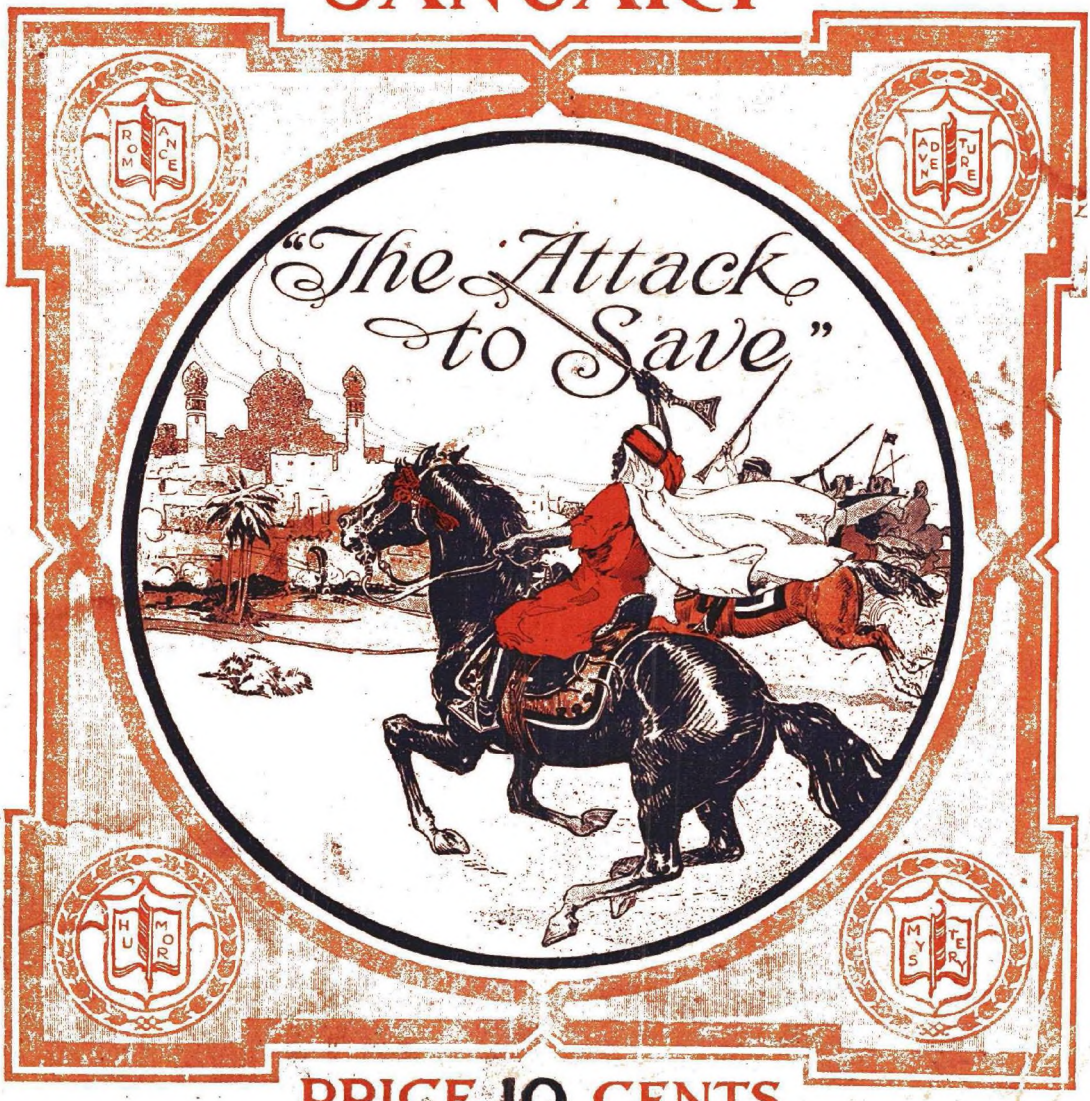
THE WOMAN HE FEARED BEGINS IN THIS ISSUE

THE ARGOSY

JANUARY



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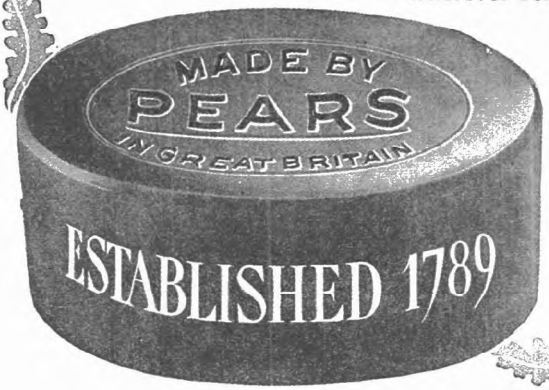

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A6

A7

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Stick, Powder and Cream

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—the Famous Colgate Quality.

Softening, soothing, sanitary. Best in its lasting abundance. Best in its antiseptic qualities and freedom from uncombined alkali. (See chemist's report below.) And best in the comfort of its skin-refreshing effect.

Do not ill-treat your face and handicap your razor by using an inferior lather.

Colgate's is the lather that can be made in three ways with one unvarying result—perfection.

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(Signed) Frank B. Gallivan, Ph.D.

Aug. 25, 1910 *Hathaway Bld'g., Boston, Mass.*

Colgate's Shaving Stick is the "Magic Wand of Shaving" in the original nickeled box.

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Trial size of Stick, Powder or Cream for 4 cents.

COLGATE & CO., Dept. 52
199 Fulton St. New York

Makers of the famous Cashmere Bouquet Soap

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXV JANUARY, 1911. No. 2

AT THIEVES' PARADISE.

BY DOUGLAS PIERCE,

Author of "The Impostor," "Two Tickets to Tuckerton," "The Shaft of Light," etc.

The Country Home in a Lonesome Neighborhood, and How It Came To Be Linked in a Conspiracy, with the City House for the Scene of Action.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

FACING A CRISIS.

WHEN Gideon Brink, the lawyer, took for the summer a lonely country house on the outskirts of Northmere, and moved his family down there, he was especially warned against thieves.

Prowling marauders of almost every variety were said to infest the neighborhood, from the hen-roost robbing hobo to the burglar and hold-up man.

Northmere, in short, was reported to be for those inclined to predatory pursuits a veritable happy hunting ground; and this, too, not without good reason, for it was a somewhat remote and thinly-settled community and the police protection was naturally inadequate. Moreover, there were a number of large, old-fashioned estates in the vicinity, whose square, Colonial mansions could not fail to prove an attractive lure to any enterprising cracksman.

Yet it was these very characteristics of loneliness and seclusion which had drawn Mr. Brink to the place.

His wife was a nervous invalid who, the doctors said, required complete rest and freedom from noise and excitement of every kind. He himself was engaged upon an exhaustive and nerve-wearing legal investigation which had for its object the bringing to justice of a coterie of wealthy men who for years had been systematically looting a big railroad company, and wanted a refuge where, on coming home at night, he could entirely rid his mind of the vexing cares at the office.

When, in his quest for such a spot, therefore, an astute real-estate agent took him down to see the old Martin homestead at Northmere, and offered to let it to him for the season on reasonable terms, as the Martin family were all going abroad, he fairly jumped at the chance.

It seemed, in fact, just what he wanted. There was a comfortable, commodious dwelling built many years, but kept in thorough repair and supplied with all modern improvements. Standing well back from the road in trimly-kept grounds about six acres in extent, it was surrounded on all sides by rustling pine woods.

There was, too, a vegetable-garden in which Mr. Brink could potter around on his return from his day's work, a summer-house where his wife could recline on pleasant days, and shady walks in every direction along which one could stroll on Sundays and "invite his soul."

The house was about two miles out from the center of the village and the railroad station, and the nearest neighbor was three-quarters of a mile away.

The conditions, in brief, were exactly what Mr. Brink was seeking; and when it is added that this paradise was only twenty-five miles from New York, allowing him to make the trip each morning and evening in his motor, there can be small wonder that

to him the sum of its advantages seemed complete.

True, he recognized that it might be something of a hardship to his daughter Martha, his only child remaining at home, to leave her young friends and practically isolate herself from all social diversions in so sequestered a spot; but Martha was devoted to the care of her mother, ready to acquiesce in anything which promised a chance of recovery for the invalid, and when her father told her of the change in contemplation, she willingly assented.

The lease, therefore, was signed, all arrangements made, and early in May the family moved out bag and baggage, and duly took possession of their new domicile.

Only one variation did Mr. Brink introduce in the running of the house. He insisted on having the telephone removed for the reason not only that its jangling was apt to disturb his wife, but also because he himself did not choose to have the quiet of his home hours intruded upon.

"Those rascals I am after know that my chain of evidence is about complete," he observed grimly, "and their counsel are working so desperately to get me off the track that they practically camp out in my waiting-room. If I have a wire in here, they will keep it hot with their propositions and importunities."

When he called at the exchange, however, to leave instructions for cutting off the instrument, the manager gazed at him in surprise.

"You surely don't mean that, Mr. Brink?" he protested earnestly. "Not, living out where you do?"

"Oh, that makes little difference to us," the lawyer rejoined carelessly, thinking he referred merely to the inconveniences of marketing. "The tradesmen's wagons come around every morning, and if anything especial is desired, my daughter can always run into the village on her wheel."

"Ah," said the manager, "but how about burglars? I guess you'd be wanting the phone then all right."

"Burglars?" Brink laughed. "I had never given a thought to that contingency."

The manager raised his eyebrows.

"It's plain to be seen you haven't been long at Northmere," he observed dryly. "Why, sir, hardly a night passes, but one of our subscribers rings up to say that somebody is trying to break into the house."

The lawyer declined to be impressed.

"Well," he smiled, "I don't imagine an occasional burglar scare would be any more of a nuisance than the perpetual ringing of that bell. And of two evils always choose the least; so, if you please, we'll let the removal order stand."

Before the day was out, however, he learned from various other sources that the telephone man had not been exaggerating conditions merely to retain business, but that the possibility of a midnight visitation was a very real and existing menace.

Not only that. He was also told that one had to be on guard against ruffians and impostors of every description.

A favorite trick, he was informed, was for a crook to gain admission to the house on the excuse of being an agent or pedler of some kind, and then either to spy out the lay of the land for a future call, or if no one was found at home but unprotected women, to go ahead boldly and sack the place then and there.

