so she naturally thought it meant to-day. And the thing all settled two weeks ago!

"Oh," he groaned aloud, "how she must care for that fellow to go to him now when she knows he is a thief! He doesn't deserve such devotion. Anyway, I know where to find her—the Hotel Belle-Coudaire."

II.

On leaving the group so abruptly, Cornelia had hastened into the house, and breathlessly gave instructions to her maid.

"Bring me quickly the morning papers. Then get my suit-case and pack it with things I will want for a couple of days in town. Don't ask me what. Put in what you think I would need."

Then she hurried to the phone that connected with the garage.

"Noble, have the car ready to take us to the city in fifteen minutes. We will probably be gone two days. You needn't drive around to the front door; we'll come down to the garage and get in."

She turned quickly as she heard the maid. With nervous haste she took up the papers.

Having glanced through the first, she frowned and threw it aside. The second received the same treatment.

With the third she seemed to have better luck. A look of satisfaction came over her face as she glanced down one of the pages.

Tearing it out, she ran quickly up the stairs. Like a whirlwind she swept into the room where her aunt was peacefully sewing.

"Aunt Margaret," she exclaimed, "you know you said at breakfast this morning that you needed a new gown."

"Yes," was the reply, "my new foulard

has all gone to pieces. It must have been poor silk, and yet I paid—"

"Just let me read you this," Cornelia broke in. "It's the chance of a lifetime. I happened to run across it in this morning's paper: 'Our great midsummer reduction sale—Gowns that have been selling at $100 to $200, we now offer at $75. Gowns that sold heretofore '—"

"Let me see it!" exclaimed Aunt Margaret. "What store? I think it would be worth while to run up to town to-morrow or the next day and look at them."

"To-morrow!" Cornelia repeated scornfully. "Why, Aunt Margaret, there won't be half a one left by to-morrow. If you really want to see them, we must go to-day. It certainly looks like a bargain. Even now they may all be gone. It is already after eleven."

"But, my dear," protested Aunt Margaret, "we can't possibly get ready before to-morrow."

"Noble is getting the car ready now. Marie will help you pack; we might as well stay overnight. I'll just scribble a note, telling dad where we've gone."

Cornelia's impetuosity swept all before it. Twenty minutes later, Aunt Margaret, breathless and exhausted, and Cornelia, hot and excited, were speeding rapidly along toward the city.

Suddenly the car came to a stop. The chauffeur got out and examined one of the tires.

"It's a pretty bad puncture," he reported.

"Can't we possibly go on?" inquired Cornelia anxiously.

"It's risky," was the answer.

"But we must get to the city. We have a sort of engagement we must keep."

"I'll fix her up the best I can till we reach the junction." The chauffeur was already at work.

The rest of the distance was taken slowly and carefully. As they finally rode along the one street at the junction, there was a sudden deafening report.

"A blow-out!" exclaimed the chauffeur. "What I was afraid of."

"As long as it had to be," said Cornelia, "I am glad we got this far. Instead of racing on through the heat of the day, you can now, Aunt Margaret, have lunch at the hotel. We will take the afternoon train to the city.

"Noble," turning to the chauffeur, "you will have to see about getting a new tire, and then take the car back home."

"I'll attend to the tire," replied the chauffeur; "but I'm sorry to tell you, Miss Cornelia, there is no hotel here. The station, a store, and half a dozen houses make up the place."

"Don't you think, my dear," suggested Aunt Margaret, "it would be better to take the next train home. We can start out again to-morrow."

"Poor Aunt Margaret." Cornelia was really penitent. "You don't feel as if you had quite yet caught your breath. I hate to have you sitting around the station platform, tired outside and hungry inside; but truly, Aunt Margaret, we can't turn back now. I'm sure those gowns will be gone by to-morrow."

It was found that the next train for the city was not due till 2.10. So Cornelia and her aunt made themselves as comfortable as possible on the shady side of the hot platform.

"There's the train." Aunt Margaret suddenly started from the doze into which she had fallen.

"No," replied Cornelia, glancing at her watch, "it isn't time for our train yet. It must be one up from the beach. I'll just wander round and see. It will help pass the time."

With idle curiosity, Cornelia turned the corner of the platform. She came to a sudden stop, and would have fled only it was too late.

"Didn't expect the good luck to find you here." Stotesberry held out an eager hand. "Thought it wouldn't be till I got to the Belle-Coudaire."

"We always stop at the Aldine," replied Cornelia nervously.

Much to his relief, she took his proffered hand. He was grateful to her for giving him a chance to explain. While he hesitated just how to begin, Cornelia broke the awkward silence.

"We are on our way to the city. We left rather suddenly. Aunt Margaret saw an exceptional bargain in this morning's paper."

"That will do for an excuse for Aunt Margaret," replied Stotesberry. "As for you, Cornelia, it would have saved you all this hot trip if you had only taken time to notice the date."

"But that's just it." Cornelia seemed glad to be able to speak frankly. "You see, it said to-day. But, Grant, how did you happen to guess why I am going up?"

"It wasn't very hard."

"Truly I don't want the money," Cornelia hurried on. "If I get the $200 I'll give it

to the others. I just want the fun of winning it."

"What has all this to do with—" began Stotesberry, quite at sea.

"I suppose you think I'm a sneak and a coward and all sorts of things," Cornelia hurried on, "to have guessed the answer and gone off without telling the others. What did they all think when I left the porch so—so abruptly?"

A great wave of thankfulness came over Stotesberry as he dimly realized that Cornelia was ignorant of what his thoughts had been.

"While we were sitting around, working on the conundrum," Cornelia continued, "the answer came to me like a flash. To-day is the last day the contest is open, you know, so it was too late to send it by mail. It suddenly occurred to me to take it up myself. I didn't want to say anything to the others, in case I didn't win. If I did, I thought it would be such a jolly surprise."

Stotesberry agreed that it would. As the conviction grew that Cornelia was really ignorant of all that Carl Haverford matter, he would have been willing to agree to anything.

"I hurried in," Cornelia went on to explain, "and persuaded Aunt Margaret she wanted to do some shopping. I knew she would never go if she even guessed the errand. We sneaked out by the back door—I really felt like a thief in the night—jumped into the motor, and here we are. At least, I am. Aunt Margaret is doing her best at an afternoon nap on the other side of the station platform."

"But the letter—my letter with which you ran off?" Stotesberry ventured the question, wanting to make sure of his good luck.

"I have it all safe here." Cornelia patted her pocket. "Did you want it to answer, Grant? I hope it wasn't anything important?"

"Well, it was, rather," confessed Stotesberry. "Suppose, Cornelia, you give it to me. I'll make a presentable copy of your conundrum. It will save you valuable time when you get to the city."

With the letter at last safe in his pocket, Stotesberry sighed an exhausted sigh of relief and satisfaction.

"I say, Cornelia," he exclaimed, "the next time you elope, just take me. I promise to be lots more entertaining than a stupid, two-weeks'-old letter."

"Of course, I never thought of reading your private mail," rejoined Cornelia, "so you see, Grant, I can't say which would prove more entertaining, you or the letter."

Under Unknown Charges.

BY ORLANDO MOORE.

Trying Days for the Lawyer Whose Fiancee went Back on Him In Altogether Unaccountable Fashion.

JIM BLACK stepped out of the elevator, hat in hand, and watched the tall woman in mourning as she hurried through the lobby and passed out into the street. Then he turned into the breakfast-room and sat down at his table by the window.

"That's a funny deal," he said to himself, a puzzled smile hovering around the corners of his mouth. "I wonder whom she meant?"

The answer not being immediately forthcoming, he returned the good morning of the waiter and addressed himself to the iced grape-fruit which the latter set before him.

Young, with pleasing manners and an attractive personality, Jim Black seemed to have been especially favored by fortune. He had been born in a small New Hampshire town, where his father was the sole legal light; and Jim's tastes inclined in the direction of the same profession.

After a successful college and law-school career, he had come to New York and hung out his shingle. A comfortable income left him by his father, who had died when he was in his junior year at college, relieved him of those petty worries and vexations which so often dog the steps of the fledgling lawyer. Clients were not so very long in coming, and in three years he had built up a fairly lucrative practise, which was rapidly increasing.

His bachelor suite at the Huron apartment-hotel was comfortable—even luxurious. His acquaintances were multiplying with gratifying rapidity, and the few people in the city whom he really desired to call his friends were well worth knowing.

And Black acknowledged to himself that, since the month before, when the One Girl had consented to change her name from Florence Juddson to Florence Black some time during the next year, there was nothing more that he could reasonably wish for.

He lingered for some time over his breakfast, enjoying the cool breeze that swept through the southern window by which his little table stood, then strolled leisurely over to the Subway and caught an express for Wall Street.

The month being August and the day Saturday, there was little of importance to occupy him in the office. At a quarter to twelve he closed his desk, told the office-boy and stenographer they could leave for the day, and started back up-town.

At Spring Street the express came to an unexpected halt. A short circuit had temporarily stopped the traffic, and it was a good half-hour before the trouble was repaired and the train was able to proceed on its way. Black, glancing at his watch, frowned impatiently.

"Twenty minutes after twelve!" he commented. "And Florence hates to be kept waiting. I can see my finish."

He had promised to meet his *fiancée* at a certain restaurant for luncheon at twelve o'clock, and there seemed little prospect of his arriving before the half-hour after. He recalled with a grimace the slight unpleasantness which had succeeded his failure to keep a former appointment on time, and hoped the girl would recognize the fact that he could hardly be held responsible for short circuits in the Subway system.

The fact that there was no express station at Spring Street had prevented his getting out and walking across town to the Elevated, although he would have saved but little time, even had he done so.

He changed to a local at Fourteenth Street, and upon arriving at the Twenty-Third Street Station, hurried up the steps and over from Fourth Avenue to Broadway.

"Right at the foot of the stairs, by the palms," Florence had told him.

And to the foot of the stairs he went. But she was not there. He looked carefully all around the lobby; even went into the restaurant and peered about among the diners. Then he questioned the young woman at the telephone switchboard; but she could recall no one who answered the rather glowing description of the girl he had expected to meet.

"I suppose I'm in for it. She'll be as mad as a hatter," Black told himself with a sigh. "Now, a man would have called up the office when I didn't show up, and they would have told him—"

He checked himself suddenly, as he realized that there was no one at the office to answer the telephone; and even if there had been, that person could have supplied only the information that he had been gone since a quarter before twelve.

"Well, I'll have to take my medicine," he said. "Perhaps an extra large bunch of violets when we go to the theater this evening—or I might make it orchids."

He went back to the switchboard and gave the operator Miss Juddson's telephone number. After considerable delay he got the connection; but Miss Juddson was not at home, nor did the maid who answered the call expect her. She had gone out that morning with her mother about half past eight, saying that she would not be back until dinner-time. No; Mrs. Juddson had not returned, either.

Black was obliged to content himself with leaving a message to the effect that he had been detained on his way up-town, but that he would arrive at a quarter to eight this evening to escort Miss Juddson to the theater.

Then he partook of a hasty luncheon, and stopped at a florist's, to order a peace-offering sent to his *fiancée* in the shape of a very handsome bunch of orchids.

An exciting ball-game served as a diversion during the afternoon; and after dinner, at his hotel, he changed into evening clothes, entered a taxicab, and was driven to the Juddson home.

The butler opened the door in answer to his ring.

"Miss Juddson is not at home, sir," he informed Black.

"But she will be in shortly, will she not?" questioned the young man. "She was expecting me at a quarter to eight, and it is nearly that now."

"She is not at home, sir," repeated the man, "and she will not return until very late."

"Take my card to Mrs. Juddson, then," said Black, producing the pasteboard.

"Not at home, sir."

Thoroughly disgusted, Black went to the theater alone. His peace-offering had failed of its mission, then. Florence had been provoked with him, and this was her method of "getting square."

He reflected ruefully, as he gazed at the empty chair beside him, that the Subway de-

lay had been an expensive one for him. A wasted seat at the theater and a twenty-dollar bunch of unappreciated orchids were items that even a fairly prosperous lawyer could hardly afford to add to his expense budget every day in the week. Well, he would have to make his explanations in person, that was all.

Not unnaturally, he did not particularly enjoy the performance, and left early. He felt that Florence had carried her resentment over his non-appearance at the hour he had promised to meet her a trifle too far; and the fact that he had missed the engagement through no fault of his own did not serve to make him feel any better about it.

There appeared to be no particular reason why she should spoil his whole evening simply because he had failed to get to the restaurant as he had agreed.

He reached his hotel in a very bad humor, ran up the single flight of stairs leading to his apartment without waiting for the elevator, and nearly measured his length over a large box that had been propped up against his door. He picked it up, carried it inside, and fumbled for the electric-light switch. Then he closed and locked the door, and turned to make a closer inspection of the box.

It bore the name of a prominent florist; and, with a curious feeling of disquietude, he pulled off the cover. A mass of mauve and pink orchids lay before him, his own card on the top.

It was, without a shadow of doubt, the "peace-offering" he had sent to Florence Juddson that afternoon. And she had simply sent it back.

"Scorned and rejected!" murmured Black. "But I'm hanged if I think it's a nice thing for her to do," he added in exasperation. "She might have waited to hear what I had to say, instead of going off at half cock."

He removed his coat and hat, lighted a cigarette, and sat down to think the matter over.

Of course, there was something to be said for Florence. It was quite natural that she should be provoked at being kept waiting in a public place for half an hour or more, especially as she was always on time herself and expected others to be as prompt.

But there were a hundred things that might have happened to prevent a man from keeping an engagement on the dot, and she might have taken some of these into consideration and waited to hear the offender's version of the affair.

It was quite possible that she believed he had forgotten all about his engagement with her, only recollecting it when he had called her up; and that the message he had left with the maid had been only a hastily conceived excuse. In that case, she had probably determined to punish him by going out during the evening, and returning the expensive flowers, which, she had rightly conjectured, had been meant as a peace-offering.

Black decided to wait until the following afternoon, which would be Sunday, and then call and reason with the presumably irate young lady. He had no doubt that she would forgive him when she learned the reason for his delay, and be sorry for her hasty judgment.

Having reached this conclusion, Black threw away his cigarette and went to bed.

The next day was rainy and disagreeable, and Black reflected with satisfaction that Florence would hardly be likely to go out in such inclement weather. As he mounted the front steps early in the afternoon, he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Juddson's profile in the library window, silhouetted against the white background of a lace curtain.

"Miss Juddson, please," he said, as the butler opened the door.

"Not at home, sir."

"Mrs. Juddson, then."

"Not at home, sir."

"Come, Barnes; that's nonsense!" Black was decidedly provoked. "I just saw her in the window."

The butler's face was perfectly imperturbable as he repeated:

"Not at home, sir."

"Look here," said Black angrily, "you take my card to Mrs. Juddson, if you don't want to get into trouble. I—"

"I am instructed to say that the ladies are not at home, sir." The man drew back and made as if he were going to close the door.

"I don't care a whoop what you're instructed to say! You take that card in, and you do it now!"

Unintentionally, Black had raised his voice. While the butler stood hesitating, the library door opened, and a smartly coiffured gray head was thrust out.

"Barnes," called an acid voice, "tell that person that we do not care to receive him, and close the door."

Black took a hasty step forward.

"It's I—Jim—Mrs. Juddson," he called out. "This—this image has evidently mistaken me for some undesirable, and won't let me in."

The gray head was thrust a little farther

into the hall, and a pair of stony blue eyes met Black's without the slightest sign of recognition.

"You heard what I said, Barnes," said the sharp voice. And then the head was withdrawn, and the library door shut with a decisive bang.

Amazed and bewildered, almost stunned, Black stood for a moment staring dazedly at the spot where Mrs. Juddson's head had been.

"The ladies are not at home, sir," said the butler with exaggerated politeness, and Black fancied he detected a gleam of triumph in the man's eye.

Something akin to a grin were tugging at the corners of the thin mouth.

"Thank you," muttered Black stupidly, and half stumbled down the steps.

He had gone half a block before he remembered that he had neglected to raise his umbrella, and that the fine, drizzling rain that was falling would be hardly conducive to the welfare of his straw hat. Mechanically, he hoisted the umbrella and plodded through the puddles on his way down-town.

It was not exactly the day one would have selected for a stroll; but Black was in no mood to ride. He felt that he must walk, walk, walk, until he could in a measure collect his scattered senses and bridle the fierce rage that was seething within him.

It was bad enough to be refused admittance to his *fiancée's* home; it was worse to be made a laughing-stock before the servants. Simply because he had been unable to keep an appointment, he was treated like a book-agent at a house where he had been accustomed to receive every courtesy.

He could not doubt now that Florence had been at home the night before, and had simply refused to see him. He could not understand the petty meanness of a spirit that would carry resentment over a trifling offense to the extent of subjecting a man to the treatment he had received that afternoon —and that man her promised husband.

He had loved Florence Juddson deeply; had thought her the one woman in the world for him. But if she were that sort, he was well rid of her. He was glad that he had found her out in time. Married life would be unbearable if one were tied to a woman of such small caliber.

He would make no further overtures. If any olive branch were offered, it must come of her regard for him, had she taken this from her; and, smarting under the sting of that he would accept it, even if proffered.

His evening was not a pleasant one. In vain he sought to concentrate his thoughts on any other subject but his *fiancée* and her unjust condemnation of him. Half the night he tossed sleepless on his bed, his mind full of resentment and anger.

Could it be possible, he wondered, that the girl no longer cared for him? Had she mistaken a warm friendship for some stronger emotion, and, upon realizing the true state of her regard for him, had she taken this means to rid herself of a tie that was becoming irksome?

He sought to put the whole affair out of his mind, tried to tell himself that it was better to wait and let things take their course. But the attempt was a dismal failure.

Finally, he rose and wrote a short note to Florence, explaining the circumstances briefly; and stating that, so far as he could see, he had done nothing to deserve the attitude she had assumed toward him. Then he went back to bed and sank into an uneasy slumber.

At the office next morning he could not work. He was thoroughly upset and unstrung, and was so sharp with his stenographer over a trifling error she made in a brief he had dictated, that she burst into tears and resigned her position on the spot. Then he humbly begged her pardon; and five minutes later he was soundly rating the office-boy for forgetting to fill the ink-wells.

Nothing seemed to go right. It seemed as if a perverse fate had taken a hand in his affairs, determined to twist everything topsyturvy. Try as he would, Black could not regain his customary composure.

His love for Florence Juddson was very deeply rooted, and he could think of nothing but the events of the past two days, and wonder if she would answer his letter. He had been deeply hurt by Mrs. Juddson's action in ordering the butler to dismiss him and close the door; but the thought that Florence would connive at such a proceeding cut him to the quick.

She was sweet and gentle, certainly not the sort who would deliberately and of her own accord act as events had led him to believe she had done. It seemed incredible; he could not think it of her.

If he could only talk to her alone for a few moments, he felt that everything would be all right. Or she would understand when she read his letter.

But suppose she did not get it? Suppose her mother intercepted it? The glaring improbability of such a thing scarcely occurred to him. He was anxious to absolve Florence

of all blame, and Mrs. Juddson was the scapegoat ready to his hand.

Very likely Florence had talked with her mother about his failure to keep the appointment he had made for Saturday, and that lady had told her to have nothing more to do with a man who could not keep his engagements or send some word.

The idea once conceived, it became a certainty in his mind. Florence would never get that letter—her mother would not permit her to read it. He had quite made up his mind that Mrs. Juddson was at the bottom of the whole affair; and in his present wrought-up state he would hardly have acquitted her of any crime, short of murder.

The fact that he had always been on excellent terms with her, that she had approved his engagement to her daughter, and had always been wholly charming and agreeable to him, did not in the least mitigate matters in her favor. And, he argued, if she would intercept a letter, she would not stop at a telephone message. He must use a little strategy.

He called his stenographer, who had dried her eyes and gone back to her desk, and giving her the telephone number, instructed her to call up the Juddson house, get Florence on the wire, and then hand the receiver to him.

In a fever of impatience he waited until the girl got the connection, asked for Miss Juddson, and then pushed the instrument toward him and left the office.

"Florence, dear, it's Jim," he began.

There was an ominous stillness at the other end of the line.

"I'm awfully sorry about yesterday," he went on. "I simply couldn't get there on time. I started out all right, but there was a tie-up in the Subway, and I had to sit there for half an hour. Of course, you were not at the restaurant when I arrived; but I called you right up and did everything I could, under the circumstances. I hope you won't hold it against me, dear."

"I was not at the restaurant at all on Saturday, Mr. Black." The cold, even tones of the girl's voice seemed to strike a sudden chill to the young man's heart. "I learned only that morning of your perfidy—and naturally, I did not go to meet you. I am surprised that you should insist upon speaking with me, after both mama and I have shown as plainly as possible that we desire to have nothing further to do with you. I must ask that you cease annoying me."

"But, Florence, dear, I don't understand," broke in Black. "If you are not angry with me because I didn't get to meet you Saturday, what is the matter? What have I done? And what do you mean by my 'perfidy'?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean. You thought you could go on deceiving us all indefinitely—that we should never find you out. That simply because I have no father to protect me you could play your dastardly game without fear of detection or consequences."

"Why, great heavens, Florence, what *are* you driving at?" There was blank amazement in Black's voice. "Are you crazy, or am I?"

"No, I am not crazy," answered the girl, her voice quivering a little. "I wish I were. I am only too sane. But I think you must have been out of your mind. I tell you, I know *all*, everything. What your object has been, I can only guess. I have trusted you absolutely, thought you the best, most upright man in the world. And—oh, Jim, Jim, how could you, when I loved you so?"

Black heard her voice break in a sob.

"Oh, my dear girl," he cried earnestly, "I don't know what you mean. I haven't any idea. If I've offended or hurt you, I'm more sorry than I can possibly say. But I can't explain or do anything else until I know what you're accusing me of. Won't you let me see you—meet me somewhere, or let me come to the house and tell me—"

"I can never see you again," she interrupted tremulously. "Don't try to come here or write to me—it will be useless. And don't try to call me up on the telephone again. I must not talk to you. I have done wrong in speaking to you this afternoon. I promised mama I would not, under any circumstances; and I am breaking my word. But I did not know it was you on the wire."

"Why have you promised your mother you wouldn't talk to me?" cried Black miserably. "What have I done that she should exact such a promise from you? Have I hurt your feelings—"

"There is no use going into all this." The girl's voice was inexpressibly sad. "I mustn't talk to you any longer. Everything is over between us—everything—for ever. I have sent back your ring and your letters. You must have known how it would be if you were found out—and how could you expect anything else? You've not only hurt me, Jim; you've broken my heart."

"But how—"

"Oh, I am lowering myself in talking to you—in even permitting myself to listen to

your voice!" she cried. "But somehow, even when I think of the disgrace you would have brought upon me, I can't forget that I loved you. That is my only excuse. Good-by."

"But Florence!" he cried again; and then the click of the receiver told him that she had replaced it upon the hook.

He tried again and again to get the number, but received only the report "They don't answer" from Central. At last, discouraged and disheartened, he pushed the instrument from him and dropped his head in his hands.

What was this dreadful thing of which Florence Juddson and her mother accused him? What heinous crime had he committed? What deep game had he been playing? What deceit had he been practising?

He could recall no hidden secret in his past that, coming unexpectedly to light, would cause the Juddsons to cast him out of their lives as they had done. Florence had said that he would have brought disgrace upon them, that he had hurt her deeply, broken her heart. How? By what act?

His life had been singularly clean, as men's lives go. He did not drink to excess, smoked only in moderation, and had kept himself free from entanglements with women.

Indeed, until his meeting with Florence Juddson, he had never been on intimate terms with any woman in the city; and he could almost count his acquaintances among the feminine sex on the fingers of his hands.

There must be some mistake, some dreadful misunderstanding. Was it possible that some of his college escapades had been distorted and magnified until they assumed the proportions of dreadful deeds? Hardly.

Florence and he had often talked and laughed over many of his college pranks. He could remember nothing more awful than pasting the posters of a musical comedy on the chapel doors, or changing the signs of the barber and manicure, each for the other.

And while these things might not appear exactly commendable, they had happened years ago, and were at worst nothing more than youthful pranks. And yet, Florence had spoken as if she believed he had done something worthy of a scoundrel of the deepest dye; and her mother's action of the day before had certainly indicated that she shared the conviction.

But what could it be? Nothing in connection with his law practise, surely. He handled nothing but civil cases, and there had never been even the suggestion of a scandal about any of these.

No; it could only be that some distorted rumor had reached their ears, and they had been only too ready to give it credence. Yet Black could not imagine any one malicious enough to circulate stories about him.

He had made no enemies sufficiently vindictive to go out of their way to do him a mischief. Whatever the charge against him was, it must surely have a very insecure foundation.

His reverie was interrupted by the entrance of his stenographer, who had finished the brief he had dictated to her and was bringing it to him for revision.

But he felt that he could not give his attention to business; his mind was in far too chaotic a state. He put on his hat, told the young woman he would not return that day, and left the office.

On his way up-town, he fully determined to go immediately after luncheon to seek out Mrs. Juddson and demand an explanation from her. But at the door of the house he was met by the butler's imperturbable stare, and the reiterated statement:

"Not at home, sir."

All Black's threats and persuasions were in vain. The man would take neither his card nor a message. He was evidently acting on strict orders from the mistress of the establishment, and could be neither coerced nor cajoled into disregarding them.

At the telephone, Black met with the same rebuff. No one was at home, he was told, and the maid who answered the call refused to be drawn into conversation, simply hanging up the receiver and terminating the interview when the young man begged her to deliver a message to Florence for him. Evidently, he was *persona non grata* in the Juddson household, and the members of the latter were determined he should remain so.

Completely discouraged, Black returned to his rooms. On his desk he found a thick envelope, addressed to him in Florence's handwriting.

His heart leaped. She had sent him some message then. Eagerly, he tore the envelope open—and his own letter fell to the floor. It put the finishing touch to his unhappiness. She had not even read it—simply sent it back unopened, without a word.

He had been condemned unheard, without even a chance to justify himself, on a charge of which he was wholly and entirely ignorant.

All that night and the next day, he sought for a solution to the problem, but could find none. He had done something to forfeit the love and esteem of his *fiancée* and her

mother, but he did not know what, and no one would tell him. He could think of nothing else; the matter preyed upon his mind to an alarming extent.

He stayed away from the office and shut himself up in his rooms, alone with his own miserable thoughts. He was quite aware that his business would probably suffer severely, but somehow it did not seem to matter. Nothing mattered greatly, except that the girl he loved above everything else in life, and of whose affection he had been sure until three days previously, had sent him away from her without a word or a reason.

She had sent him back his letters. She had even returned his ring; and it now lay, glittering brightly, on his dresser; a constant mocking reminder of his inexplicable disgrace.