Mr. Brink did not of course alarm his wife with these reports, nor indeed did he take them seriously enough himself to order the reinstatement of the telephone; but as a matter of justifiable precaution, he supplied himself with a serviceable revolver, and installed a burglar-alarm system.

Furthermore, he warned Martha and the maids to be very careful whom they admitted to the house during his absence.

"I don't really anticipate any trouble, you understand," he said. "There is nothing here which would particularly tempt thieves;" for they had taken the place very simply furnished, and had left most of their own valuables at the town house. "Still, at times when you are here alone, it may be wise to show a little caution. When I am around, the situation is of course entirely different."

Nor was this any idle boast; for Brink, despite his fifty years, was a big, strong man in excellent physical trim, and backed up by the revolver, he did not doubt his ability to cope with any invader of his premises.

Likewise, Martha, being somewhat of a chip off the same block, was inclined to minimize the danger. She promised her father that she would observe due circumspection; but in her own mind she put down the stories she heard as the mere bugaboo tales of a country community, and was very slightly disquieted over them.

If any sneak-thief or scheming rogue did apply at the door, she fancied that she

would be fully equal to the task of handling him.

Still, it cannot be denied that one afternoon when she was sitting all alone on the porch—her mother having lain down for a nap, and both the maids at the village on an errand—she was considerably startled on raising her eyes suddenly from her book to see a strange man standing directly in front of her.

How he had got there, she could not tell. But a moment before, she had glanced toward the gate and seen no one in sight, nor had she been warned of his approach by the sound of footsteps on the walk.

In an instant, all the terrifying rumors she had heard of robbery and the intimidation of women by prowling blackguards flashed over her.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HE WANTED.

HER heart beating fast, Martha sprang to her feet and confronted the intruder.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded, striving to speak firmly and decisively, but in spite of herself, her voice trembled perceptibly, and rose scarcely above a whisper.

The young man—for Martha, as she gazed wide-eyed at him, noted half-unconsciously that he was young, and also not especially sinister-looking—assumed an apologetic air.

"I am sorry to have frightened you," he started to say, but she cut him short with a quick gesture.

"Frightened me? Not at all." She spoke very fast, and in a strained, high-pitched voice. "What is there to be frightened at? My brother is asleep upstairs, and I could call my two bull-dogs with a single whistle."

"Now, I know you are frightened, Miss Brink," he said regretfully; "for I belong to the village here, and am well aware there is no brother and no bull-dogs. I can assure you, too, that you need have no apprehensions; I am nothing more formidable than an inspector from the water-works office."

Martha still eyed him doubtfully.

"Well, what do you mean then," she demanded severely, "by sneaking up on people this way, and startling them half out of their wits?"

The fellow flushed and dropped his eyes in contrition.

"I ought to have had more sense," he confessed humbly; "but I never dreamed of your being alarmed until I saw you look up and go white as I started to speak to you.

"You didn't notice me before," he went on, "because I cut across lots from Colonel Medford's and came in the back way, and you didn't hear me step up on the porch, because"—he glanced penitently at his feet—"I wear rubber soles."

Martha decided that if he were a robber, he was certainly the most bashful and diffident specimen of his class she had ever heard of.

Still she did not relax her attitude of suspicion. Being a woman, she had to rub it in a little to pay him for the scare he had given her.

"How do I know that you are an inspector from the water company?" she questioned coldly.

For answer, he opened his pocketbook, and handed over a card on which was inscribed: "Walter J. Fluno, Inspector Northmere Water Co."

Miss Brink was not her father's daughter for nothing.

"But that is no proof." She glanced contemptuously at the card. "Any one could have had those printed."

"Well, it's all the proof I can offer," he faltered. "I don't wear a badge here as they do in the city, you see, because everybody knows me.

"I guess, Miss Brink," he pleaded, "you'll just have to take me on faith."

She wrinkled up her brows. "That depends on what you want."

Martha's panic had now evaporated, and she was really rather enjoying the little clash of wits. It was at least a break in the monotony of a lonely afternoon at Northmere. Besides, the young fellow had a pair of undeniably fine brown eyes, and an extremely pleasing smile.

"What I want?" he repeated. "Oh, that is very simple. The people at the office neglected to take your father's town address, when he called there to make arrangements for water, and I have been instructed to get it."

"For what reason?"

"Why, we always get it in the case of summer residents, so that bills can be rendered to them after they leave."

"There seems to be no harm in that," she admitted at length. "Which address do you want—office, or home?"

"Both, if you please. I know it sounds foolish; but that is our rule."

"Oh, I have no objections to it." She smiled slightly. "We have no intention of skipping out, and leaving our accounts unpaid."

"Oh, Miss Brink, you know I didn't mean that," he urged in stammering protest. "It is simply a red-tape regulation, that—"

But she cut him short.

"My father's office is at 49 Wall Street," she informed him graciously; "and we live at 906 West Eighty-Fourth Street."

Fluno duly made a note of the two numbers, and thanked her.

"And now," he continued more easily, "while I am here, I suppose I may as well look over the faucets and connections, and make sure that everything is in order."

He moved toward the front door as he spoke; but with a revival of her former suspicions, she stepped quickly in front of him, and barred the way.

"No," she said sharply, "there is no need of anything of the kind. The plumbing is all right, I know."

But the fellow seemed strangely insistent on his purpose.

"Ah," he returned, "but one can't always tell about such things. The pipes may look all right to an inexperienced eye, yet have some weak place or defect likely to cause a disastrous leak at any moment. Better let me make an examination, and be sure."

His urgency, however, only made her the more determined that he should not enter, and she was about to give him a curt dismissal, when her mother's voice from inside broke in upon the colloquy.

"Who is there, Martha?" asked the invalid, aroused from her nap by the sound of voices.

"Only a man from the water company, mama. He is just leaving."

"Oh, don't let him go away yet." Mrs. Brink spoke in the querulous tone of a sick person. "There is a tap in the bath-room which needs attention badly. I noticed it this morning."

The girl hesitated.

"Hadn't we better wait and send for a plumber?" she suggested. "This is merely an inspector calling to get father's address."

"Well, ask him to look at it, anyway," insisted Mrs. Brink. "He can probably do something, and you know how one has to wait for the plumber's convenience in these country places. We might easily be deluged before he got around."

There was nothing to do but accede. Martha knew that her mother could not be thwarted in even the smallest particular without danger of bringing on a nervous attack, and neither could she explain the true reason for her desire to exclude the stranger from the house.

Grudgingly she stood away from the door and motioned the fellow to enter; but she did not allow him for a single moment to get out of her sight, following closely at his heels as he passed from room to room.

Perhaps she did not really believe that the alleged inspector was a crook, or other than he represented himself to be; if she had, she would probably have been more tenacious in opposing his entrance; but she was determined to take no chances.

Yet, when they reached the bath-room, and, starting to work on the defective tap, he asked her for some old rags, she could not, for all her caution, very well help leaving him alone a few moments while she went to comply with his request.

She was gone only long enough to get down-stairs and back, however, and was satisfied by the progress made in his work during her absence that he could not possibly have left the room.

Thereafter, too, he made no effort to get rid of her, but finished up his job in a skilful, workmanlike fashion, and took his departure.

He lingered a second on the steps, though, as he bade her good afternoon.

"I wonder," he questioned shyly, "if your father would be willing to have a little talk with me some time?"

"My father?"

She glanced at him in surprise. It struck her that perhaps the man was a lunatic, and this a round-about proposal of marriage.

But he speedily dispelled her absurd conjecture.

"Yes," he said. "You see," blushing painfully, "I am only holding down this position in order to make money enough to fit myself for something better. I have been reading law now in the evenings and in my leisure time for over two years, and I thought maybe there might be a chance for me to get into your father's office.

"Oh, if I could only do that"—his eyes lighted up—"I'd pretty well consider myself made. Just think what it would mean to get one's start in the profession under Gideon Brink!"

Martha smiled at his enthusiasm.

"Oh, I am sure my father would be glad to talk with you," she said cordially. "He is always only too ready to help along any young man he believes has the right stuff in him. Come out any evening or Sunday afternoon, Mr. Fluno, and you will find him at home."

Watching him as he walked springily down to the gate, and with a final wave of his hat to her turned into the main road, her lip curled a bit derisively at the earlier doubts she had entertained.

"He's really an awfully nice chap," she mused. "If it hadn't seemed a little too free and easy, I'd have told him that father wasn't the only person out here he could come to see."

Then she went up-stairs to change her gown for dinner, and found that a rather valuable pearl pin was missing from her dresser.

CHAPTER III.

AN INTERRUPTED DINNER.

MARTHA'S first impulse, of course, was to raise a hue and cry—to inform her father, and have him take measures with the police for the apprerension of the thief; but, on second thought, she decided to keep silence.

She could better endure the loss of the pin, she felt, than her father's sarcastic comments on the affair; for she was bitterly ashamed that, after all the warning admonitions she had received, she should have let herself be taken in so easily by the wiles of a sneak thief.

A flush of mortification surged up to the very roots of her hair, as she thought of the fellow's farewell and of the invitation to call on her which she had only just restrained.

What a fool he must have thought her—the term used by people of that class was "easy mark," was it not? And how he must have laughed in his sleeve to see how readily she fell for all that pious talk about studying law in the evenings, and wishing to advance himself.

No, she insisted, she certainly was not going to put herself up as a laughing-stock and the butt of one of those undying family jokes—not for a whole jewelry-storeful of pearl pins!

Therefore, when her father arrived in the motor at six o'clock, and she had greeted him with a daughterly kiss, she made no mention of the incident of the afternoon, but talked away almost feverishly on extraneous topics.

What had happened in town she wanted to know with eager interest. And what had he seen on his run out from the office?

But at last, as luck would have it, the lawyer, managing to get in a word edgewise, asked her if anybody had been at the house during the day.

It was merely a casual question, put without the slightest underlying motive; but Martha started at it guiltily and dropped her eyes in confusion.

"No-o," she stammered; "no one at all." Then, striving to speak indifferently: "That is, no one except a man from the water company. He wanted your town address, and while he was here I got him to fix a leaky tap in the bath-room."

Mr. Brink was busy carving the steak at the moment, and did not observe her perturbation; but as he finished his task and laid down the carving-knife, he frowned slightly.

"A man from the water company, eh?" he commented. "You saw, of course, that he had proper credentials before you admitted him into the house?"