He smoked considerably more than was good for him, became morose and disagreeable, spoke to no one unless he was absolutely obliged to, and ate his meals in silence and at irregular intervals.

But his character was cast in too strong a mold to permit this attitude to continue for very long. On the evening of the fourth day, he decided to pull himself together once and for all.

If Florence Juddson had cast him out of her life, then he would put her and all thoughts and memories of her out of his. She had declared that she loved him; but if she did, would she have refused to give him a chance to justify himself? Would she have believed any idle tale that had come to her ears, without giving him an opportunity to plead as to its truth or falsity? He thought not. She had said everything was at an end between them; that was her decision, not his. Very well; he would abide by it. He would not allow her to spoil his life.

He knew that he had done nothing to bring such condemnation upon him; had said nothing to any one. The Juddsons had been the only persons among his acquaintance who had treated him in any unusual manner.

"Let me see," he mused. "It was Saturday they found out what Florence characterized as my despicable conduct—my 'perfidy.' She was all right when I saw her Friday night. So it could not have been anything they thought I had done recently; for after I left the house Friday night, I never spoke to a soul until I had breakfast Saturday morning except—Great Heavens!"

He bounded suddenly to his feet, his eyes wide, his jaw dropped, his hands clenched at his sides. Then his fists slowly unclosed, the light died out of his face, and he heaved a deep sigh.

"No, it's impossible!" he lamented. "They don't know her, and, anyway they wouldn't have seen her. Or, if they had, and she had told them, they wouldn't have credited any such wild tale. Still—it's worth looking into. There might be some remote possibility— Oh, I'll do anything to lift this cursed shadow that is hanging over me."

He stepped to the telephone and took down the receiver.

"Give me Mrs. Freeman's apartment, please," he said to the operator.

"Hallo; Mrs. Freeman? This is Mr. Black. I hate to trouble you at such a time; but—but, it's a very vital matter to me. You recall meeting me in the elevator last Saturday morning?—You do?—You remember the conversation that took place between us? —Yes—Did you mention it to any one?— Only to Mrs. Juddson and her daughter?— Why—then *that* was it—Yes—Dreadful trouble; they won't have anything more to do with me—and Florence and I were to have been married—Oh, not at all—But you see, it was a mistake. There was no time for me to explain—Oh, you *did* find out about it— Why, they won't let me in or talk to me on the telephone or—or anything. Ah, *would* you? That would be more than kind. But I don't like to have you go to all that bother. I feel like a criminal annoying you about it, anyway—What! Your fault? Indeed, it was not! The blame was entirely mine— It's awfully good of you—Thank you, thank you Good-by."

He hung up the receiver, sat down in an armchair, and softly clapped his hands together. He had found the solution of the mystery! Mrs. Freeman would straighten it all out, and then—Oh, he must call up Florence at once!

He hurriedly gave Central the number; but his new-born hopes were dashed, when the maid's voice informed him that she had strict orders to convey no messages from Mr. Black. He tried to persuade her to call Florence, but she only rang off.

It seemed to Black that after his brief sojourn on the heights of elation, his descent into the depths of despair was deeper and darker than ever. It had not been Mrs. Freeman's mistake after all. If it had, Florence would have rung him up at once, or at least, answered his call. No, there was something else; and he might never know what it was.

Well, it was over. He would not think about it any more, he told himself. But in his heart, he knew that he *would* think of it—that he probably would think of little else, for long days and endless nights to come.

In the meantime, there was work for him to do. Since Florence has taken the initiative, he would follow her example.

Determinedly, he set about the task of getting together all the letters she had written him, all the little presents she had made him. It cost him a pang to take down her pictures from the dresser, where, framed in silver, they had been among his proudest possessions; but with set lips, he added them to the other articles. He wrapped them all up carefully in a bundle, sealed and addressed it, and started down to the desk to summon a messenger.

As he opened the door, there was a rush of slippered feet in the corridor, a flurry of skirts, a little cry—and Florence Juddson was in his arms, her head on his shoulder.

"Why—why—Florence—why—" he stuttered.

"Oh, Jim, Jim, how could you — how could you?" sobbed the girl. "How could you let us act this way when you knew it wasn't true?"

Dumfounded at the sudden turn of affairs, Black could only hold her close and try to soothe the storm of tears and sobs. He was not exactly certain how she got into his arms, but he knew that it was very good to have her there.

He became gradually aware that Mrs. Juddson had followed her daughter through the hall, and that she was gently pushing him, his arms still about the weeping girl, into his apartment. He backed along, drawing Florence with him, until Mrs. Juddson could close the door. Then he led Florence over to the couch in the sitting-room; drew her down beside him, and turned his face toward Mrs. Juddson, who pulled forward a large armchair and sank into it with a sigh.

"Well?" said Black inanely.

He realized that it was not a very profound observation, but he seemed totally incapable of further speech.

"Well, I don't know what you must think of us, Jim," said the lady. "It's all a dreadful, absurd mistake, of course — but — well, really, I don't know where to begin."

"Begin at the beginning," suggested Black.

He was quite ready to agree that the mistake was dreadful, but the absurdity of it was not as yet apparent.

"I suppose I'd better," agreed Mrs. Juddson. She drew a long breath. "You see, Jim, it was this way. Florence and I came down-town early on Saturday morning to go to the dressmaker's, for a final fitting on of the gown Florence was to wear that evening. She had set her heart on having it for that occasion, and there was very little time to finish it in. You remember you were to take her to the theater?"

Black nodded. He remembered quite well. He could shut his eyes and see the empty chair beside him now.

"Go on," he said softly.

"Well," continued the lady, "that accounted for our being down this way so early. We were obliged to pass the door here, and just as we did, Mrs. Freeman came out. She had just lost her husband, and we stopped to speak to her. I have known her for several years, long before she came to New York; but for some time I have not seen her, and did not know of Mr. Freeman's death until I saw it in the paper.

"She was telling us that every one in the hotel had been so nice to her—that they had all sent cards and flowers and shown her every possible attention. And then she said that she had just come down in the elevator with a Mr. Black, one of the guests in the house, *you*, Jim; so many people had written, she said, that she despaired of ever acknowledging all the cards and letters; and that she had seized the opportunity of thanking him for his card of sympathy and asking him to convey her appreciation—"

"Hold on!" shouted Black, springing to his feet and holding up both hands. "I know—I know! She told you I had a wife!"

"Exactly," assented Mrs. Juddson. "She said 'you and your good wife'—those were the very words she used. She wanted to know if I thought it a very dreadful thing for her to do—to ask you to speak to your wife for her. Of course, it was unconventional, but she had no heart to write. I told her there must be some mistake—that you were not married. But she said that she knew you were; your rooms were directly under hers. And she knew there was a Mrs. Black, because not only had she heard the clerk tell one of the hall-boys to carry some water up to Mrs. Black, as she was ill, but that when she asked you to thank your 'good wife' for her, you had replied: 'Thank you, I will.'"

Florence began to cry again, and Black sat hastily down on the sofa beside her.

"What I want to know is—why did you

admit having a wife when you haven't?" demanded Mrs. Juddson. "Or, at least, none that I *know* of?" she added as an afterthought.

"Why, you see," began Black awkwardly, "when I got into the elevator Saturday morning, I noticed that Mrs. Freeman was in a dreadful state. Any one could see with half an eye that she was all upset. And there was only an instant, because the car had only to run from the second floor to the ground. And I was so surprised at having a wife—er—thrust upon me, as it were, that I simply said the first thing that came into my head. She was half way through the lobby by the time I got it out, anyway. She astonished me so that I didn't know what to say; and, in the state she was in, I couldn't go into any long explanation, about my not having any better half. She was all ready to cry, and it would have taken just about two words to start her.

"And I hadn't sent any card at all, you see," he finished apologetically. "I felt a little guilty about it, because every one else in the house who knew her had. I didn't want her to know she was thanking the wrong person, and I'd have felt like a fool telling her she'd mistaken me for some one else."

"Now, you see what comes of accepting the credit for doing something you've left undone," observed Mrs. Juddson sagely. "Well, of course, when I heard that you were married, that you actually had a wife living right here in your apartments, the only thing I could do was to forbid you the house and command Florence to have nothing more to do with you. The boldness of your behavior disgusted me. A married man, who would deliberately engage himself to a young girl, was no fit associate for *my* daughter.

"And I knew that Florence cared a great deal for you and, you know, she is very tender-hearted. I was afraid that if you once talked to her, you would give some facile explanation of your dishonorable conduct, and that she would feel sorry for you, instead of condemning you utterly and putting you entirely out of her mind. I felt that it would not be well for her to extend any sympathy to such a cad as I believed you to be.

"The mistake might have gone on indefinitely, had Mrs. Freeman not called me up this evening. Almost the first thing she said was that she had discovered that you were not married at all! The Mrs. Black she had heard spoken of was the housekeeper, and you were a bachelor. She then told me you had called her up and asked her to speak to me. She was very sorry that she had gained a wrong impression of you, but she could not understand exactly why you had said you would convey her thanks to your wife when no such person existed.

"She said she had puzzled greatly over this, and the only explanation she could think of was that she had either mistaken entirely what you had said to her, which seemed impossible, as she had heard you distinctly, or that you had thought she meant the housekeeper, and had no time to correct the impression that she was your wife. She was very sorry for the misunderstanding, and hoped it had caused no trouble."

"No trouble," echoed Black; and from the girl beside him came a fresh burst of sobs.

"There, Florence, don't cry any more," said her mother. "You've done quite enough of that the last few days. I assure you, Jim, she was quite broken-hearted," she continued, turning to Black. "And I am greatly distressed over the way I have treated you—I am, indeed. As soon as Mrs. Freeman rang off, we came right down-town. Florence wouldn't wait a minute to telephone, or anything. She wanted to see you. It has been quite a dreadful time for both of us. But, after all," she added thoughtfully, "it's all right now. And it might have been very much worse."

"How could it have been any worse?" cried Florence, sitting suddenly up and making little dabs at her streaming eyes.

In one hand she held her handkerchief, while with the other she clasped Black's tightly, as if afraid that he were suddenly going to disappear.

"How could it have been any worse, mama?"

"Why," said Mrs. Juddson the practical, "it might have been true!"

BETWEEN.

LIFE means to us a thousand different things;
The highest meaning is the one we miss;
And yet, a warning voice unceasing sings,
"Life is eternity's parenthesis."

Grace H. Boutelle.

A THIRD-ACT MYSTERY.

BY GEORGE STILLWELL.

Why the Leading Man Collapsed at Precisely the Same Point in the Play Night After Night.

ON three nights in succession the leading man had fallen unconscious to the stage just as he reached that part of the play. It came as he spoke the last word of his big speech.

Suddenly, and without premonition. No one had touched him, and there was nothing in his physical condition to account for the strange collapse.

The first time he had thus dropped, an eminent physician who chanced to be in the audience hurried back to the stage, and, after making an examination, declared that there was absolutely no organic ailment. Heart and lungs were normal, although temporarily idle.

It was as if a perfect-working clock had been stopped by some one grasping the pendulum. The wheels were all in good order, the mainspring strongly resilent, the levers accurately balanced. Yet the timepiece had stopped.

Moreover, it had done so at exactly the same period in the play on three nights, one after the other.

This was the third time.

"It's a good thing it happens at the very end of the third act," remarked Gil Barry, the stage-manager.

The "heavy man," Huntley Towner, who was gazing curiously at the still form, lying face upward, across the carpet, its head only a few feet from the curtain, nodded with a cynical smile.

"Yes, Monty Crown is always considerate. He wouldn't have spoiled Miss Annerton's scene even to indulge in his regular trance."

Laura Annerton, the leading lady, holding a futile vinaigrette to the nostrils of the unconscious man, looked up indignantly.

"That's the cruelest speech I ever heard, Mr. Towner," she flashed. "You seem to have forgotten the curtain is down."

"What has the curtain to do with it?" was his rejoinder, his teeth gritting savagely, although the cynical smile still curled his sensually heavy lips.

"Only that, when it is down, you might stop being a villain, and become a gentleman instead."

"Wow! That's a hot one!" commented Dan Murphy, who was helping to "strike" the dining-room scene, preparatory to "setting" the garden for the fourth and last act. "Did yer hear that, Props?"

"Here, Dallas, help me carry Mr. Crown into his dressing-room," ordered the stage-manager.

Abe Dallas, the property-man, who was carrying off a tray of bottles and glasses used in the act just finished, put them down, and grumbled under his breath that he was in the theater to handle "props," not to lift actors. He obeyed, nevertheless; and, as on the two preceding nights, Montague Crown, the leading man, was carried into his dressing-room and laid on an improvised couch of two trunks and a chair, the whole cushioned with portières and overcoats.

The removal had been supervised by Dr. Robert Wellesley, who had spent the evening on the stage at Montague Crown's request. The two had been classmates at Ann Arbor University; and now, in New York, were as nearly chums as two very busy young men, in entirely different professions, could be.

So, when the young doctor had heard of Montague's peculiar illness on the stage two nights before, he had offered his services to his friend, and now was doing all he could to bring him back to a knowledge of this world and its doings.

Montague Crown was beginning to understand things, but was still lying on the trunks, ten minutes later, when the stage-manager bustled in and asked perfunctorily:

"How is he, doc? Can't go on for this act, can he?"

"That would be impossible, Mr. Barry."

"That's what I thought. Well, I've got his understudy ready. He looks so much like Monty the audience can't tell the difference. Luckily, it's a dark scene. There's nothing much in it except the fight with the 'heavy.'

Hardly any talking, so the voice won't give it away. How soon will you have Monty on his feet?"

"He won't be able to move for at least fifteen or twenty minutes, and he'll be shaky for an hour afterward. That was the case last night, as I saw for myself."

"So it was the night before, when we brought Dr. Lambert back to look at him. It's a curious business, isn't it? What do you think the trouble really is?"

"It may proceed from half a dozen causes," answered Wellesley with professional deliberation.

"Sure! I know that. But what are some of them?"

"Weakness of the heart valves, or—"

"He hasn't any such weakness," interrupted Barry. "Dr. Lambert was positive about that."

"Or he may have swallowed or inhaled something poisonous."

"Impossible!"

"Doesn't he drink some stage wine in the third act?"

"It's only ginger ale. There's no harm in that."

"How do you know?"

"Because it is the imported kind, with the cork wired down, and it isn't opened until just as it is served in the scene as champagne."

"Who opens it?"

"I do, generally. Besides, Monty isn't the only person who drinks it. Other people in the cast take as much as he does, and it doesn't hurt them."

"Who are they?"

"Miss Annerton, the leading lady; Miss Young, the *ingénue;* Huntley Towner, the villain of the play, and two or three more."

Wellesley had been holding the left wrist of the leading man, his eyes fixed upon the drawn face, ghastly behind the vermilion of the "make-up."

"He's getting better, Mr. Barry."

"Good! I leave him in your hands," replied the stage-manager briskly, as he hustled out of the room.

The next moment Wellesley heard his sharp order, "Fourth act! Clear the stage!" followed by the *ting!* of the bell and the long "swish" as the curtain swept upward.

"How is he now?" inquired a gentle voice.

Before the doctor could answer, Montague Crown spoke for himself, in tones which he strove heroically to make firm:

"I'm all right, Laura. I'm going on in this act."

He tried to get up, and threw out his hands vaguely, seeking something to aid him.

"Keep quiet, Monty," said Wellesley.

"But I heard Barry call the fourth act. Lend me a hand, won't you?"

He struggled to a sitting posture. Then he fell weakly into the arms of his chum.

"Oh, doctor! Is he worse than he was last night?" cried the girl anxiously.

"Miss Annerton, your cue will come in a minute. "You'd better hurry," interrupted a hard voice.

It was Huntley Towner. He had slipped up behind the girl, and now, seizing her elbow, pulled her away playfully. But it was the playfulness of a beast of prey, and Laura shook herself free.

"I'll walk by myself, Mr. Towner," she said.

They disappeared from the door together, and Montague Crown, trembling with jealousy and physical weakness, whispered:

"Bob! Did you see that?"

"I saw that Miss Annerton did not thank him for his warning," returned Wellesley lightly.

"He's always forcing himself on her like that."

"Is he? Well, you needn't care, I'm sure, judging by the way she snubbed him."

"Towner doesn't care much for me."

"Because Miss Annerton likes you, I suppose?"

"I don't know whether she does."

"Don't be an ass."

Montague Crown looked sharply into the face of his chum.

"What do you think about it, Bob?"

"Why, I should say, without question, that—"

"I don't mind confessing to you," went on Montague feverishly, "that I'm going to marry Miss Annerton, if she'll have me. But whether she—"

"The trouble with you actors is, you get so used to the business of love-making on the stage that you don't know the real thing when it comes along."

"That may be."

"May be? It is," rejoined Wellesley warmly. "Here's Miss Annerton letting everybody into the secret of her regard for you—"

"Why, she hasn't said—"

"Of course not. But she can't help showing how she feels whenever she looks at you. Among others who have noticed it is this villain of yours, Towner. He's in love with Miss Annerton."

"Rot!" interjected Montague.

"Yes, I think it is, so far as his hopes of winning her are concerned. But he wants her, and he wants her badly."

Montague Crown let his feet drop to the floor. Standing upright, one hand resting on Wellesley's shoulder, he glared through the half-open dressing-room to the stage beyond.

"Look here, Bob," he said earnestly. "I'd kill Huntley Towner before he should have her."

"Ye-es," drawled Wellesley, with a thoughtful smile, "and I'll bet he feels just that way toward you. Now, these sudden illnesses of yours have to be explained on some theory, and mine is that it's the work of an enemy."

"How?"

"That I don't know yet. But," he added confidently, "I will."

"I don't see how an enemy could bring on these fainting-spells, or whatever they are, without my knowing it."

"Have you ever had a quarrel with Towner?"

"No. But we are not intimate. I haven't known him long. Met him first when we began rehearsals of this piece. That's about two months ago. We didn't take to each other, and before we'd been rehearsing a week I had to ask him not to be so rough in our fight in the last act."

"What did he say?"

"Grumbled something about having to follow the 'business' of his part, but he'd try not to hurt me. I didn't like the sneering way he said it, so the next day when we rehearsed the fight I slammed him all over the stage."

"Good! Fine!" chuckled Wellesley.

"Yes. Well, of course he came back at me. The fight was so hot on the opening night that all the critics praised it for its realism. It's been realistic every night since—up to the time that I began to go to pieces at the end of the third act. My understudy doesn't work any harder than he can help, and I'm told Towner doesn't press him."

For a few minutes Wellesley was silent, while Crown, still weak, lay on his couch, watching him.

"You haven't any other enemies in the company, have you, Monty?" asked the doctor at last.

"Not that I know of. I don't even call Towner one. We're simply not overfriendly, that's all."

The fourth act had been going steadily on during the talk between the two, and now the sound of stamping, thumping, and shouts by Towner and the leading man's understudy told that the fight was in progress. Soon the curtain fell; and Towner, still breathless, looked into the dressing-room.

"How's the patient, doctor?"

"Much better."

"Guess he's run down. You ought to prescribe a long rest for him."

"I will if I think it necessary," was Wellesley's short rejoinder.

Huntley Towner went on his way, and Wellesley, turning to Montague, said, with a wise nod:

"He wants you out of the piece so he can have a clear field with Miss Annerton. Don't let him have it."

"I won't. I hope I sha'n't have another of those attacks to-morrow night. I feel nearly all right now."

"There's something very queer about this whole affair, Monty, and I'm going to get to the bottom of it somehow. One big difficulty, from a medical point of view, is that there are no preliminary symptoms."

"I noticed that I became nervous as I approached the end of the third act to-night."

"Nervous, eh?"

"Yes, I had a feeling that I should drop some time before it happened."

"That sounds as if autosuggestion might have something to do with it."

"No fear of that," returned Montague, with a scornful laugh. "If there were any autosuggestion in the business, I should never give way, for I'm always telling myself that I won't, even while fearing that I shall."

"Well, there's no use in speculating any farther to-night, Monty. Your taxi is at the door. I'll take you home, and to-morrow we'll put on extra steam in trying to discover who or what is knocking you out."

They went away together, without encountering anybody as they crossed the stage except Dallas, the surly "props," who snarled at them for bumping into him in the gloom as he was carrying a pile of "grass-mats" to the property-room.

The next night Montague Crown was as well as ever. He appeared at the theater smiling, and declared that he felt more "fit" than he had for weeks.

Wellesley was with him, and the first thing the doctor did as he reached the stage was to ask Gil Barry to show him the two bottles of ginger-ale which were to be served as champagne in the third act.

"Here are the bottles, doc," replied Barry, leading Wellesley into his private office off the stage. "They are wired down, as you can see, and they won't be opened until just before they are required in the scene."

"Thanks," said the young doctor. "I'm going out front to watch the performance."

He slipped into a private box through the doorway from the stage, and seated himself where he could look at the actors and the audience with equal facility. He intended to be in the wings during the third act.

The first and second acts of "The Strong Hand" were played smoothly by the carefully chosen company. The piece was one of the season's hits, and every actor in the cast had been more or less commended by the critics. Montague Crown and Laura Annerton were both favorites, while Huntley Towner had gained a reputation for "heavy" parts, which he well maintained in his present work.

It was a modern play, exploiting fashionable life. In two of the acts the men were in evening dress, while the women wore astounding gowns, of Paris origin, with many jewels. Everything in the production bore the stamp of Broadway theatrical excellence.

"Now, Monty," said Wellesley, as he sat in the leading man's dressing-room at the end of the second act, "I have been talking to Mr. Barry about this queer sickness of yours, and I want you to try an experiment to-night."

"What is it?"

"When Miss Annerton has denounced the villain and turns to you for protection, you have a big speech directed toward him, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"And you speak it always in one position, leaning on the small table, with Miss Annerton clinging to you beseechingly, while Towner sits on the opposite side?"

"That's the way of it. You've watched that scene several times. It isn't necessary for me to tell you."

"I merely want to go over it with you, so that there shall be no mistake," explained Wellesley. "Because I have persuaded Mr. Barry to let you change the 'business,' as you actors call it, this evening."

"Why, how—" began Montague protestingly.

"That's all right," interrupted Barry, who had stepped into the room unobserved. "You and Miss Annerton change places with Towner. I've already told him."

"Are Miss Annerton and I to sit down?" asked Montague, in a tone which indicated that he was not pleased with the innovation. "I'm afraid it's going to muddle up the whole scene."

"No, it won't, if you do as I tell you. Towner will stand on the left side of the table, where you are usually, and you and Miss Annerton will be on the right. You won't be quite in the center of the stage that way, but pretty near it, and the effect would be bad."

"But there's no chair there for Towner," objected Montague.

"He won't need a chair. He'll stand up."

"Leaning over the table," put in Wellesley. "That's what I want."

"Yes, leaning over the table," assented Barry.

"So that he will be in exactly your usual place and attitude, Monty," added Wellesley.

"Yes, that's right. Have you got that, Montague?"

"I think so, Mr. Barry. But why can't we go on the stage and rehearse it? It won't take two minutes."

"All right," agreed Barry promptly.

Laura Annerton and Huntley Towner were already dressed for the act and on the stage. Montague Crown joined them; and in a few moments Gil Barry, with the skill of the experienced stage-manager, had made clear to them, by actual demonstration, what they were to do.

"Props" was moving the table a little nearer to the footlights.

"Get out of the way there, Dallas," ordered Barry sharply. "I thought you had this scene set long ago."

"So I had, but the table wasn't exactly where you told me to put it, and I didn't want no come-back," growled Dallas. "It was two inches out of the way. The table is so durned hefty, I always have trouble to get it just right."

"It's near enough. Get away."

"Aw! Go chase yerself!"

But "props" took care to utter this elegant bit of persiflage so softly that the stage-manager could not hear it.

In less than the two minutes Montague had said would be required, the new positions were rehearsed. Then Barry swept them all off the stage, so that he could "ring up."

The act opened with a number of men and women, in evening dress, on the scene. They were supposed to have just arrived in motor-cars for a dinner dance in the luxurious home

of *Mr.* and *Mrs. David Van Lyne.* There was a little general talk, and anteprandial refreshments were served. These refreshments included champagne.

The scene was a handsomely furnished room connecting with the apartment where the company would dine. Through a wide center doorway at the back could be seen the table ready set, when the *portières* were brushed aside, with carefully rehearsed carelessness, from time to time.

Wellesley stood by Barry as he opened the ginger-ale bottles and placed them on a tray. This tray the stage-manager kept in his hands while the liveried servant, who was to serve the supposed wine in the scene, took them and walked on at his cue.

Wellesley never took his eyes off the bottles. He saw the servant go to a buffet and fill some glasses with the ginger-ale, which he handed to certain characters, as his instructions demanded. Then Towner pushed the man aside.

"Ah!" muttered Wellesley to himself. "There's Towner pouring out some into two glasses. One of them he's giving to Monty, and he's drinking from the other himself."

In his excitement, the young doctor called out "Monty!" so loudly that Barry, who was by his side, caught his arm and fiercely whispered:

"S-sh! They'll hear you out front! What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing!" replied Wellesley resignedly. "It's too late anyhow. He's drunk the stuff now."

But something in another part of the stage which needed attention had caught the stage-manager's vigilant eye, and he had slipped away without hearing Wellesley's remark.

The action of "The Strong Hand" turned on the modern dramatist's favorite problem, the "everlasting triangle." The two men in it were *David Van Lyne,* the husband, represented by Montague Crown, and *Orden Kenwood,* the interloper, which was Huntley Towner's part. Laura Annerton was the young wife, *Alice Van Lyne.*

The story was a clear one. The audience had seen *Orden Kenwood* endeavoring to force his attentions on *Alice Van Lyne* from the beginning of the play. She had repulsed him consistently. At last, in desperation, she had threatened to tell her husband, and *Kenwood* knew she would do it if he went too far. So, with the diabolical ingenuity of the average stage villain, he contrived to make *David Van Lyne* jealous—not of himself, but of *Alice.*

This was the state of things when the third act opened. The stage gradually emptied after the serving of the champagne and general chat. The *ingénue* and juvenile had a comedy love-scene. Then they followed the others off the scene.

Alice enters alone. A moment later *Kenwood* strolls on. He tells her he loves her. There is a short, violent scene, and she is about to go. He stops her and takes her in his arms. She, half fainting, clings to him to save herself from falling. *David* comes on, sees his wife holding tightly to *Kenwood,* and believes she has thus herself furnished proof of her infidelity.

She protests her innocence wildly, but *David* does not heed her. *Alice* continues to assert that she is the victim of a horrible mistake, and denounces *Kenwood.* He only smiles sardonically until *David,* still convinced that his wife is false, but chivalrously determined to stand by her nevertheless, turns on *Kenwood* and fairly crushes him under a storm of invective.