"Oh, yes," she gulped. "Yes, he had his credentials. But excuse me a minute, father," rising hurriedly. "I think there is something wrong out in the kitchen. Mary, I am sure, has forgotten the salad again."

Also, when she returned from her housewifely errand, she kept the conversation sedulously to domestic affairs, and felt greatly relieved to find that her father had apparently forgotten the matter of the water inspector.

But the distasteful subject was destined to be reintroduced before long, and in a way she little expected; for just as they were finishing dessert and she was pouring the after-dinner coffee, the *chug-chug* of a motor sounded on the driveway outside, and a moment later there came a sharp ring at the door-bell.

It was some one to see Mr. Brink, the maid who went to the door reported, and accordingly he stepped out into the hall; but a minute or two later he thrust his

head into the dining-room, and informed Martha that she was wanted, too.

Following her father out to the front, she saw standing on the porch a thick-set man with a long, drooping mustache and a slouch hat pulled down over his brows, which he showed no inclination to remove.

"Daughter," said the lawyer, "this is Deputy Sheriff Haskell, and he has called to inquire concerning a shrewd rascal they are trying to run down, and who they are informed was seen in this neighborhood to-day."

"Well, I am afraid I can give him no assistance," Martha spoke up quickly. "I have not been away from the house, and certainly if any one of the kind had been lurking about, the maids would have noticed it and told me."

"And no one came to the door?" The deputy sheriff took from his lips the cigar on which he had been puffing, and glanced at her keenly.

"No one," she answered firmly.

"That is," put in her father, "you mean no one except the water inspector you spoke to me about."

"A water inspector?" The officer's eyes narrowed. "Ha! What kind of a looking chap was he?" His tone was significant.

"Oh, he was all right." The lawyer frowned impatiently. "My daughter is very careful as to whom she admits into the house, and she has already assured me she made this fellow give proofs that he was what he claimed to be."

"Humph!" snorted the deputy sheriff. "What sort of proofs, miss?"

There was no evading the question. Both Haskell and her father turned to her, awaiting an answer.

"Well," she hesitated, crimsoning at the feebleness of the explanation, "he gave me his card with 'Water Inspector' printed on it."

"His card!" sneered the official contemptuously.

"His card!" her father repeated almost incredulously, his face darkening. "Why, that might have been picked up anywhere. You certainly don't mean to tell me, Martha, that—"

"Hold on there, colonel, hold on," the other man interposed with a touch of authority. "She ain't to blame; ladies aren't supposed to be up to all these moves. I think we can save time, though, if you'll just let me do the questioning, for it certainly looks like we're getting pretty warm on the trail.

"Now, miss," and he turned to Martha, "I'll ask you again for a description of this duck, if you please?"

"I don't know that I can give it," she faltered. "I didn't notice him particularly. He seemed just an ordinary sort of young fellow."

"Kind of chunky and heavy set, wasn't he?" asked the officer.

"Oh, no, quite the contrary. He was slender and rather tall."

"Just so!" The deputy sheriff grinned triumphantly. "And he had brown eyes, didn't he, and a smooth face, and a kind of bashful way with him?"

Martha was furious at the way she had been tricked into an admission. So intensely had the swaggering official aroused her dislike, that she had felt an illogical impulse to shield the thief.

Still, she had reluctantly to confess that the description given tallied very closely with that of her visitor.

"Ah, I thought I couldn't be mistaken." Haskell gave a short laugh. "It was 'Jimmy, the Stool Pigeon,' beyond any shadow of a doubt. Asked you for the old gentleman's town address, didn't he?"

"But," the father broke in as she nodded assent, "suppose he did ask it, and suppose she gave the address, what possible harm could result? I don't see where anything is to be gained from that."

"Ah!" Haskell wagged his head. "It's a game that's been played a good deal lately, sir, and not a bad one at that. These fellows go to a summer residence, and by pretending to be water inspectors or some such thing, find out just where the town house is located, and whether or not anybody is likely to be there. Then, if conditions suit 'em, they go to the place that night with their gang, and make a clean-up.

"The chances are, Mr. Brink," he continued, "that if I hadn't dropped around, your city house would have been looted to-night, and when you discovered the fact a week or so from now, you'd never have been able to tell how it happened."

The lawyer's face grew serious. There were a good many things of value in that town house which he did not care to lose.

"What had I better do?" he queried. "Go over to the village and telephone the New York police to be on the lookout?"

"Too much chance of a bungle." The other shook his head. "Even if they got the message straight and followed directions, they'd simply scare the gang away for to-night, and give 'em a chance to come back later when the coast is clear.

"A better plan, to my mind," he suggested, "is for us to handle the deal ourselves, and catch 'em dead to rights. Now, I have my motor here, and if you're willing, we could run up to town together, plant ourselves on guard in the house, and nab 'em when they come in and start to work."

"Good!" Mr. Brink did not hesitate a second. "Just wait until I get my coat and cap, and I'll be with you."

As he turned into the house, however, Martha saw a peculiar glint come into the deputy sheriff's eye, and she had a swift intuition of trouble ahead.

So, when her father came hurrying out, thrusting his arms into the sleeves of his coat, she laid a detaining hand on his elbow, and drew him momentarily aside.

"Don't go off on this mad venture, father," she pleaded. "It seems to me a much wiser plan to telephone the New York police and let them handle it. Now, take my advice, and—"

But he turned away from her with an impatient curl of the lip.

"My dear Martha," he said coldly, "seeing that you are the one mainly responsible for the situation, I am afraid I do not feel like yielding to your judgment."

Then he sprang down the steps and jumped into the waiting car; and with a heavy heart the girl watched him go whirring down the drive and out into the night.

CHAPTER IV.

PLANNING THE ATTACK.

It was about eight o'clock when Mr. Brink and his companion left Northmere; but they had some tire trouble on the way and one or two other set-backs, so it was well after eleven when they finally crossed the Williamsburgh bridge and found themselves in Manhattan.

Over to Broadway, then, they spun, and up its long diagonal straightaway—through the "Great White Streak," and past "Automobile Row"—until they finally reached Eighty-Fourth Street, and turned west toward the river.

They had discussed the situation pretty thoroughly along the road, and had reached a conclusion that their best plan would be to leave the machine a block or so from the house, and then advancing on foot, gain an entrance and be in readiness to surprise the gang of crooks on their arrival.

But when in pursuance of this stratagem they arrived within three or four doors of the dwelling, the lawyer suddenly halted, and with a smothered exclamation clutched his companion by the arm.

"Look at that!" he whispered tensely. "They've got here ahead of us!"

The deputy sheriff, following the direction of the other's excited gaze, saw three men mount a stoop just ahead, and after a brief delay at the front door, swing it open and pass inside.

"Is that your house?" he queried; then, as the other nodded assent, he muttered:

"Gee but they're bold! They're either taking awful long chances, or else they've got a first-class stand-in, and most likely it's the latter."

"But what are we to do?" impatiently broke in the lawyer. "While we are standing here talking, they will clean out the entire house. Hadn't I better run up to the corner and telephone the station-house, or at least get the policeman on beat?"

"And have them buzz around like a lot of big bumble-bees until they've scared the thieves away?" sneered Haskell. "Didn't I tell you it looks like a cinch to me that the cops are in on the deal?

"No, thank you." He drew a big gun ostentatiously from his pocket, and twirled the cylinder to see that it was in working order. "I'm an officer of the State, and I prefer to handle this job alone. If you don't feel like taking the chance," with a touch of disdain, "you can wait for me here."

Mr. Brink very promptly resented the imputation on his bravery.

"It is no question of that kind," he disclaimed stiffly. "I was merely considering what would be the best course, and I still think it more than rash for the two of us to pit ourselves alone and single-handed against a band of desperate rascals. If you are determined on that method, however, I have nothing more to say. I shall simply try to back you up to the best of my ability."

"No, no, you don't understand," Haskell interposed less aggressively. "I'm not stuck on rushing in there and getting my head

blowed off any more than you are. What I want to do is to land that bunch, and you can take it from me that the cops would be a whole lot more bother to us than help.

"To my mind," he went on, "the two of us, by using a little strategy, can turn the trick just about right. It ain't no desperate band we're going up against, neither. There's only three of them altogether, and between us we certainly ought to do for them in jig time, if you'll agree to follow my plan."

"I have already told you that I regarded you as the leader here," said Brink. "You have the experience and the legal authority. All you have to do is issue your orders; I'll try the best I know how to carry them out."

"That's the kind of talk I like to hear," Haskell waxed effusive in his approval. "And I'll bet if it should come to a scrap—which I don't expect—you won't give no bad account of yourself, neither.

"Now, tell me," his tone becoming businesslike, "is there any way we can get in except through that front door?"

"Yes; through the areaway." The lawyer produced a bunch of keys as he spoke. "Fortunately I remembered to bring all the keys to the house when I left. I thought they might be needed."

"Ah, who said you didn't have a wise, old head on you?" commented the sheriff jubilantly. "We've got 'em sewed up tighter than a drum-head."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, don't you see, they think they're perfectly safe in there, the only possibility of a surprise being through the front door?"

"So, by going in at the area," finished Brink, "we take them on the flank, as it were, and not knowing what they are up against, they surrender at the first call."

"Exactly," assented Haskell. "I tell you, it's going to be as easy as taking pie from the pantry.

"But now pay close attention to me," he continued, "because we can't afford to have any slip-ups, and there'll be no chance to do any talking after we're once inside. We've got to be still as mice then, until we're ready to spring the 'grand transformation scene' on 'em.

"You," issuing his instructions, "know the run of the house and will have to take the lead. You must guide me up to the front door, and leave me there; then go to the back of the house where you can cover the basement stairs, and start to make a racket like a whole bunch of detectives was breaking in.

"That will scare the scoundrels, and they'll come pelting to the front door to make their getaway, and run square into my arms.

"I don't doubt,"—he squared back his big shoulders—"but what I can handle all three of them without any trouble; but if I shouldn't, or if any of them is cute enough to make a break for the back then you'll have to come into the game. See?"

Brink nodded to show that he understood, and intimated that he was ready to proceed.

"Wait just a minute," said Haskell. "Have you got a gun?"

The lawyer drew from his hip pocket the pearl-handled revolver he had purchased on going to Northmere.

"Humph!" the deputy sheriff grunted contemptuously, and thrust it into his pocket.