It was at the end of this fiery denunciation that Montague Crown had crumpled up, senseless, on each of the three nights. Now, here was the speech again.

Would he succumb once more to this strange influence, so inexplicable and so overwhelming? Truth to tell, he never thought of it now that he was approaching his big moment in the play. He enjoyed his work too much to think of anything else. For this well-written arraignment of *Orden Kenwood* was a splendid example of what actors call a "reading speech," abounding in opportunity for rhetorical effect, but demanding power and skill in the actor to do it justice.

Wellesley and Harry were in the wings, as near to Montague Crown as they could go without being seen by the audience, when he began to hurl his scathing oratory at Huntley Towner.

"He looks a little awkward on that side of the table," whispered Barry to the young doctor.

"That's because you are used to seeing him on the other. Towner is exactly where Monty generally stands, isn't he?"

"Yes, and leaning over the table just as Montague always has done till to-night. He's standing straight up now, and I think maybe the speech goes better that way. Well, I only hope he'll get through without keeling over this time."

Both looked anxiously at the leading man as the rounded sentences, assiduously polished by the author in many a weary hour in his

study, rolled forth in the rich, well-trained tones of the actor, while Towner, as if the words were actual blows, cowered lower and lower.

It was a strong scene. There could be no question about that. Not a sound came from the audience, although the house was packed. The strained attention of more than two thousand people, as they followed every word and movement on the stage, seemed to engender an electric current which could be felt by the doctor and stage-manager in the wings, as well as by the actors before the footlights. The tension was almost painful.

Suddenly, Wellesley, who had been peeping at the audience through a half-open door in the "box set," whispered to Barry, excitedly:

"Look! Look! That man in the fourth row. Look at his eyes. See how they change color. And he's staring straight at Monty."

"So are all the others in the house, for that matter," answered Barry. "Still, there *is* something strange in that man's eyes. I've seen them before. He's been coming here every night this week."

"He has? What for?"

"To see the play. Likes it, I guess," was Barry's indifferent response. "That's nothing. I've seen lots of 'em come night after night, in the course of my experience, especially to a musical show."

"But this is a drama."

"Well, some men are stuck on singing, dancing, and chorus girls, and others fall for a good strong play. It's all a matter of taste."

Gil Barry had been in the theatrical business too long to be astonished at any vagaries on the part of the public. He shared the opinion of many of his profession that you can find more cranks in a theater auditorium than anywhere else in the world outside of a madhouse.

"Don't think that fellow, with the curious eyes, has anything to do with Monty's falling senseless every night, do you?" said Wellesley in a thoughtful whisper.

"Lord! No! Hypnotism and that kind of thing cuts no ice with me. You don't think it's that with Montague, eh, doc?"

"No; but you never can tell."

"Look out! Montague will be through with that yard of cackle of his in a few moments. Then we shall see what we shall see," observed Barry, abruptly changing the subject, and, as he would have said himself, chucking the man and his staring eyes into the discard.

Montague was nearing the end of his big speech, and Wellesley also dropped the goggling stranger from his mind, to watch closely his chum as he drew toward the fateful moment.

In a few seconds they would know whether he was to sink to the floor unconscious, as he had done three times before just as the curtain fell.

The conditions were practically the same as they had been on the three preceding nights. With the exception that he was on the right of the table, instead of on the left, as had been the case heretofore, nothing was different.

The same scenery and "props" were used. The same people were around him. He was speaking the same words, with the same intonation, for he had laboriously studied the speech at rehearsals, and had decided just where he would place each inflection, make each pause, and drive each sentence home with extra power.

If the thing that had happened to him three times was due in any way to his environment, it should come again now.

What Wellesley's idea was in causing Montague Crown to stand on the right side of the table to-night, instead of the left, he had not said. Neither Montague nor any of the other actors had had an opportunity to ask, and Barry didn't care.

"Now he's winding up, doc," whispered the stage-manager. "Look out for him. Miss Annerton is ready to catch him when he goes down. She can break his fall a little, anyhow."

Matter-of-fact was Gil Barry. He never "lost his head." That was one reason he could handle a stage "mob" better than any other "producer" along Broadway.

Montague had reached the final sentence, and he delivered it in ringing tones. It ran thus:

"Now, Orden Kenwood, I know you for what you are, and you can no more escape punishment than can the felon in the death-chair as a thousand volts tear through his quivering body."

At the last word, it came! But—not what was expected.

Montague Crown was still erect, in the attitude in which he had finished his denunciation. His feet were firmly braced, his warning finger extended, his eyes blazing with righteous anger.

And, on the other side of the table, Huntley Towner had gone down in an unconscious heap, just as Montague Crown had on three successive nights previously.

The curtain fell, as it always did at the end of the hero's big speech, and Wellesley rushed to the side of the senseless, rigid form of Towner.

"It's just the same thing as you had, Monty," said the doctor, looking up, with his fingers pressed on Towner's pulseless wrist. "The same sickness, and obviously from the same cause."

"But what is the cause?"

To Montague's astonishment, Wellesley leaped to his feet and thundered:

"Let that table alone!"

Dallas, the property-man, was stooping at the side of the table, close to the unconscious Towner, and was busily turning a thumb-screw at the bottom of one of the heavy legs.

"What for? Who are you, giving orders?" snarled Dallas. "I've got to do my work."

"Let it alone, I tell you!"

"Aw! Do something for this guy lying here, and keep away from me."

Thus saying, the surly Dallas turned to his thumb-screw again, as if the argument made him tired.

But Wellesley was not to be repulsed in this off-hand manner. He flew at the stooping property-man, knocked him over with a vigorous shove, and felt at the back of the table-leg where Dallas had been twisting the thumb-screw.

"I thought so!" shouted the young doctor. "Mr. Barry!"

"What is it?" responded the stage-manager, bustling up to the table. "Hallo, Dallas! What are you sprawling around there for? Clear the stage! Don't you know there's another act?"

The property-man, slowly getting up, was livid with rage.

"It's that there doctor!" he spluttered. "He's interfering. He wouldn't let me clear my stuff away."

Three of the scene-shifters, technically known as "grips," who were about to carry Towner to Montague Crown's dressing-room —it being nearer than his own—stopped, with the unconscious man in their arms, to enjoy the altercation.

"Get on, you fellows!" was Barry's curt order. "What's it all about, doc?"

"I think I've found out why Mr. Crown has been dropping senseless every night until now, and why Mr. Towner was the victim this time."

"Good Lord, Bob!" ejaculated Montague. "Is that so?"

Laura Annerton bent forward anxiously to hear what Wellesley would say.

"I'll tell you in a few moments, if Mr. Barry will help me."

"Of course I'll help you. But I must have the stage cleared. Get to work there, Dallas!"

The "grips" and carpenters had taken away the walls of the third act room, and the stage was rapidly assuming the aspect of a garden. Dallas's assistant had removed everything coming under the denomination of "properties" except the heavy table.

"Take that table away, quick!" sang out Barry.

Dallas and his man lifted the table together, and Wellesley pounced upon the spot where the leg with the thumb-screw had been. He pointed to a round hole in the stage, something more than one inch in diameter.

"What's this, Mr. Barry?" asked Wellesley.

"That hole? Oh, you'll find a dozen of those in different parts of the stage. They've been used in putting on set pieces at various times — practical trees, fountains, and such like. They're in all stages after they've been used a while."

"I see. Will you go down under the stage with me? I want to look at something."

"Sure I will, if you like. My assistant will ring up for the last act. Come on."

Down they went into the gloomy, dusty region below the stage, faintly illuminated by incandescent lights here and there, until, at Wellesley's request, Barry placed himself directly beneath the spot where the table stood in the third act.

"Look, Mr. Barry! Who's that?

Wellesley had seen a man slipping furtively around the uprights of a "vampire trap" in the shadows. He had noticed also that the man was hugging a glass jar to himself with both hands.

It was Dallas, the property-man!

With a bound, Wellesley was upon him and had wrenched the glass jar away. As he did so, it was revealed that a long rubber tube, with a brass valve at the top, was dangling from the metal stopper of the vessel.

One hasty glance at the jar and a long sniff at the tube were enough for the young doctor.

"Here's the secret of Montague Crown's collapse every night, Mr. Barry," he said

quietly. "But don't you let that fellow get away."

Dallas tossed his head defiantly.

"Oh, I'm not going," he growled. "What's more, now that you have the goods on me, I'll tell you all about it. I don't care, anyhow."

"You might as well tell us, because this jar tells me the story," observed Wellesley, still sniffing at the tube.

"Yes? Well, I fixed up a contraption, with a rubber tube which I ran through a hole in the stage and up by the side of the table-leg to another smaller hole in the top of the table. There's always a lace cover on the table, and that hid the hole there."

"But what was the tube for?" interrupted Barry.

"The stuff in the jar is dope of the wickedest kind. I've used it in experiments at the technical school I used to go to, and I know all about it. Though it's so almighty strong, you can regulate it to a hair if you know how to do it. My old professor could do it, and I picked it up from him. He used to say I was the wisest guy in his class. The way I did it here was with that brass valve on the end of the tube, where it screws to the other tube I ran up the table-leg. That tube is there now. You'll find it if you look for it."

"How did you work it?" asked the stage-manager, deeply interested.

"I came down here and listened through holes in the stage till Mr. Crown got to the end of that big speech. Then I turned on the gas for a few seconds. The stuff ran up the tube, through the table and lace cover, and caught him square in the face as he leaned over. It was just a thin stream of vapor, but as deadly as a poisoned bullet—for a while. As soon as he dropped I turned it off, rushed up the stairs, and then, the curtain being down by that time, disconnected the valve from the upper tube by turning the thumb-screw. I kept the jar hid in the property-room."

"It could be done," remarked Wellesley, nodding to Barry. "To-night, you see, Towner was in Monty's place, and got the vapor instead. I suspected something of the kind, though I didn't know of course just what was being done. But that was why I had them change places to-night."

"I didn't know it under the stage, or I wouldn't have done it. I haven't anything against Towner."

"You rascal! Why did you want to hurt Mr. Crown?" demanded Barry.

"I meant to drive him out of the theater. That's why," replied Dallas. "Laura Annerton and me came from the same town. We used to go to school together when we was kids. Before she was an actress she and me was sweethearts. I got her on the stage. She soon made a hit. Then she wouldn't take no more notice of me. I'm only a stage-hand, don't you see. So we never spoke. The next thing I knew she got stuck on this Montague Crown. Can't you understand all this?"

"I can," said Wellesley softly, and not without sympathy.

"Say, Bob, what is that gas the fellow used?" asked Montague Crown, an hour later, when the chums were talking it over.

"I can't tell you that, Monty. It is so deadly an agent that it ought never to be talked about outside of a laboratory."

"Yet this Dallas managed to get some."

"He's studied chemistry, and he knows more about wicked gases and liquids than the average man," replied Wellesley. "As for getting hold of it, an experienced 'props' can procure anything he wants if he makes up his mind to it. You know that. It's one of the curious things about property-men."

FALSE PITY.

A WOUNDED hare, a homeless cat,
  Her very tender pity tries;
With bird she would not deck her hat,
  'Twould bring the tears unto her eyes.

She would not harm a fly. I know
  A hunted deer would make her mourn,
But as for me who love her so,
  Melissa kills me with her scorn.

Nathan M. Levy.

That Bewitched Diamond.

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

The Persistently Disappearing Stone that Haunted this Detective Until He Finally Tracked the Mystery Down.

BUSINESS had been more or less dull, and it was something of a relief when my private secretary handed me a letter from Mr. Moses Bendelbauer, a letter short and to the point. Mr. Bendelbauer wished to have a confidential chat with me at once.

I had had business dealings with Bendelbauer before. I knew the man's character well.

He was a dry-goods merchant, reputed to be very wealthy, and also very close-fisted. But, with all his penuriousness, Bendelbauer had one hobby. It was diamonds.

If he was reduced to his last five-hundred-dollar bill, he would go hungry and buy a diamond. He wore diamond rings, diamond shirt-studs, a watch-charm set with diamonds—in fact, he wore diamonds wherever a man could wear them so they could be seen. I shudder to think what Bendelbauer would have done with diamonds had he been born a woman.

"I suppose this is a case of diamond stealing," I remarked to my private secretary.

She nodded and grinned. She knew of this foible of Bendelbauer.

I found Bendelbauer in his private office, which was on the second floor of his great dry-goods emporium.

"Ah, Barbone! You are prompt," he said, extending his hand. "I am glad you were not too busy to come to me at once. It is a very mysterious case."

He shoved a box of cigars toward me, and I lit one.

"Fire away, Mr. Bendelbauer," and I settled myself comfortably in an armchair.

I knew Bendelbauer took considerable time to tell the story of a loss.

"Barbone," he began in a voice that betokened the proximity of tears, "I am greatly puzzled. This is a matter that will tax your detective genius to the utmost. And you know I consider you the greatest detective in the world."

I knew I wasn't, but I bowed my thanks just the same.

"You remember," continued Bendelbauer, "when you worked up that other case for me—you remember my private safe?"

"I do. It is a time-lock, with a peculiar combination."

"Exactly. And nobody knows that combination but myself and my private secretary, Miss Aarons, who is—I'll swear—an honest young woman."

"I'm sure of it," I said. "I followed her in the other affair and proved it. Get to the case in hand."

Bendelbauer slipped down in his chair, put one leg across the other, puffed smoke a minute, and then went on:

"You know, Barbone, that I have a great penchant for diamonds. I have some of the finest jewels in New York. My wife has more. Well, even so, I cannot resist the temptation to buy diamonds if they are good—and cheap. A week ago—to be exact, it was on the eighth of this month, August—a man came to me and in a furtive, secret sort of way informed me that he had a diamond I would surely want. I had never seen the man before.

"I was shy at first. But he told a straight enough story. He said he had arrived but a short time ago from Amsterdam—Holland, not the town in New York State—and that in Amsterdam he had a brother who was in the diamond business. He had brought a few good stones to this country, and admitted, after pledging me to secrecy, that he had smuggled them in without paying duty.

"You know, a diamond crank doesn't care whether a diamond is smuggled in or not, so long as he can get a fine stone at a bargain.

"Well, this man, who said his name was Phlander, showed me a diamond. It was certainly a beauty. It was four carats, and examine it as I would, I could find not a single flaw. It was a sparkler—a headlight. I wanted it.

"I bargained with him for half an hour. It is not necessary for me to give in detail all our conversation. The end of it was that I paid Phlander one thousand dollars, and the gem was mine.

"My idea was to have it set in a brooch, and to give it to my niece as a wedding present. She is to be married next month.

"It was necessary for me to leave town for a week. You remember that the time-lock in my safe can be set for any number of days up to fourteen. It is a new patent—the most secure of all locks for safes.

"I placed this diamond in a small compartment in the safe, and set the lock for to-day, the fifteenth. I went to Chicago on business, and returned to New York late last night. This morning I reached the office at eight o'clock, but had to wait till nine before I could open the safe.

"When I opened it the diamond was gone."

Bendelbauer by this time was almost weeping.

"Gone!' Vanished into — what? Who could have opened a safe guarded by the newest time-lock and a difficult combination?"

"Did you examine the safe thoroughly? You might have forgotten in which compartment you put the diamond."

"The diamond was not in the safe. Look for yourself"

He turned the combination-wheel a few times and pulled open the safe-door. I pulled out drawer after drawer, but found no diamond.

In one drawer was a pile of bank-notes. I counted them. The aggregate amount was five thousand dollars.

"When did you put this money in here?" I asked.

"It *was* in there when I went away."

I stared at him.

"Do you mean to say that somebody stole a diamond worth one thousand dollars and left five thousand in cash?"

"That's just what somebody did. Either the thief was nervous and in a hurry, or was frightened off by a noise, or just wanted that diamond and nothing else."

"The latter is the most plausible theory. Do you suspect anybody?"

"What can I say in answer to that? Sadie Aarons alone knew the combination."

"But could she tamper with the time-lock?"

"I don't know. That's what gets on my nerves."

As a matter of fact, something had so evidently got on his nerves that I began to suspect Bendelbauer himself.

"Have you had any trouble with your niece?" I asked.

"Now, now! I know what you mean. But I swear, Barbone, I did not steal my own diamond. My niece knew nothing about it, so it was not necessary for me to steal it."

"Then I must drop my previous good opinion of Miss Aarons and watch her. Describe the diamond."

"It was a pure white stone, with sixty-four faces. Rose-cut."

"Describe the man."

"Tall, undoubtedly a foreigner, long hair; small, sharp eyes, a fluent tongue. He looked—he looked to me as though he might be a hypnotizer."

"He couldn't hypnotize a diamond out of a safe."

"But if he came here and saw Miss Aarons—"

"Go on with the description."

"He wore a straw hat of peculiar shape. It had a high crown and narrow brim. It was a dark-brown straw. He wore a light-blue sack coat, a white vest, and light-colored, striped trousers."

"Ought to be found, if I want him. I'll watch Miss Aarons first. She is, if I remember correctly, fond of jewelry."

"Very. Now, I want the thief caught. If I have a thief in my employ, I want to find him. And if my time-lock is no good, I want to know that. The loss of the thousand is, as you know, nothing to me. But I must know the truth."

"You shall."

I began at once. I had an assistant shadow Miss Aarons, a tall, good-looking, showy girl, while I made a tour of the various pawn-shops. I did not find a diamond of four carats and sixty-four facets, nor anything like it. I spent several days visiting all the jewelry-stores in New York. Nobody had offered such a diamond for sale.

While I was in the thick of it, I received a letter from a man named Willingman, in Brooklyn. I went to see him.

"You are the famous detective, Barbone," he said. "I have a case for you. In my library at home, I have a strong room built in the wall, with a combination lock. My wife and I alone know the combination. Several days ago—to be exact, on the tenth of this month, I purchased a very fine diamond from a foreigner, who said he had smuggled it from Holland. It was a beauty, four carats in weight, with sixty-four facets, rose-cut. I placed it in the strong room, and told my wife I would give it to our daughter on her twentieth birthday. The diamond is gone."

A most peculiar and uncanny feeling took possession of me.

"Describe the man."

He did so, and it was Bendelbauer's Phlander to a thread.

"Do you suspect your wife?" I inquired.

"What can I say? She is a good woman. Of course, like all other women, she loves jewelry."

"But would she steal from her daughter?"

"In fact, it is my daughter by a former wife."

"Where do you live?"

He told me.

"Describe your wife."

"A tall, slender blonde, great mass of hair all her own, walks with stately dignity—when she does walk—goes out in a victoria every afternoon."

"Any ill feeling between your wife and daughter?"

"I have thought so, but it is always veiled before me."

"I will have your wife watched. The possession of an unset diamond would not appeal to a woman. If she visits a jewelry-store I'll know what she is there for."

I shadowed Mrs. Willingman myself. On the second day she drove in her victoria to a well-known jeweler's in New York. I sauntered in from a taxicab in which I had been following her. I got near enough to hear every word she said.

She did not mention a diamond. She wanted to buy a chatelaine watch for her stepdaughter's twentieth birthday.

I was perplexed—nonplused.

I couldn't suspect both Bendelbauer and Willingman of stealing their own diamonds. And the fact that each had bought a diamond exactly like the other was a puzzle also. I knew it was a difficult matter to match diamonds of four carats.

I was in my office pondering over the thing when I received a letter from Albany.

"Mr. Barbone," it ran, "I have heard and read of you as a most successful detective. I wish you would come to me at once. I have sustained a loss which I cannot understand. It is a diamond robbery."

The name signed was James Showski.

I found Mr. Showski to be a rich Pole who did much traveling.

"The story is simple in the telling," he explained, "but not in the understanding. Some time ago—I forget just the exact date, but about two weeks ago—a foreign-appearing man, well-dressed, came to me, and said he understood I was a purchaser of fine diamonds, which is true. I love to handle them. I have a fine collection. Well, he showed me a beautiful diamond. It weighed four carats. It was a rose-cut stone."

"Sixty-four facets?" I asked.

"Exactly. How did you know?"

"You are the third man I know who owned and lost that same diamond. I'll tell you all about it. You paid a thousand dollars. You put it where you thought it would be safe—in your safe-deposit vault, was it? You are not in business, so I should say you put it in a safe-deposit vault."

"I did—I did."

"Did the man from whom you purchased the stone know that?"

"Why—yes. I had a quantity of cash in the vault, and he accompanied me there to get his thousand."

"He saw you put the diamond there, and also saw the money."

"True. But I took the rest of the money with me, and went to the St. Lawrence River. When I returned the diamond was gone."

"Have you spoken to the officials of the vault?"

"Yes. They know nothing about it. They even doubted my word."

"I would myself if two other men had not had practically the same experience. It is the rule to have two names attached to the ownership of a safety-deposit vault, and two keys. Who has the other key to yours?"

"My nephew, who is in the clothing business on State Street."

"Do you suspect him?"

"I taxed him with the theft. He swears he was not near the vault during my absence."

"You believe him?"

"Frankly, no. But what can I prove?"

"Well, we must get at this thing somehow. Describe the man."

He did, and I knew the description by heart. It was the same fellow.

"I'll have your nephew watched by an assistant," I said. "What's his name?"

"The same as mine—Showski."

I telegraphed for one of my best men, and put him on to the nephew. His report in two days was that young Showski seemed to be straight, and that he had not been to a pawn-shop nor jeweler's.

My cup was filled, however, when I received a letter from Poughkeepsie, from a woman, Mrs. Swatorby, telling in three pages how she had purchased a smuggled diamond from a foreign gentleman, paying a thousand dollars, and had laid it aside with two rubies intending to have a ring made and the three

stones set therein. By the time she got around to it the diamond was gone.

I went at once to see Mrs. Swatorby. I found her to be a flashy and somewhat coarse woman of middle age. I asked her but few questions. She had a jewel-case which was always kept in her dressing-room. Two maids had access to this. Both maids had been with her for years, and never before had one of them been subject to suspicion.

Her description of the man from whom she purchased the diamond tallied with what I had heard three times before. I dismissed the idea that either of the maids had taken the diamond.

Returning to my office in New York I sat down and smoked. I had learned some time before that I could study out a case better while smoking. Whether the tobacco stimulated my brain, or soothed me and staved off nervousness and the consequent brain muddle, I don't know.

But I began from the start—the case of Bendelbauer.

It was undoubtedly the same man who had sold the four missing diamonds. No four men could be found to answer the same description, tell practically the same story, and each have a diamond to sell.

No four diamonds so precisely alike could be found by scouring the country with a fine-toothed comb.

The truth, as it was clearly presented to my mind, was simple enough. The man was engaged in the lucrative business of selling a diamond for a thousand dollars, stealing it back, and selling it again.

How he managed to commit four seemingly impossible robberies was the problem I now had to work out. First, I must find the man.

Comparing the dates I knew, and the approximate dates of the sale of the diamond to Showski in Albany, and to Mrs. Swatorby in Poughkeepsie, I believed that he was now in New York.

I had learned that the diamond-merchant, who seemed to have only the one diamond to sell, stopped at Albany and Poughkeepsie at the best hotels. Possibly he did in New York.

I haunted every first-class hotel in New York. I found no trace of him. Then I began on the Subway and the Elevated and the ferries.

I employed extra men. I had a trusted man at every important Subway station, and men traveling north and south in the Elevated trains. I had a man at every ferry leaving New York, and three at the Grand Central Station.

A week passed. Then one afternoon Loomis, one of my regular men, came to me.

"I've located your man," he said calmly.

I leaped from my chair.

"Where is he?"

He mentioned a number on Madison Street.

I lost no time. I took him with me. My blood was at fever-heat. We hurried to Madison Street.

"He went in there," said Loomis, indicating a small, dingy brick house.

There was no evidence of life about the place. The shades that hung in the windows were dirty.

I did not go direct to the house. On the opposite side of Madison Street, on a corner, there was a liquor store. Loomis and I went in there, and stood peering through the filigree work at the top of a swinging door.

We remained there until nearly six o'clock.

"Here he is," said Loomis.

The man came from the basement. He started off at a brisk walk.

"You follow him," I directed. "Don't arrest him. Don't let him know you are trailing him. But don't let him get out of your view."

I waited till Loomis and his quarry were out of sight, and then I went to the little brick house. I rang the bell. Nobody came in response.

I tried the door. It was locked. I went to the basement door. That was locked. I rang the basement bell. Nobody came.

Evidently the diamond-merchant lived alone.

I found the regular policeman on post. It was an easy matter to introduce myself.

"Do you know anything about that little brick house and its occupant?" I asked him.

"Not much, Mr. Barbone. He's a queer card. He lives alone. Takes his meals at a restaurant. Has no business that I know about."

"Who does the housework?"

"The janitor's wife. You see the house is one of a row of six. They all belong to the same owner. He employs John Kelly to take care of them all, shovel snow in winter, sweep the sidewalk in summer, and all that. Mrs. Kelly has a key to them all."

He showed me where John Kelly lived. In ten minutes I had the key to the little brick house.

The place was poorly furnished. Yet the occupant lived at the best hotels when out

of town. I went through the rooms. There was nothing on the top floor nor the parlor floor that aided me any in my investigations.

I went to the basement.

The kitchen was fitted up as a laboratory. I judged more money had been spent on the furnishings of this room than on all the rest of the house.

There were all sorts of queerly shaped things. Twisted tubes, straight tubes, alcohol-lamps, charcoal-furnaces, bellows, long steel pliers, spoons, bottles of various liquids, powders, copper pans, fixings of various kinds, the use of which I did not know, and several retorts and receivers.

There was, even then, a slight odor of burning alcohol. I looked for the flame in vain. But at last I saw, hidden away behind a mass of apparently useless material, a steel ball suspended by a platinum wire over an alcohol flame.

I stood looking at this a moment and, turning accidentally, as I stepped on a piece of tubing, I espied a small note-book on the end of the work-bench.

I picked it up and opened it. It contained a list of names, with addresses and remarks. As for example:

"Moses Bendelbauer, Hebrew, Dry-goods merchant. Very rich. Very fond of display. Loves diamonds. Easy."

A black line was drawn through the name of Bendelbauer.

The next entry was that of Mr. Willingman of Brooklyn. A black line was drawn through that. Then followed Showski of Albany, and Mrs. Swatorby of Poughkeepsie. These were all scratched off.

The next name on the list was:

"Jacob Weisnanger, Broadway. Plenty of money. Stylish wife. Wife displays much jewelry. Good-natured."

I replaced the book where I found it, and went home.

The next morning I went to see Mr. Weisnanger.

"Do you know a man named Phlander?" I asked.

"I do not, Mr. Barbone."