"Here," he said, handing over in its place a companion to the heavy .45 he had displayed shortly before, "better take one of mine. I guess you'll find it a mite more serviceable."

Then, all their preparations completed, the two advanced to the area door, opened it noiselessly, and removing their shoes, stole in stockinged feet up the dark basement stairway.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN IN THE MOONLIGHT.

MEANWHILE, Martha, like her Biblical namesake, "troubled with many cares," was holding down the helm at Northmere.

For a time after her father's departure, her household tasks kept her busy; but when at last the dinner things were all cleared away, the silver counted, the breakfast orders given, and her mother comfortably tucked away for the night, she had leisure to think. And her thoughts were far from reassuring.

Restless and perturbed, she took down a cloak and stepped out on the porch, walking briskly up and down in the hope that the exercise and cool night air would calm her disquietude.

Yet the remedy seemed to have little effect. Somehow, she could not feel easy about this t ip her father had taken.

Not that she feared for him in any scrim-

mage with the thieves. She had no idea of course, that he would be led into the recklessness of a personal engagement; but supposed that he would simply report the matter to the police and let them handle the situation.

No; her apprehensions, although she could give no logical reason for them, were chiefly on account of the man he had gone away with.

She felt a distinct distrust of the slouch-hatted deputy sheriff and it was useless for her to attempt to argue herself out of it.

In vain she told herself that her intuitions were not to be depended on, that she had gone far astray that very day in her judgment of the plausible rogue who had filched her pearl pin; still the fact remained that as between the thief and the officer of the law, she was far more favorably inclined toward the former.

Reflecting upon her deceptive visitor of the afternoon, she kept puzzling as to why he should so insistently have maintained his false rôle of water inspector after once gaining his end?

According to the deputy sheriff, all the fellow desired was information of her father's town address. Why, then, with this in his possession, should he have seemed so determined to keep up the fiction.

Against her protests, he had fairly forced his way into the house to examine the plumbing, and no one could deny that his work there had been accomplished in most proficient fashion.

Yet it seemed incredible that he should go to all the time and trouble he had given for such inconsiderable booty as a little pearl pin.

More likely, she was inclined to believe, he had been actuated by another purpose, and had merely picked up the pin under stress of sudden temptation, or because he considered it too easy a chance to be overlooked.

Still, she asked herself, what other purpose could he have had?

Then, while she walked up and down, pondering the question, there came a rush of slippered feet down the stairs, and her two maids appeared in *dishabille* at the doorway.

"Oh, Miss Martha!" they gasped in frightened chorus. "There's a man hanging about the place!"

"A man?"

"Yes, ma'am." It was Mary, the cook, who took up the tale. "Nellie saw him first, and pointed him out to me, and then we both got to watching him, and we're sure from the way he acts that he means mischief!"

"The way he acts?"

"Sure, ma'am. Nobody that meant honest would sneak around the way he does. When Nellie first saw him, he was peeping out at the house from over among the pines, and then he began to come closer and closer, dodging from behind one tree or bush to another, and—!"

But at this point, the more timid Nellie, with a shrill squawk, scuttled back into the house and started for the stairs.

"Oh," she shrieked, "there he is now—right behind that clump of hydrangeas near the end of the porch!"

There is a certain contagion in panic, and the other two women followed in a pell-mell rush upon Nellie's heels; but, once inside, Martha recovered herself sufficiently to grab the almost hysterical girl, and clap a hand over her mouth.

"Sh!" she hissed. "We must not wake mother!"

Then, seizing the two trembling maids with either hand, she dragged them back and forced them to help her hurriedly close and lock the front door and bolt all the ground floor windows.

"Now," she commanded, furtively drawing aside one of the blinds, "show me just where you saw this fellow."

Together the three peered out. It was an eery night with the pine trees moaning and waving their branches in the breeze, and the moon casting fitful shadows as the scurrying clouds flitted over its face.

More than once, Martha thought she saw something moving, only to realize a moment later that she had been deceived by a tossing bush, or some trick of the shifting light and shade.

"Pshaw!" she started to mutter. "You girls have been letting your imaginations run away with you. There is nobody—"

But just then, Nellie clutched her excitedly with a stifled ejaculation, and following the direction of the girl's staring eyes, Martha perceived in the moonlight the figure of a man.

Bending low, and with his cap drawn down over his brows, he was cautiously making his way from behind the shelter of the hydrangea bed to a clump of shrubbery still nearer the house.

For only a second, Martha caught a glimpse of the skulking figure; but it was enough to tell her that he was tall and slender—unquestionably the chap who in the guise of a water inspector had called on her that afternoon.

CHAPTER VI.

BESIEGED.

INSTANTLY, with her recognition of the figure on the lawn, there flashed upon Martha the explanation she had been seeking.

Perhaps, as the deputy sheriff averred, the fellow's main object might have been to secure her father's town address; but, if so, it seemed equally certain that the wily visitor had killed two birds with one stone, and had spied out the land so as to undertake a raid on the country house also.

It would have been easy enough for him to apprise his city confederates of the location of the New York residence, while he himself remained at Northmere to handle the companion job in person.

Or, it might even be, she reflected, as her mind ranged rapidly from one possibility to another, that the alleged deputy sheriff was only another member of the gang, and the summons to her father merely a trick to get him out of the way and leave the premises unprotected.

With this thought, came, too, a realization of her absolutely helpless state. She was alone in the house with a bedridden invalid and two maids practically paralyzed by fear.

There was no man on the place, and no way of summoning assistance. The frail locks at doors and windows would offer but scant resistance to a resolute intruder.

Martha, for a second, fell prey to terrors almost as severe as those which were overwhelming poor Mary and Nellie. Her imagination pictured vivid contingencies of robbery, violence and even murder.

Then with an effort she gained control of her nerves. The never-say-die spirit, which she had inherited from her father, surged to the front.

She leaned over and shook by the shoulder the two whimpering girls crouching beside her on the floor.

"Mary," she commanded, and she was surprised herself at the calmness of her tone, "go down and start up the fire in the kitchen range."

But Mary only clung closer to her mistress's skirts.

"Oh, ma'am, I don't da'st to," she pleaded. "Go through that long hall and into that black kitchen all alone, and without knowing what might jump out at me? Sure, ma'am, if a board 'd squeak on the way, I'd go off into a dead faint."

"Very well, then; if you feel that way, take Nellie with you."

Now this was genuine courage and self-sacrifice; for Martha was no more desirous of solitude just then than was her humbler sister. Indeed, she entertained a most decided repugnance to being left by herself in that big shadowy front hall where the expected effort to force an entrance would almost inevitably be made.

Even the timorous Nellie was better than nothing as a moral support.

Still, she saw plainly that wild horses could not have dragged either of the girls unaccompanied to the kitchen and she promptly sacrificed her own misgivings to the furtherance of the plan she had evolved.

"Go down to the kitchen," she repeated, "and get the range to going full blast."

"Get the range to going?" Mary stared at her stupidly. "What good will that be doing, ma'am?"

"I'm coming to that. When you have the fire drawing well, put on the wash-boiler and every kettle you have in the house, and—"

"Put on the kittles and wash-boiler?" Mary again interrupted, looking as though she thought her mistress had gone insane. "But Miss Martha how can kittles and wash-boilers do us any good?"

"Oh!" Martha gave an exasperated stamp of her foot. "Don't stand there like a silly parrot asking me what good things will do, but do as I bid you.

"What good will the kettles and wash-boiler do?" she cried. "Well, as we are four forlorn women alone in the house, and have not even a revolver to defend ourselves with—I saw papa stick his into his pocket, when he left to-night—why, I fancy boiling water is about the only means we have with which to repel invaders."

"Ah!" Mary drew a long breath. "You're plannin', then, ma'am, to—?"

"I am planning to have all the scalding-hot water possible in readiness. Then, when he starts to come in, we will rush it up here, and douse him. Maybe, he will get a warmer reception than he expects.

"And now,"—she waved her arm in an imperative gesture—"don't let us waste any more time in talking. Down to the kitchen, Mary, and get the fire going or the critical moment will come and find us without our ammunition."

But the cook still lingered a second, her homely face growing shrewd with her fuller comprehension of the project.

"Beggin' your pardon, ma'am," she ventured, "but I'm thinkin' maybe I can improve that receipt of yours a bit. I've got a lot of grease and tallow down there I was fixin' to render out, and half a pail of lard, and a can of olive oil; and don't you think, a dipperful or so of that mixture flung in the rascal's face would stop him even quicker than the boiling water."

"Good!" Martha nodded; and with this approval the two girls hurried off.

The commandant of the beleaguered fortress was left to do a solitary sentry-go, and man the outer walls alone.

In the semi-darkness of the hall she crouched, peering out from behind the blind, and ready to give an alarm at the first sign of the enemy's advance; but although she bravely stuck to her post, it was only sheer strength of will that enabled her to do so.

Every creak of the furniture, every rattle of the doors or windows, sent shivers of apprehension coursing down her spine. She felt a constant inclination to look over her shoulder, and at times it was all she could do to restrain herself from flying in a panic to join the other members of the garrison in the kitchen.

The minutes dragged by on leaden feet. A church clock in the distance chimed nine, only emphasizing by its faint, far-away sound the loneliness of her position; for nine o'clock in the country is the equivalent in solitude and quiet of midnight in a city or small town.

Martha counted the laggard strokes, and as she noted the hour, anxiety awoke afresh in her breast regarding her father.

Surely he ought to be returning by this time. Had something happened to him? What was causing his delay? Oh, if he would only come, and relieve her of her fears and responsibility!

A hundred dire contingencies, projected by her lively imagination, arose to plague and worry her concerning his safety; and in them all loomed sinister the figure of the burly, slouch-hatted deputy sheriff.

Oppressed thus with a double set of alarms—gravely concerned both for her father and herself—and apprehensive, moreover, as to the effect which all this excitement and upheaval might have on her mother, Martha was fast verging on a state of collapsed nerves.

The strain and tension were telling on her heavily. Would those girls never come to announce that the boiling oil was in readiness?

Once more she peered from the window, and searched with her eyes the different clumps of shrubbery on the lawn. For many minutes now, the lurking figure out there had made no apparent move. Was he still behind the bush where she had last seen him, she wondered, or could he have eluded her vigilance, and be now stealthily gaining his entrance?

She strained her ears, almost hoping to catch the sound of his jimmy, and find relief in action from the monotony of waiting. Unless something happened soon, she felt as though she would scream.

And then through the silent house suddenly re-echoed twin shrieks of terror and affright. A door slammed in the nether regions, and upon the stairs sounded the clattering footsteps of the two maids.

With no other thought than that the burglar's attack had unexpectedly been made in that quarter, Martha sprang to her feet and started on a run for the kitchen.

CHAPTER VII.

TO THE RESCUE.

At the top of the back stairs, Miss Brink encountered the fleeing Mary and Nellie, and stayed their excited rush.

"Fire!" the two gasped in a breath.

"Fire?"

They broke in upon each other incoherently, trying to explain; but from the confusion of tongues Martha finally gleaned the information:

"The kettle of grease tipped over, and blazed up on everything. There ain't no use trying to put it out, ma'am. We had to run for our lives!"

As if to add confirmation to the report, there swept up the stairway at that moment a great waft of acrid smoke.

Martha waited for no further word upon the subject, but springing down the steps swung open the kitchen door.

Instantly she closed it again, however; for a burst of flame rushed out to meet her, singeing her hair and scorching her face with its hot breath.

Nor was there need for more than the single glance she had taken. What the girls had said was only too evidently true; there was no use attempting to check the blaze.

The inflammable oil and grease had spread over the floor igniting everything it touched, and now the woodwork was crackling merrily in all directions, the interior of the place a veritable furnace. In the second that Martha stood there trying to collect her wits, she heard the panes of the windows break and tinkle in the heat.

Whatever might have been done by prompt action in the first place, it was now too late to accomplish any results with the means at hand.

Nevertheless, Martha bestirred herself to cope with this new emergency.

Dashing back to the top of the steps, she shoved the panic-stupefied maids into action, ordering one to bring buckets of water from the bath-room, and the other to get out the garden-hose and attach it to the hydrant in the yard.

"Sure, ma'am, all the buckets we have is in the kitchen!" Nellie wrung her hands; and, "Sure, ma'am, the hose busted to-night, and ain't no good at all, at all!" wailed Mary.

"Then get pitchers, tin cups, anything that will hold water!" directed Martha excitedly. "Are you going to stand there, and let the house burn down about our ears?"

Suiting the action to the word, she herself dashed off to the bath-room to return in a moment with a wash-bowl full of water, while Mary and Nellie followed eagerly in her wake, the one bearing a soap-dish and the other a tooth-mug.

But the fire by this time had gained too strong a headway for any such puny efforts to avail. The stairway had become so choked with stifling, black smoke that even Martha was forced to give back, and from above could be heard ominous sounds betokening that the blaze was rapidly spreading to the second story.

Martha made one last trip to the bath-room to refill her bowl, and dash the contents down the smoke-filled stairway; then she resigned the unequal struggle.

Mary and Nellie had already deserted the field, and rushed to the threatened upper rooms to save what they could of their personal belongings; and there seemed nothing left for the daughter of the house but to awaken her mother and arrange for her removal to a place of safety.

Accordingly she hastened at full speed to the invalid's room; but when she reached it, she found the bed empty, and no sign of its occupant anywhere in sight.

"Mary and Nellie must have got here ahead of me, and carried her out."

Martha came to this quick conclusion, and dreading the effect the flutter and trepidation of the maids might have upon the sick woman's sensitive condition, she hurried in pursuit.

In the excitement of the fire, she had completely forgotten the earlier menace of the lurking man outside, nor did she recall it as she rushed from the burning house.

Curiously enough, too, she failed to be struck by the fact that the front door was still closed and locked as she had made it against the approach of the intruder. She should have realized that had the maids left the house with her mother, they must have gone that way; but in her preoccupied haste she gave no thought to the matter.

With fluttering fingers she unbarred the door, and sped out upon the lawn; but arriving there, she halted with a sudden realizing qualm of uncertainty.

The flare from the burning building was by this time lighting up the entire grounds with its ruddy glow, making everything about the place as light as noonday; and so far as she could see, she herself was the only person in evidence.

Her mother and the two maids were nowhere to be discerned. Where could they have disappeared in so brief an interval?

But while she stood gazing bewilderedly about, Mary and Nellie came struggling out of the front door toward her, bearing between them a monster bundle done up in a sheet, and from which trailed dresses, hats, shoes, *lingerie*—a hopeless jumble of their combined goods and chattels.

Martha, springing forward, instantly assailed the pair with eager questions.

Where was her mother she demanded? What had they done with her?

The two halted with gaping jaws at the inquiry, and dropped their unwieldy bundle in alarm.

"Your mama?" stammered Mary. "Great heavens, Miss Martha, we never

once thought of her. Haven't you got her out yet?"

The daughter stared dazedly at them for a second as she slowly took in the meaning of their response; then she wildly flung up her hands and started on a run back into the burning house.

Before she had taken half a dozen steps, however, the two girls had seized her, and were holding her back from her mad purpose; for a mad purpose it was, indeed.

The fire had spread with inconceivable rapidity, and although scarcely ten minutes had elapsed since the first alarm, the whole interior was ablaze, with flames shooting out of all the windows, and a great cloud of smoke rolling skyward.

Even where they stood outside on the lawn, the sparks and cinders were falling like rain, and the heat was so intense as to be almost insupportable.

It seemed like nothing short of suicide for any one to try to brave such a hazard; but Martha was apparently determined to sacrifice herself in the vain effort to save the invalid.

Almost beside herself, she struggled fiercely in the restraining grasp of the two maids, and struck out savagely at them with her clenched fists.

"Let me go!" she demanded in a frenzy. "Let me go, I tell you! Don't you see that mother is burning to death in there!"

Mary and Nellie pleaded and begged with her to stay back, and tried to point out the hopelessness of the task she would essay; but deaf to all their entreaties and arguments, she only struggled the harder.

"You *shall* let me go!" her voice rose shrill above the roar and crackle of the flames. "I will not let my mother burn!"

Ordinarily, the two girls could have handled her without the slightest trouble; but now she was exerting an almost maniacal strength.

Hither and thither, the three wrestled over the lawn, tugging and straining at one another, unitl at last, with a supreme effort, Martha wrenched free from her well-nigh exhausted captors, and started on a dash for the door.

Mary and Nellie fell back with a cry of dismay.

But at that moment, a slender, agile figure swept around the corner of the house, dashed up the steps, and seizing Martha by the arm, swung her to one side.

"You stay here!" the girls heard a terse command. "I'll get your mother out all right!"

Then, with the crouch of a football player about to tackle, he hurled himself forward into the swirling inferno of smoke and flame.

It was the man they had seen lurking in the shrubbery—the imposter who had called that afternoon!

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN THE FIREMEN ARRIVED.

STRANGE, the effect one mind will have over another.

Martha Brink, half-distraught with anxiety for her mother, had utterly disregarded the urgings of her faithful serving maids.

Their prayers and protestations had not carried a single atom of weight with her.

Yet at this stranger's mere word she abandoned her impulsive rush, and became as submissive as a child.

Curiously enough—for she had every reason to distrust the man—she felt confident that he would do exactly what he said.

Mary and Nellie, standing at one side, were weeping and wringing their hands, hopeless of the result; but Martha wore an air of calm assurance.

She busied herself during the period of waiting in selecting from the girls' heterogeneous bundle a warm cloak, and holding it ready to wrap around her mother the moment she should be brought forth.

Still, to tell the truth, there was hardly one chance in a hundred for the bold rescuer to succeed in his undertaking.

The house, an old frame structure, was now blazing like a tinder-box; and despite the short time which had elapsed, the conflagration was so far advanced that the walls might be expected to collapse at any moment.

Even if Fluno could force his way unscathed through the flame and smoke to the side of Mrs. Brink, there was imminent peril that before he could get her out, both would be buried under an avalanche of burning timbers.

Perhaps, if Martha had fully realized this danger, she would have been less composed; but seeing only that the fire had not yet reached to any great extent the wing where her mother's room was located, she believed that there would be little difficulty in winning through.

More than all else, though, it must be confessed, her woman's mind relied upon that decisive, masculine promise: "I will bring your mother out!"

Still, as the moments passed and there was no sign of his reappearance, while the fire steadily increased in volume and intensity, doubts and apprehensions began to disturb even Martha's settled trust.

A sigh of relief broke from her parted lips, as she heard the clanging of bells, and the murmur of shouting voices down the road. Help was at last at hand; for evidently the glare of the conflagration had aroused the neighbors, and the village fire department was hastening to the scene.

"Oh, hurry, hurry!" she breathed an involuntary prayer to them; for now the delay was stirring her fears once more to fever pitch, and she had to turn her eyes away in terror from the leaping advance of the flames.

Nearer and nearer came the strident bells, however. The hoarse murmur of voices could be distinguished as shouts of: "Fire! Fire!" And at last in a yelling mob, the excited villagers swept through the gate and into the grounds, dragging their engine behind them.

Martha turned toward them with an eager cry; then recoiled, startled and scarce able to believe her eyes.

At the head of the red-shirted firemen, and running with the best of them, was no one but her own mother—the invalid who for six months had not been able to rise from her bed without assistance!

"Mama!" cried the girl in consternation, and springing forward, would have enfolded her in the cloak; but Mrs. Brink pushed her somewhat impatiently away.

"I am all right, Martha," she said. "The outcry of the girls awakened me, and smelling smoke in the house, I knew instantly what was the matter; so jumping out of bed, and slipping into my skirt and shoes, I ran half a mile down the road to Smithson's to summon aid. On the way back, though, the fire department overtook us, and arrived as soon as we.

"I don't suppose, however,"—she glanced ruefully at the blazing dwelling—"that it will be possible to save anything after all. It will be a total loss.

"How thankful we should be," she added, "that all of us got out alive!"

Martha had been so overwhelmed and taken aback by the apparent miracle of her mother's recovery that she had been able to entertain no other thought; but recalled now to the desperate plight of the man within the burning house, she reeled back with blanching face and hands clutching at her bosom.

"Ah," she gasped; "but there *is* some one inside!"

"Some one inside?" exclaimed Mrs. Brink. "What do you mean, Martha? Nellie and Mary are both here. Who else—"

But Martha waited not to give response. She had already sprung away toward the fireman who were swiftly uncoiling their hose and getting their engine ready for immediate action.