I described the man accurately.

"Do you know, or have you ever seen such a man?"

"Never."

"Then he probably only knows you from report."

"If he knows me at all. What's up?"

"You'll know. I want to change names and places with you."

"For how long?" he asked in amazement.

"I don't know. This man is coming, I believe, to sell you a pure four-carat diamond for a thousand dollars. I want to buy that diamond myself."

"You wish to occupy this office? Want me to get out?"

"You will be at liberty to come back—after I secure this coveted prize."

"Is it the stone Bendelbauer lost?"

"Yes—or one like it."

"Oh, huh! I see. The place is yours."

"Have it understood that such a man is to be sent to me if he asks for you."

"Never fear, I shall reduce myself to the position of doorman. I'll know the man by your description."

I sat two days in Weisnanger's office, smoking. I had my lunch sent in at noon. On the third day the door opened and the diamond-man walked in.

He began glibly enough, speaking with a foreign accent that clearly was not assumed.

He told the same story of a smuggled diamond. I was all eagerness, of course.

"You zee," he said, taking the stone from a piece of soft white tissue paper, "eet iss vairy fine. Four garats. Sixty-four fazets. I sell heem for one t'ousan' dollar."

"It's a good stone, all right," I remarked. "Let me see it."

He handed me the diamond without any hesitation. I examined it.

"I think—yes—I am certain," I said, "that I have heard of this diamond. But I will take it."

He beamed with pleasure. I thrust my hand in my pocket as if to take out a check-book or money. Instead, I took out a revolver. He stared.

"Mr. Phlander, sit down," I commanded. "We will exchange jewelry for a time."

I clapped some handcuffs on him. I called a boy.

"Tell Mr. Weisnanger to come here, and bring me some kind of a tray or a clean saucer."

Weisnanger came in. So did the boy, with a small, silver-plated tray.

"Mr. Weisnanger," I said, "Mr. Phlander and I will occupy your office day and night for a time. There is a sofa here, on which Mr. Phlander may sleep. I shall not sleep. Mr. Phlander has sold this diamond four times, and each time, in some inexplicable way, it has disappeared from the possession of the purchaser. I have bought it now, and propose to protect it. Now, please give orders that not a soul except yourself shall

enter here. Have, in the morning, at noon, and at six o'clock at night, a hearty meal brought to the door for Mr. Phlander and myself."

"All right," said Weisnanger, completely mystified.

Phlander was white to the gills. He blustered. He threatened. He pleaded.

"I gif you zee stone an' one t'ousan' dollar, you let me go," he said finally.

I made no reply. I sat with my eyes glued to that sparkling diamond.

That day passed. We had our supper. I settled down, a pocket filled with cigars, for a long night of vigil. Under the electric lights the diamond on the tray gleamed and sent shafts of light from its surface.

Phlander went to sleep. I wanted to, but did not.

Morning came. The diamond took on its day hues. I watched all that day. Nobody came near me. Phlander could not get near the diamond without me knowing it.

Alongside the tray was my watch, open.

Twenty-four hours of vigil found the diamond intact and on the tray, and me very weary.

Forty-eight hours found everything the same, except that I was more weary, and Phlander almost in a state of collapse.

Another long night. The sparkle of the gem did not seem so brilliant under the electric lights. My weariness left me.

I sat watching that diamond, never shifting my gaze a hairbreadth. I could see at the same time my watch.

The night passed. Nothing had occurred, nobody had tried to go near the diamond. Morning came. The diamond had lost its brilliancy.

I sat there after our lunch. My watch showed me that seventy-one hours had passed since the diamond had come into my possession. I leaned my elbows on the desk and stared down at it. It was there. My watch ticked off the time till it was twenty-five minutes past two.

I was staring at the diamond. Suddenly there was a very slight sound from the tray—there was no diamond there.

"You've done pretty well, Phlander," I said. "Your mistake was in returning to New York to sell another. Now, if you can make them as perfect as that, why don't they last?"

He shivered.

"Eet cannot be done," he said. "Science haf tried to manufacture diamonds many years. A diamond can be made that *will* last. But eet iss not a pairfect stone. I haf discovered how to make what appear to be a pure diamond. Eet iss a secret of my own. But—when taken from ze retort an' exposed to ze air about seventy-two hours—oof! Eet disappear. Eet evaporate in ze air. What? Of course eet iss robbery. Nopody but you would discover. Some day I shall comblete my disgovery. I shall make goot diamonds zat last for all ze time like ze natural diamond."

"If you do, you'll do it in Sing Sing," I told him. "Come, Phlander, I'm sleepy. Let's take a walk."

The artificial-diamond industry received a setback in New York. Phlander received his sentence meekly. It was not a severe one, for there was an element of humor in the thing that appealed to everybody.

My interest in the matter ended when I received from Bendelbauer his check for my services. But he and the others were out the thousand dollars just the same.

DOBSON'S TROUSERS.

BY HOWARD P. ROCKEY.

The Awful Ordeal of a Young Man with an Important Engagement to Keep, and the Crowning Horror of the Thing.

DOBSON had been waiting nearly an hour for his trousers.

At first he sat patiently on the edge of the bed, smoking a cigarette. After fifteen minutes he moved over to the window, and sat looking down at the crowds strolling on the board-walk. At the end of half an hour he began pacing restlessly up and down the room.

Finally he went to the telephone, and took off the receiver. A young woman's voice answered from the exchange down-stairs.

"About an hour ago," said Dobson, "I gave to the bell-boy some clothing to be

pressed and mended. He promised to have it back in twenty minutes. It isn't here."

"Oh, yes," replied the voice. "I think your clothes are here in the office now. It is a dinner-jacket, isn't it?"

"It is not," said Dobson. "It—they are a pair of trousers."

"Oh!" said the young woman.

"Kindly have them sent up immediately," directed Dobson. "I wish to go out, and—"

"I will attend to it at once," said the young woman, and rang off.

Dobson resumed his seat at the window. It was now nearly four o'clock, and at that hour he had promised to call at a near-by hotel for Evelyn Forrest. In his haste to leave the city at noon, he had not been able to go home for a change of clothing, but had picked up a traveling-bag packed with a few necessaries. On his way to the station he had purchased some fresh linen, and just boarded his train as it started.

It had annoyed him that he must leave town so ill equipped, for he intended that evening asking Evelyn to marry him, providing he could get his courage up to the proper point.

Naturally, under such conditions, Dobson had wished to appear to the best possible advantage; but he had decided he would at least be presentable if he had his trousers pressed.

Consequently, upon reaching his room in the hotel, he had sent for a bell-boy, handed him the trousers, with instructions to hurry, and gave himself over to the delights of a cold bath.

Now, in order to save time, he completed his dressing, tied his tie neatly, and put on his coat and vest. Still the trousers did not arrive.

His watch pointed to twenty minutes after four—twenty minutes after the time he should have been with Evelyn.

Dobson swore.

He looked longingly out at the board-walk, grew wrathy as he thought of Evelyn waiting for him, and imagined the mood she would probably be in when he finally arrived.

Promptness was one thing she invariably demanded, and Dobson was always particular not to disappoint her.

There came a knock at the door, and Dobson opened it cautiously, sticking his head out.

A bell-boy stood in the hallway, empty-handed.

"Where are my trousers?" Dobson demanded.

"Indeed, boss, I can't find no trousers belongin' to you, sir," protested the boy.

"Can't find them!" Dobson shrieked. "You must find them! What did you do with them?"

"Nothing," said the boy. "I didn't see any trousers at all. You-all must have given them to Jim, and he's gone home now—won't be on duty till six o'clock to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" Dobson exclaimed. "Do you expect me to stay in this room until six o'clock to-morrow morning, waiting for that boy to come back with my trousers?"

"'Deed, boss, I don't know anything about those trousers," the youth insisted. "They don't anybody know anything about 'em down-stairs. Are you sure you had them when you came in?"

"Am I sure I had them—" Dobson paused and threw open the door. "Boy, do you suppose I came down here on the train and walked through the streets in this costume? Naturally, I did not. I am sure I had my trousers."

The boy grinned.

"Then they must be somewhere," he said.

"Doubtless," retorted Dobson. "The point is, however, that they are not here about my legs, as they should be."

"I'll try to find them, boss," said the boy.

"Try! You *must* find them at once!" insisted Dobson. "If you don't, I'll come down-stairs and—" He stopped and gazed ruefully down at his trouserless legs. "Boy, *please* find my trousers *now!*" he pleaded.

He closed the door, and sank upon the bed in his perplexity. He looked at his watch, then went to the telephone. In a few minutes Evelyn was at the other end of the wire.

"I'm frightfully sorry," he explained, "but I've been detained."

"How soon will you be over?" she asked.

"Why, in—that is, I—really, I can't say," he answered.

"Indeed," said Evelyn coldly. "Do you expect me to sit here indefinitely waiting for you?"

"Of course not," rejoined Dobson. "You see, I'd come immediately if I could, but it is really quite impossible."

"Well, don't you know when it will be possible for you to come?"

"Why, yes," said Dobson; "just as soon as the boy brings my—I mean, I expect to be able to come over at any time now."

"I shall expect you in twenty minutes, then," announced Evelyn.

Dobson stood staring absently at the telephone. Of all absurdities, this was the worst. He could not well explain to her that he was all impatient to come—that the last hour had seemed like a century—and but for the fact that his mislaid trousers kept him a prisoner in his room he would have been with her long ago.

There were no two ways about it. He could not go out without trousers. Consequently, if his trousers did not materialize in five minutes, he must have another pair.

He spoke his conclusions into the telephone, and incidentally into the ear of the clerk down-stairs—a male clerk, this time.

Then he lit another cigarette, and paced up and down the room. After a seeming eternity, the bell-boy appeared again, in his arms half a dozen pairs of trousers.

The first two Dobson discarded at once, because they were impossible combinations with his coat and vest. The third pair were more than three inches too long for him. Another pair scarcely reached the tops of his ankles.

With a cry of joy he seized upon the last pair, which matched his coat almost exactly. He hurried into them. Then his face fell. The waist was at least forty-two inches, and Dobson was thin.

"Are these all the trousers you have in the hotel?" he inquired.

"All that aren't on gentlemen or that belong to other gentlemen," said the boy.

"Can't you beg, borrow, or steal some kind of trousers that will fit me?"

"I don't see how, boss," said the boy. "Them last ones belongs to the head porter, and he's wearing his other ones."

Other ones! Dobson flushed and wondered how a man would feel who actually had two pairs of his own trousers within reach!

"Boy," he said, "go out and search this town. Get my trousers, anybody's trousers—trousers that will fit me—and get them here in a hurry. I don't care how or where you get them. You can rent them, buy them, steal them, or, if necessary, take them away from the first man you see who is anywhere near my size. Only get them. Understand?"

"Yes, boss," said the boy, and disappeared.

It was after five o'clock. Dobson telephoned again, and almost dropped the receiver when he heard Evelyn's ice tones.

He apologized humbly, begged her forgiveness, and suggested that she should not wait any longer. It would be impossible for him to arrive before dinner, but he would surely be there by eight o'clock.

"I shall expect you then—promptly," she said, and hung up.

Dobson threw himself upon the bed to frame up a plausible and satisfactory excuse for his conduct—anything but the real one—and to wait for the arrival of a pair of trousers.

The boy had been gone three-quarters of an hour. Dobson grew restless. He was also hungry. It occurred to him that he would have but little time in which to dine unless those trousers arrived soon.

It had grown intensely warm and close, too, and the little room seemed hotter as the sun faded away than it had been in the afternoon.

Ten minutes passed, and Dobson tried the telephone again. The clerk was apologetic, extremely sorry; but as yet it had been impossible to find a pair of trousers in the hotel that would fit him; and, it being Saturday, the shops had closed early, so that the boy had been unable to buy a pair thus far.

Certainly, the clerk said, they would send up his dinner, and a pair of trousers would be produced at the earliest possible moment. Dobson thanked him and swore again.

Indignant and alone, he ate but little when the tray was brought up to him. Another half-hour had passed, and still no trousers came. He telephoned the hotel office once more, only to be reassured that they were doing everything in their power to find the necessary garments.

At ten minutes of eight Dobson called Evelyn up with misgiving in his heart. Her voice confirmed his fears. She was indignant, and would listen to no explanation.

"Please do not trouble to come around at all," she said finally. "I have wasted a whole afternoon waiting for you. I have dined alone, and now I suppose you think I am going to sit here all evening and wait until you get ready to come around."

"Please don't say that," Dobson pleaded. "I want to come right away."

"Then, why don't you?" she asked.

"I—I can't," he faltered. "I've tried to explain, but you see—"

"I understand perfectly," she said. "It is quite unnecessary to discuss the matter any further. Tom Ellet is here, and I shall go out on the pier with him."

"Evelyn," said Dobson despairingly, "won't you please try to understand? Did you receive a box from me?" he added, remembering that he had ordered one sent.

"Did you send those?" came the quick reply over the wire.

"Yes," said Dobson. "Since I can't be with you, won't you at least wear them?"

"Jack Dobson!" she exclaimed furiously. "I will do nothing of the sort! If you think you are funny, I don't. Please don't ever come near me again!"

"Evelyn!" he protested. "What is the matter—what have I done?"

But she had gone. The wire was dead.

A knock aroused Dobson, and he opened the door to see the bell-boy with a large pasteboard box in his arms.

"I guess these are what you wanted, boss," he said. "I'm sorry, sir, but there's been some mistake. They've been down-stairs for three hours."

"Well, I'll be—"

Dobson broke off suddenly. It was no time for complaints. The trousers were at hand. He would dress and hurry over to explain the matter to Evelyn and offer his sincerest apology.

With nervous fingers he broke the cord, opened the box, and gasped. It was filled with American Beauty roses.

"Gee!" said the bell-boy. "They ain't your trousers, after all!"

"No, you blockhead!" shouted Dobson wrathfully. "They are not. I ordered this box sent to a lady at the Monmouth House. Instead, some blundering idiot has sent her my trousers!"

SETTLING WITH BOGGS.

BY STEPHEN ANGUS COX.

A Claim-Agent's Nasty Interview and the Happy Thought that Prolonged It.

"HIGGINS," said the superintendent, "here is a claim. Go see the fellow and settle as cheaply as possible."

Robert Higgins, claim-agent of the B. D. and S. Railroad, took the letter from the superintendent's hand, and read its contents, which were as follows:

> Supt. B. D. and S. Railrode: Yore darn injine killed six uv my best steers. I want yuh to pay darn quick.
>
> BEN BOGGS.

The letter bore the address of a whistling station up in the wildest region of Wyoming.

"All right," said Higgins, "I'll go out there and settle with Mr. Boggs."

That evening he took the train, and next morning he was at his destination, Rawlins, and, alighting from the cars, looked around him. It did not take very long to see all there was to be seen, for the place consisted of only one store, a hotel, two or three saloons, and about a dozen ramshackle houses.

Higgins interviewed the agent-operator and general man-of-all-work, and inquired about Boggs.

"He is a hard case," said the agent.

"Where does he live?"

"'Bout ten miles," motioning toward the east.

"H'm! He sent in a claim for damages for six steers that he says one of our trains killed. Know anything about it?"

"Only that if he had any steers he must have rustled 'em."

"Ah—he hasn't any stock of his own, then?"

"No; only what he steals."

"Did the train kill some steers that he claimed as being his?"

"Maybe so. I know a train killed five or six steers a couple of weeks ago. The section-hands say Boggs drove the steers on to the track a little while before the train came along, though."

"That so? I guess I'll interview the section-hands."

Higgins did so, and the men said that they had seen somebody drive the steers onto the track, and while they were so far away they could not be certain that it was Boggs, they did not have any doubt that it was he, as he had sent in the claim for damages.

Higgins then went to the hotel, where he registered, ate breakfast, and engaged the landlord in conversation. He told him about Boggs and his claim for damages for the steers, and the landlord shook his head.

"Boggs is a bad egg," he said. "He's a terror, a gun-fighter, an' if I was in your place, I'd settle with him at his own figgers an' then hike out uv town afore he got full on the money an' wanted to be paid again."

"I'm not going to let him rob me, even if he is a desperado and gun-fighter," remarked Higgins quietly. "I can shoot a little, myself," and he tapped his pocket significantly.

The landlord again shook his head and looked sober.

"He'd git yuh, I'm guessin'," he said. "I'd pay almost any amount in reason, an' not have any trouble with him."

"I wonder if he'll be in town to-day?" observed Higgins. "Or will I have to go out to his place?"

"He'll likely be in to-day. I'd wait here, if I were you."

"All right, I guess I will. The agent and the section-hands tell me that Boggs drove the steers onto the track, anyhow; and the agent says likely they were rustled steers, and not his. So I'm not going to pay him very much for them."

"Better pay him a rather stiff price than hav' 'im put a bullet in yuh, Mr. Higgins," was the reply.

The claim-agent shook his head grimly.

"We'll see about that," he said.

Higgins put in the day sitting around, smoking and waiting. He was out on the porch, about the middle of the afternoon, when he saw a huge, whiskered ruffian ride up in front of a saloon about a hundred yards distant, dismount and tie his horse. As he did so, the landlord, who had stepped to the door, said: "That's your man."

"I suspected as much," was the reply.

"Yes. How d'yuh like his looks?"

"He looks like he might be capable of shooting a man up."

"Yes, especially when he's drinkin'. If yuh'll take my advice, yuh'll go an' have your settlement with him before he gets tanked up."

Higgins nodded.

"That's a good idea, I judge." Then he rose, stretched, and, stepping off the porch, walked slowly toward the saloon.

When Higgins entered, Boggs was standing at the bar, engaged in the pleasing pastime of filling himself with bad whisky. He glanced at the claim-agent, nodded, and said: "How air ye, stranger? The boys has jest been tellin' me that ye was in town. Glad ter see ye. Got ther money ter pay me fur them steers?"

"I guess so," was the reply, "that is, if you don't want too much for them."

"Three hunderd dollars is my price fur them steers, Mister—what's yer name?"

"Higgins."

"All right, Higgins. Jest hand out three hunderd dollars, an' take a drink with me, an' we'll call et squar'."

Higgins shook his head.

"Too much money, Mr. Boggs," he said. "I can't allow you fifty dollars apiece for the steers. They weren't worth more than ten or fifteen each."

The face of the ruffian turned red with anger. He glared at the claim-agent fiercely.

"What's that?" he cried. "D'ye mean to insult me, Mr. Higgins? Them steers was worth fifty dollars apiece, an' that's the price I'm goin' to get fur 'em, too, or I'll have blood, d'ye hear what I say, young feller?"

His hand dropped to the handle of his revolver, and the men in the room, who evidently knew Boggs well, sidled around so as to be out of range of his weapon. Higgins saw these actions, and knew that he was in danger, but he did not flinch.

He met the gaze of the fellow steadily, and, advancing a couple of steps, leaned his elbow on the bar, and standing with his side half turned toward the man, said quietly:

"Don't get angry, Mr. Boggs. This is a business proposition, and there will be no occasion for the shedding of blood. Now, those steers were—"

"Them steers was worth three hunderd dollars!" cried Boggs, thumping the bar viciously, "an' I'm goin' to have three hunderd dollars fur 'em. So ye might as well pay me, furst as last."

"Be calm, Mr. Boggs," said Higgins quietly. "Let's talk this matter over. I'm willing to pay you a reasonable price for them, but—"

With an exclamation of anger and impatience, the ruffian jerked out his revolver and leveled it, the muzzle almost touching Higgins's forehead.

"I don't want talk," Boggs snarled. "I want money. Han' over thet three hunderd, an' do et quick!"

Higgins knew that he was in great danger, but still he did not show signs of alarm.

"Be reasonable, Mr. Boggs," he replied. "Take that gun away. You might pull the trigger too hard, and—"

"Then et would be good-by Mr. Higgins," was the grim retort. "An' I'm mighty apt to pull ther trigger ef ye don' dig up that three hunderd purty prompt, d'ye hear?"

Higgins was doing some swift thinking. Boggs had the drop on him, and he realized that the desperado would not hesitate to shoot him down, as he threatened.

Still, he did not intend to pay three hundred dollars for the steers, which could not have been worth more than one hundred and twenty-five, at the most. And he was trying to figure out how he was going to manage the affair.

Suddenly a thought came to him: He was an expert boxer, and although Boggs was fifty or sixty pounds heavier, Higgins believed he could give the ruffian a thrashing in a fair fist fight, so he said quietly:

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Boggs."

"What'll ye do?" gruffly.

"You want three hundred dollars for the steers?"

"Yes, an' I'm goin' to have—"

"I claim that the steers were not worth a hundred dollars," interrupted Higgins, "but I'll make you this proposition: We will fight a fair and square fist-fight, and if you whip me, I'll pay you the three hundred dollars; while if I whip you, I'll pay you only one hundred. Come, what do you say?"

"That I'll go ye," was the reply, with a chuckle. "Why, Mr. Higgins, ye won't be in et at all with me. Ye might as well pay me the three hunderd dollars an' be done with et."

He replaced the revolver in his belt, and Higgins drew a breath of relief. He had feared that the fellow might pull too hard on the trigger in his anger, and that would have been the end of Higgins.

The idea of a fight between the two met with the approval of all the men present, and so the matter having been settled, all adjourned to the open air, where the principals doffed their coats and rolled up their sleeves ready for business. By the time they were ready to begin the fight, the entire population of Rawlins was on the ground, even to the landlord of the hotel and the station-agent, there being no train due at that time.

The landlord acted as referee, and when they were ready, he told them to go at it. No sooner was the word given than Boggs rushed upon his smaller antagonist and made a fierce attack.

He flailed the atmosphere at a great rate, striking blows that, had they landed, would have knocked their recipient senseless. But they did not land. Higgins was a skilful boxer, and he ducked, dodged, and evaded the blows of the other, with seeming ease, and then, when Boggs had become winded as a result of his strenuous exertions, and dropped his hands to rest his arms, Higgins made a sudden, fierce attack. He hit his opponent as he pleased, forcing him backward, the spectators giving way before Boggs, who caught his heels against a rock at the same time that Higgins dealt him a severe blow over the heart.

Down he went with a thud, and lay there for a few moments, blinking up at the sky, and doubtless enjoying a display of meteors, comets, and other celestial bodies, such as he had never witnessed before.

Exclamations of wonder and delight escaped the lips of the onlookers. They were amazed that Higgins, who was so much smaller, should be able to knock the big ruffian down, but they were well pleased, for they did not like Boggs, who was quarrelsome when drinking.

Presently, Boggs rose to a sitting posture and glared wildly around him. Then his eyes alighted upon Higgins and he remembered what had happened. A growl of rage escaped him, and he scrambled to his feet, leaped to where his belt lay on his coat, jerked the revolver out of the holster and, was just on the point of leveling it, when his wrist was seized from behind, and a voice said in his ear:

"Hold on, Boggs. None of that. Hand over that gun and surrender. I arrest you, in the name of the law, for rustling cattle."

It was the sheriff of the county, and Boggs wilted. He handed over the revolver without a word of protest, while the sheriff snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists and started to lead him to his buggy. He had driven up unobserved just as Higgins knocked Boggs down.

"Hold on," said Higgins, addressing the sheriff. "Your prisoner claims pay for some steers that a train killed. I'm the claim-agent. To whom shall I pay the money?"

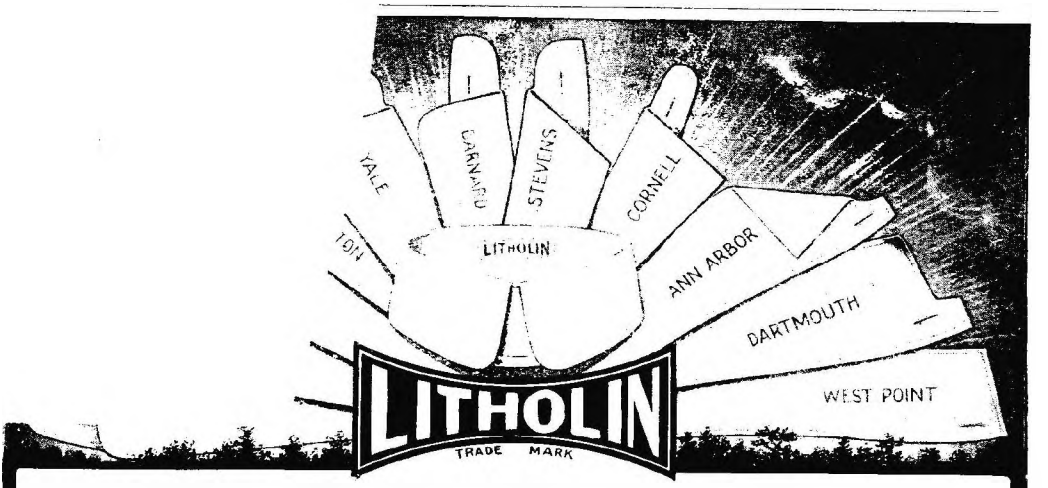
"Keep it yourself, for thrashing him," was the reply. "And, anyhow, he stole the steers, so is not entitled to the money."

"All right, sheriff, and thank you," said Higgins.

The sheriff assisted his prisoner into the buggy, got in after him and drove away; Higgins donned his coat and went to the hotel, while the spectators dispersed, discussing excitedly the thrashing Boggs had received at the hands of the claim-agent.

Higgins returned to Cheyenne and reported to the superintendent, who was well satisfied with the manner of settlement.

"You are a good man for the work, Higgins," he said. "You handled that case very well indeed."



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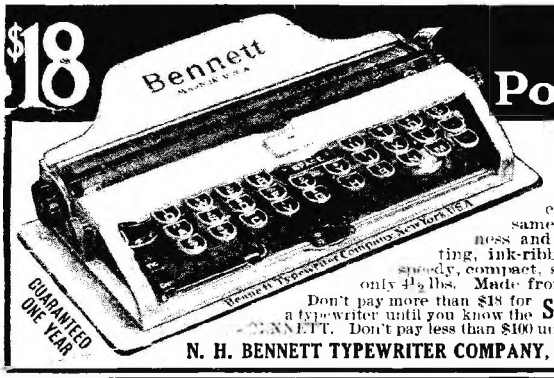

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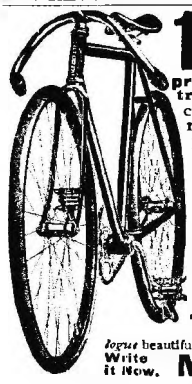

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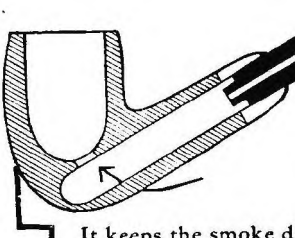

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