"Oh, don't mind that!" she appealed passionately. "Let the old house burn, if it wants to. There is life to be saved! A man is inside there, and I know he cannot get out!"

"A man inside?" The firemen dropped the tasks upon which they were engaged, and stared at her incredulously. "But we were told that everybody was out?"

"No no!" screamed Martha. "He is there, I tell you! Right up there!" She pointed to the upper story of the now flaming wing. "Oh, surely, you will not let him perish!"

But there was really no need for such agonized entreaty.

Once clearly comprehending the situation, the helmeted captain turned to his men with the stentorian order through his trumpet:

"Off with the ladders!"

There was no necessity for further instructions. Every man there understood just what was wanted.

With a cheer, they sprang to the work, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the scaling ladders were off the wagon, and a band of picked men were dashing with them toward the house.

But before half the distance had been covered, there sounded above the roar of the flames an ominous, threatening creaking and rumble.

"Come back!" the captain bellowed, snatching up his trumpet. "Stand from under!"

The ladder-men heard and obeyed. Already some of them had halted, warned by their own ears what to expect.

Then, with a grinding, crunching slide, and a noise like the reverberation of thun-

der, the north and west walls toppled in, and a great pillar of flame and sparks shot up from the ruins!

CHAPTER IX.

THE ONE CHANCE.

WITH the falling of the walls, a groan of horror burst from the spectators on the lawn.

It seemed inevitable that in such a cataclysm the man inside must be lost, buried under tons of burning *débris*.

Martha threw her hands to her eyes to shield them from the sight, and broke into anguished weeping; for she felt that it was she who had sent him to his doom.

Under stress of her emotions, the world grew black about her, and she swayed unsteadily as though about to faint.

Then a sudden shout from the firemen roused her from her semi-swoon, and hastily uncovering her eyes, she gazed fascinated at the spectacle presented.

The great burst of flame which ensued upon the falling-in of the wall had for the moment cut off all view of the ruined structure; but as this died down, it could be seen that the southeast wing—the quarter to which Fluno had gone in his quest for Mrs. Brink—was still standing and practically intact.

The roof had slid forward and gone down in the crash, and a line of jagged, smoking timbers showed where the floor had broken away; but the two upper rooms of the wing—exposed by the tumbling-in of the rest like a scene on the stage—were undisturbed.

In the fierce light of the blazing ruins, each detail stood out plain and distinct—the bed in Mrs. Brink's room with the covers thrown back as she had leaped from it in sudden forgetfulness that she was an invalid, some of her garments hanging over the back of a chair, her dresser with its array of toilet articles, while in the adjoining chamber stood her husband's untouched couch and more masculine appurtenances.

But the sight which held all eyes riveted was the figure of young Fluno crawling out from under the bed, where he had evidently dived to shield himself from falling *débris*, as the roof went away from over him.

As he wiggled out from this retreat, and stood erect, showing that he was still uninjured, a cheer rang out from the watchers on the lawn, and a score of voices shouted encouraging admonitions to keep cool, and he would be saved.

Easier said than done, though, as to both propositions. At the front of the house the wall had fallen a trifle sideways, forming a barrier of fire between him and his would-be rescuers; beneath him, the lower rooms of the wing were in flames; and when the ladder-men rushed to the back, they found that the still blazing kitchen cut them off in that direction.

Apparently he was caught like a rat in a trap, encircled by a ring of fire; and to add to his peril, it was only too manifest that at any moment the flooring might give way, or the remaining walls topple in to engulf him in the raging furnace below.

With its supports being steadily eaten away, the wing swayed insecurely, looking as though it would tumble over at the first strong gust of wind.

Some of the firemen turned their heads away, unable to look upon the tragedy they felt sure was coming. Others ran wildly hither and thither in a frantic effort to be of some avail, or shouted futile advice at the top of their lungs.

But the young man paid no heed. Plainly he understood as well as those upon the ground, the desperation of his predicament.

Taking a few steps, he ran into Mr. Brink's chamber and gazed from the window at the back, only to return to the larger room once more, shaking his head.

Then, advancing almost to the edge of the charred flooring, he questioned the chances of a jump out over the piled-up, fiery mass of fallen wall; but quickly decided that this was also impracticable.

Hitherto, despite the odds against him, the chap had held his nerve; but now as he essayed one avenue of escape after another only to find them all closed, it was plain to be seen that his self-control was breaking.

His movements became more flurried and uncertain; he dashed aimlessly from one point to another; his face, when he turned it to the throng below, was set and white; he passed his hand over his brow from time to time as though to wipe away the starting drops of sweat.

But, all at once, he paused in his purposeless rushing about, and stood stock-still with his back to the spectators, gazing

upward and evidently struck by an inspiration.

A second he hesitated; then, as if having fully matured his plan, dragged the bed across the room, and with a quick, nervous heave, up-ended it against the wall.

Up its side he clambered as on a ladder, and reaching the top, stood erect, poising himself carefully on the cross-bars of the headboard.

What was he about to do? What idea had presented itself to his mind.

But the onlookers had not long to wait.

He raised his hands—the distance from his extended finger-tips to the edge of the cornice from which the roof had slid away being about three feet—and with a mighty spring leaped up and gained a hold.

For a second he dangled, his feet kicking wildly; then he drew himself up, and stood on the top of the wall.

As he balanced there on his precarious footing, his figure outlined dark against the ruddy glow of the sky, a realization came to those beneath of the desperate feat he was about to attempt.

Far enough away from the house to remain untouched by the flames, was a big elm-tree. Its trunk was perhaps forty feet distant from the wall; but one of its upper branches swayed not more than ten feet away from where Fluno stood.

His intention was manifestly to leap out, and catch the end of this, thence making his way to the ground; and with the recognition of this purpose, the crowd at once became still more excited.

Some yelled at him not to attempt the dangerous hazard, and others prayed him to wait just a minute; for the ladder-men catching his idea were already running to the tree with the design of clambering up and extending a line of poles across to him.

But he gave no heed to the freely-offered advice, if indeed he heard it.

The wall was swaying and trembling under him; the fire, burning through the flooring of the room he had just vacated, was leaping up toward him; and unmistakable noises of grinding and settling gave him warning that there must be no delay.

He crouched low, gathering his muscles for the spring, while a sudden silence fell upon the watchers; then with a tremendous leap, he launched himself down and out over the encompassing ring of flame.

Hearts stopped beating for an instant as he sped through the air. Scarcely a breath was drawn.

Then the eyes upraised to the spectacle saw his clutching hands grasp at the outer twigs and branches of the bough; saw his flight stayed, and the great limb dip sharply under his weight, until his feet almost touched the bed of blazing coals beneath.

Could he hold on? The anxious question was on every lip.

The bough, shaking and quivering, sprang back into position; and the question was answered.

His hold remained firm and unbroken; and before the next dip came, he had flung himself forward through the leaves, and was hugging a thicker portion of the branch in safety.

But as a tumultuous cheer broke from the crowd, there came another earthquake roar, and the wing, crumpling up like a house of cards, collapsed into the fire.

Fluno had made his leap not a moment too soon.

CHAPTER X.

A FEW EXPLANATIONS.

THE hero of the thrilling adventure slid down from the tree to the ground.

Instantly the crowd closed in upon him with encomiums for his daring and cleverness; but, instead of seeming elated thereat, he was manifestly downcast and dejected.

"Open up a way there!" some one shouted back in the press. "Miss Brink wants to speak to him."

Fluno shrank back nervously, and evidenced a desire for flight.

"Good Heavens, I can't face her!" he gasped. "Let go of me there, you fellows, and give me a chance to beat it."

"Can't face her?" questioned those surrounding him, struck by the dismay in his tone. "What's the matter with Miss Brink?"

"Why, don't you understand?" He struggled against their restraining grasp. "I promised to bring her mother out of that inferno, and"—his head drooped—"I failed.

"By Jove, though"—he glanced around challengingly—"it wasn't because I didn't try. Every hole and corner where the smoke and fire wasn't too thick to breathe I explored, and—"

"But Mrs. Brink wasn't there," a dozen voices broke in to reassure him. "No wonder you couldn't find her. She had left the house long before you started on your quest."

"Not there?" He stared incredulously at the information; then drew a long breath of deep relief. "Do you mean to say that I was the only person in the house when it fell?"

"The only one," they told him.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I'd go through it all over again, and more, too, just to hear that. Gosh, you don't know how good you fellows make me feel!"

But by this time Martha and her mother had got through the throng, and were standing in front of him; and Fluno made no effort now to evade the meeting.

The girl stretched out both hands to clasp his in an impulsive grip.

"Can you ever forgive me?" she asked in deep contrition.

Fluno never knew just exactly what he said in reply; but apparently it was satisfactory, for Martha and her mother both smiled approvingly, and the crowd broke into hearty applause.

"And you are sure you are quite unhurt?" Martha persisted anxiously.

"Quite," he rejoined, and at the time thought he was speaking the truth, although an inventory the next day showed that he was minus a couple of eyebrows and several patches of skin from various portions of his anatomy, not to speak of the numerous holes burned in his garments and a long rent in one sleeve made in descending the tree.

"By golly, Fluno," grumbled the fire-captain, who came up at this moment, "since the thing's ended all right, I'm not sorry that it happened. It may teach your people down at the water-works a lesson; for if we had had any kind of decent pressure we could have drowned out the blaze at the back, and saved you from having had to take such a risk."

Martha gave a slight start, and glanced at the speaker with a touch of uncertain question.

She realized all at once that everybody not only was calling the young man Fluno, but also seemed to know him and treat him as a familiar acquaintance and neighbor. Moreover, there could be no doubt from the fire-captain's remark that he was in fact the water inspector he had represented himself.

How, then, she puzzled, could he be the crafty crook, "Jimmy, the Stool Pigeon," as declared by the deputy sheriff? It must be that the latter for some reason had lied.

Still, on the other hand, she quickly reflected, there could be no denying that he had stolen her pearl pin, and had been lurking about her father's premises in most suspicious fashion.

Was he perhaps one of those individuals of whom she had read, who lead a double life, plying a blameless and legitimate occupation by day, while at night following the tortuous path of the outlaw and malefactor?

Yet how could she reconcile such a theory with his gallant action in entering the burning house? To picture a rogue who had been hanging about the place for the purpose of robbing, and mayhap murdering, the entire household, suddenly transformed into an angel of rescue for the same people, was — to say the least — something of a strain upon the imagination.

Martha could only shake her head bewilderedly as these different reflections flashed through her brain. Such a bunch of apparent contradictions she had never before encountered.

A ray of light on the vexing problem was cast for her, however, by the colloquy in progress between the young fellow and the fire-captain.

"It isn't our pressure that's at fault," he disputed the latter's criticism. "It's the leaky valves of your old, worn-out engine. I found pressure enough before you came to put out the fire all by myself, if I'd had anything but a busted garden-hose to work with."

"Oh! So you were here when the fire broke out, eh?"

"Sure, I was. I was standing just about here on the lawn, when I saw a sudden flare of light at the back; and, running around there to see what was up, found the whole interior of the kitchen ablaze. Things would go fast, I knew, unless something was done pretty quick; so I hunted out the garden-hose and hitched it to a hydrant in short order.

"But, as I tell you, the rotten old rubber was as full of holes as a sieve; and before I could patch it up to give more than a trickle the fire had gained such headway that I saw all bets were off.

"Then I heard Miss Brink screaming

that her mother was inside, and I raced around here to the front to do what I could."

"But what I can't understand, Walt," spoke up another of the bystanders with a touch of banter, "is how you happened to be out in this direction so late? Kind of off your regular beat, isn't it? You must have a girl out this way somewheres?"

Watching him narrowly, Martha observed that Fluno dropped his eyes in slight confusion at this thrust, and rather clumsily evaded an answer.

He was saved, too, from any further interrogatories of the same character by the fire-captain, who turned to Martha with an inquiry as to how her father happened to be absent from home?

"He was called away," she answered, studying Fluno out of the corner of her eye, "on important business. The deputy sheriff came after him to go to New York, and he has not yet returned."

"The deputy sheriff?" repeated the fire-captain. "There must be some mistake about that. I am the deputy sheriff down here myself."

CHAPTER XI.

OFF TO NEW YORK.

"You?" faltered Martha. "You are the deputy sheriff?"

"That's what he is," the bystanders chorused.

"Then who," she questioned, her eyes growing wide and apprehensive, "who is this man Haskell who came after my father?"

"Haskell—Haskell?" The fire captain shook his head. "I don't know of any one by that name in these parts, especially any one in an official position.

"Do any of you boys," turning to his men, "know of any Haskells hereabouts?"

But only blank looks and uncompromisingly negative shakes of the head came from the crowd.

"Perhaps, ma'am," he went on, "perhaps, ma'am, you've made a mistake, and this Haskell party is a deputy sheriff from New York or Brooklyn? That'd be a good deal more likely."

But Martha scoffed at this plausible explanation.

"No," she insisted; "he said that he belonged down here. 'I am the deputy sheriff of this county,' those were the exact words he used when he introduced himself to my father."

"Ah!" The real deputy glanced up with a sudden significant interest. "Then Mr. Brink wasn't previously acquainted with the man?"

"Oh, no. Indeed, I am very sure that father had never even so much as set eyes on him before."

"Yet he went with him on a trip to New York in this stranger's motor?"

"Yes."

The fire chief's face grew grave, and he chewed thoughtfully for a moment on the end of his mustache.

"Miss Brink," he said to the girl at length, "if you know, would you mind telling me just what sort of an errand your father went off on? This thing may be all right, but it looks pretty fishy to me, and—"

Martha gave him a quick, warning glance; for she had noticed all at once that her mother was listening to the conversation with startled interest.

For the moment, she had been so concerned in the revelations of the captain that she had forgotten the presence of the elder lady; but now recalled to herself, she attempted hastily to smooth things over.

"Oh, there is no need for any alarm," she cried glibly. "Father is not the kind of man to do anything without knowing what he is about."

At the same time, however, she telegraphed covertly with her eyes that she wished to have a private interview with the official as speedily as possible.

But it was already too late to try hoodwinking Mrs. Brink. She had heard enough to have her anxieties very thoroughly aroused, and she was determined now to learn the whole truth.

"Come, come, Martha," and she clutched her daughter by the arm. "That is no way to talk. With your father carried off by a man who is evidently either a fraud, or worse, I think there is very decided cause for alarm.

"This is no time," she went on firmly, "for holding anything back. Let us have the whole story from beginning to end."

Mrs. Brink was not a person to be gainsaid when she put her foot down, even in her days of invalidism; and Martha attempted to interpose no more excuses or evasions.

Briefly as possible, she narrated the circumstances of Haskell's arrival, and of the misgivings his questions had engendered on the part of Mr. Brink, finishing by describing the precipitate departure of the two for town against her protests and entreaties.

The only thing she omitted to tell was the identity of Fluno with the supposititious, "Jimmy, the Stool Pigeon."

Listening to her detailed account, the fire chief and those around him grew manifestly perturbed; and when she ended there was but one opinion expressed—that Mr. Brink had fallen into the toils of one of the scheming scoundrels who infested Northmere and gave it its bad name.

"Just to make sure, though," said the chief to one of the villagers who had run out to the fire in his automobile, "suppose you motor over to the nearest telephone, and call up New York police headquarters. They can tell you whether any assistance has been asked for at any of the station houses, or whether any attempt has been made to raid Mr. Brink's residence."

The man readily complied; but when he returned some fifteen or twenty minutes later, his report was not reassuring.

The West Eightieth Street station-house with which he had been talking not only insisted that no appeal had been made to them to prevent an anticipated burglary, but in order to make sure that everything was all right had despatched a couple of men to Mr. Brink's residence, and found it absolutely secure in every respect.

Considering this authoritative statement, and the length of time which had elapsed, since the lawyer set out—an ample interval for him to have made New York and return twice over—there seemed nothing to infer but that he had suffered foul play of some kind on the road.

Naturally, the men after a consultation among themselves over the situation, strove to make light of the affair to the ladies; but in their own minds, scarcely one there but believed that Mr. Brink, for some cause or another, had been done away with, and that his dead body would be found in the vicinity.

Immediately a score of volunteer searching parties were organized thoroughly to explore the road leading to New York; and in one or another of these practically every man in Northmere was speedily enrolled.

Then arose the question, what to do with Mrs. Brink and her daughter.

A dozen offers of asylum were of course made by hospitable neighbors; but Mrs. Brink settled the point by declaring an intention of returning to the town house.

She felt that she could be more comfortable in her own home, she said, and, beside, she had a fixed idea, that there she would be more apt to hear early news of her husband.

The garage which housed Mr. Brink's car was situated some little distance from the dwelling, and had been untouched by the flames, so there was no difficulty in regard to convenient means of transportation.

In fact, both she and Martha assured the fire chief that they could make the trip without the slightest trouble, and would be much better satisfied to do it.

The only obstacle which presented itself was to obtain a suitable chauffeur.

All the men qualified for that position were eager to remain behind, and join in the search for the missing lawyer; but the fire captain, who seemed to have constituted himself master of ceremonies, wasted scant time in coming to a decision.

"Here, Fluno," he said to the young water inspector, "you've done about enough hard work for one night, and it's up to you now to take the lazy job. Anyway, you're the best fitted man for the post, for no one can beat you running this style of a car, and you know the roads into town like a book."

Martha was staggered as she heard this proposition.

Could she trust her mother and herself alone on the long ride to New York with a man who, no matter how he had redeemed himself, had as yet given no satisfactory explanation of his suspicious earlier behavior?

Fluno also hesitated.

"Perhaps Miss Brink would prefer some one else," he observed diffidently.

As he spoke, he raised his glance a bit defiantly to hers; and whether it was a case of answering defiance, or whether she saw something there which stilled her qualms, Martha instantly acceded to the proffered arrangement.

"On the contrary," she said with a slight toss of her head, "if Mr. Fluno is willing to put us under still another obligation, there is no one I would rather have as our pilot."

The young fellow waited for no further sanction; but, hurrying off at once to the

garage, soon had the car out and cranked, ready for the start.

Then, having assisted his passengers aboard, he shot the lever up to full speed, and with a warning honk-honk from the horn, whizzed out of the yard and away into the night.

As they left Northmere behind, it was just at the moment that Gideon Brink was stealthily entering his invaded house.

CHAPTER XII.

NO DEFENSE.

On the front seat of the automobile rode Martha beside the chauffeur. The rear was occupied by Mrs. Brink, reclining in a welter of pillows and shawls.

As a matter of fact, the elder lady rather resented this arrangement, maintaining somewhat petulantly that she did not want to be treated as an invalid any longer; but Martha had insisted, perhaps for the ulterior reason that she herself wished to be where she could keep a sharp eye on Fluno.

Yet, as they sped along, she had to confess that he made not the least move which was open to question.

Apparently he was absorbed solely in the proper running of the machine; and with his attention engaged by a rather ticklish piece of road, they traveled for quite a time without exchanging even a word.

At last, though, when a somewhat smoother stretch was encountered, he turned to her abruptly with the question:

"Why didn't you let on to the fire captain back there that you thought I was 'Jimmy, the Stool Pigeon'?"

For a second she was taken aback; then she answered with equal directness:

"Because I was not absolutely certain; there was a chance that I might be mistaken. Was I?"

"Were you what?"

"Mistaken in regard to you."

He laughed.

"There's a question that won't bear answering," he said; "because, if I was the crook, I'd almost certainly lie, and if I wasn't, I'd never say that I was, so in either case the reply would be the same.

"No," he suggested; "a better plan to my mind is that you tell me your reasons for believing me off color, and then I will try to disprove them. Have you any grounds for your suspicion against me, outside of the statements of this self-styled deputy sheriff, Haskell?"

She nodded.

"What are they?"

"Well,"—she hesitated a moment—"why were you hanging about our place so long before the fire broke out, dodging around through the shrubbery, and scaring us half into fits?"

"Ah, you saw me there then?"

"We most assuredly did."

"And I frightened you?"

She admitted it a trifle impatiently, although she did not tell him that to the fear he had caused was due the burning down of the house.

"I am sorry," he said contritely. "I had no idea that you could see me."

"But why were you there at all?" she demanded. "What were you doing?"

"I was trying to guard you from harm," he confessed unwillingly.

"Trying to guard us from harm?" Her tone was distinctly skeptical. "What ever put such an idea in your head?"

"Well, I happened to see your father start off with this stranger, and although I had no suspicion then that anything was wrong with that, I realized that you women were all by yourselves out there in that lonely house, with no way of calling assistance if anything should happen; so I determined to go out, and stay around the place until your father got back.

"I see now," he granted, "that I handled the matter like an idiot, but you must admit that my motive was all right."

But she was still not entirely convinced.

"Why then," she probed, "couldn't you have given that explanation to the firemen at Northmere, instead of hemming and hawing, and evading their questions as you did?"

"Aw,"—and he shrugged his shoulders—"they were piling the hero business on me too thick as it was. I didn't want to make any more bids for that kind of thing."

His tone of disgust was too genuine to be put on. Martha was satisfied that he was telling the truth.

He caught a glimpse of her face, and his own lighted up with relief over his success in having persuaded her of his innocence.

"Is that all you want to know?" he asked with a hint of triumph in his voice.

"No. There is one thing more. Tell me why you took my pearl pin."

If he had been suddenly plunged into a snow-bank on a broiling hot July day, Fluno could not have been more surprised and overwhelmed than by this set-back to his vaunting self-assurance.

"Why I took your pearl pin?" he stammered, showing every sign of guilty confusion. "What do you mean?"

"Simply that a valuable pearl pin was missing from my dresser this afternoon, after you had been at the house, and the circumstances point to you as the only person who could have taken it."

"Well, the circumstances point wrong then. I did not take it."

His manner, however, failed to carry conviction. His denial sounded dogged and obstinate, rather than sincere.

Martha turned from him coldly with a sense of contemptuous disappointment.

She had hoped that he would be able in some way to explain the incident of the pin, and his failure to do so, or to enter more than a mere disclaimer of the charge hurt him worse in her eyes than if he had assented to all the other indictments she had brought against him.

She was willing to concede that he was not the shrewd, wily crook she had first thought, a master by virtue of superior gray matter in the world of graft; but, instead, she believed him now simply a pitiful sneak-thief, a dishonest fellow who in the presence of temptation had not been able to restrain his pilfering instincts.

He seemed to realize instinctively this attitude of mind on her part, and either because he resented it, or was trying to cover up his shame and humiliation with a touch of bravado, he moved rather ostentatiously away from her, and devoted his attention solely to the motor.

Thus they rode along in silence again, lips set, faces straight ahead, never deigning to glance in each other's direction.

The pearl pin loomed up as a monster barrier between them.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHARING THE RISK.

MILE after mile sped swiftly away into the rear of them without a word or look passing between the two on the front seat.

Mrs. Brink despite her assertions of complete restoration to health, had succumbed to the fatigues, excitement, and anxieties of the night, and was asleep amid her shawls and pillows. Indeed, an unmistakable snore finally gave evidence to the depth of her slumbers.

Fluno started at the sound, and glancing quickly around, assured himself that she was off fast and sound; then he leaned toward his companion.

"Quite a remarkable recovery, that," he nodded toward the rear, as he broke the strained silence.

Martha assented distantly.

"She had been ill quite a long time, I understand?" he went on.

"Quite."

"Confined to bed all through?"

Miss Brink's lips twitched a shade impatiently.

"Since you seem so interested, I will give you a history of the case," she responded ungraciously.

"My mother was taken ill two years ago" —reeling off her words like a phonograph— "with an ailment which was pronounced by the doctors a form of neurasthenia, but which seemed to me more nearly to resemble creeping paralysis.

"She steadily grew worse, and for the past six months has not left her bed or been able to take a step."

"You are sure of that?" broke in Fluno sharply.

"Sure of it? Of course, I am sure. Have I not been in constant attendance on her?"

She frowned in annoyed fashion.

"Why should you ask such a question as that?" she demanded.

"Oh, for no especial reason. I simply knew that people afflicted with that disease are often very cunning and sly, and seem to take a perfect delight in tricking and deceiving their nurses.

"Now is it not possible," he questioned, "that your mother may have walked about the house more or less all the time without your knowledge, in which case her performance of to-night would be far less surprising than it appears?"

"But I am positive," Martha asserted, "that mama did nothing of the kind."

"You insist, then, on regarding her recovery as a miracle?" His tone was a bit quizzical.

"If you want to call it that. It is not uncommon, I believe, for nervous cases to be cured by some sudden shock, or strong emotion."

He hesitated a moment, as though pondering what he was about to say; then leaned toward her.

"Miss Brink," he said slowly, "what would you think, if I told you that your mother—"

But just then the old lady gave vent to such a violent snore that she woke herself up and interrupted the disclosure Fluno was about to make.

"Ah, the lights of New York!" she exclaimed. "How quickly we have made the trip."

The lights of Manhattan were indeed in evidence; for they were speeding through Long Island City and toward the Queensboro' Bridge; and as Mrs. Brink, feeling that she was now near home, kept awake, Fluno had no further opportunity to touch upon the subject he had started to broach.

A chauffeur picking his way across New York, even at night, has his hands pretty full anyhow; and while he dodged taxicabs and trolley cars, at the same time keeping a wary eye out for traffic cops, the man from Northmere did not feel much like indulging in conversation.

He won his way, safely across town, however, and without mishap of any kind landed his charges at their own door.

But, as he helped the two ladies out, and started to gather up the shawls and pillows to carry them into the house, he heard Martha suddenly give an exclamation of chagrin.

"Good heavens, mother!" she ejaculated. "How are we to get in? We have no key!"

"No key?" repeated the other. "Do you mean to tell me, Martha, that you came away without the keys?"

"I am afraid that is just what I did," admitted the girl forlornly. "You see father took one bunch with him when he started, and the other was burned up in the fire: so I couldn't have brought a key even if I had thought of it. But I'll have to admit that I did not think. In the hurry and excitement of deciding what to do, the fact that the house was locked up never once occurred to me."

"But what are we to do?" cried Mrs. Brink. "You know how I hate going to hotels, and beside, I would never consent to appear at one in this rig—merely a skirt slipped on over my nightgown, and Nellie's jacket around my shoulders.

"We must get into the house, Martha," she insisted desperately "if only to obtain some decent clothes."

It was all very well to say that they had to get into the house; but to do so without a key, even Mrs. Brink realized, was beset with more or less difficulty.

The three of them stood on the sidewalk and gazed up with very little hope at the blank, shuttered windows and boarded door.

All at once, however, Fluno clapped his hand to his hip pocket and uttered an expression of satisfaction.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, drawing forth a small, oddly-shaped object. "I forgot for the moment that I had it with me; but it's here, all right, and it solves our problem very nicely."

"What is it?" inquired Mrs. Brink, eying his find with, it must be confessed, not any too much confidence.

"A combination chisel and wrench," explained Fluno, "which, as you see, folds up compactly into a handy size for the pocket. I find it of great use in my business; but where it's going to be especially valuable in the present crisis, is in the fact that it also has a glass cutter attachment.

"If you don't mind, Mrs. Brink,"—his eyes twinkled—"I am going to take the part for which they cast me earlier in the evening, and proceed to burgle your premises."

"I don't care what you do," she retorted impatiently; "so long as you get us inside."

"All right, then; let the responsibility be yours. But, since an inquisitive cop would be more apt than not to march me off to the station-house, if he caught me, suppose you two stand out on the sidewalk, and give me fair warning should one come strolling down his beat."

Accordingly, Martha and her mother duly mounted guard; and Fluno, selecting one of the basement windows as most convenient for his purpose, first pried open the shutters with the chisel part of his tool, and then using the glass cutter, removed enough of one of the panes to permit the introduction of his hand and the manipulation of the catch.

He had not made his boast in vain. A way into the locked and barred house was soon open.

On his return to the ladies, he was brimming over with triumph.

"There," he declared, "I don't believe

the slickest cracksman in the business could have done a neater, quicker or quieter job. Did you notice, there wasn't even a tinkle when I took out that glass.

"But," he went on, "I guess you ladies are more interested in getting inside, than in hearing how the trick was turned; so, if you'll just put me wise to the lay of things, I'll hustle around to the front door and play butler for you. It's the usual interior arrangement, I suppose?"

"I'll go with you, and show the way," said Martha quietly.

"But that isn't necessary at all, Miss Brink," he protested. "All I need is a pointer or two to keep me from going astray."

"No," she insisted firmly. "I am going with you."

"Ah!" His lip curled, as he thought he understood. "You fancy, perhaps, that I was a shade too workmanlike on my burglary job? Or, maybe"—dropping his voice—"you have an idea that I might find another pearl pin?"

"Not at all," she asserted, and her voice showed that his thrust had wounded her deeply. "There is a certain risk, slight though it may be, in going into the house this way, and I prefer to share that risk with you. In other words, I do not choose to increase the heavy obligations under which you have already placed us."

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE CELLAR.

BACK now to the adventures of Mr. Brink and the slouch-hatted Haskell.

As will be remembered, the two, in pursuit of the intruders in the house, passed in at the basement door, and stole stocking-footed through inky blackness up the stairs to the first floor.

Here, the plan was for Brink to guide his companion to a position by the front door, and then creeping back to the head of the basement stairs, guard that exit himself, at the same time flushing the thieves by making a noise as though the police were entering from the rear.

And up to a certain point the pre-arranged procedure was followed without a hitch.

The thieves, it was evident from the slight noises which could be heard, were at work in the second story, just where they wanted them; so Brink, without hesitation, led the way through the front hall with the deputy sheriff's hand in his, and when he reached a point near the hat-rack, indicated by a slight pressure of the fingers that this was the spot where the other was to stand.

But, instead of letting go, Haskell clutched him suddenly in a tighter grip, and at the same time threw his free arm about the lawyer's neck, jerking him backward, and closing down with a vise-like hand upon his windpipe.

Taken utterly off his guard by the treacherous attack, Mr. Brink could not even put up a struggle. Almost before he knew what had happened, he was absolutely powerless in his false ally's grasp.

"I've got him all right, boys," Haskell panted. "But hurry up with those ropes. He is wriggling like an eel!"

There was quick assent, the sound of hasty footsteps; and then some one turned the bull's-eye of a dark lantern on the prisoner, while others, under Haskell's instructions, trussed him up tightly with cords, and forced a gag between his lips.

Thus tethered, he was carried none too gently down into the cellar, and propped up in a corner with his back to the wall.

By the light of a smoky lantern he saw that he was surrounded by six or eight desperate-looking ruffians of whom Haskell was evidently the leader.

With a grin of sinister significance, the latter seated himself on a box, and opened the proceedings.

"Well, Mr. Shrewdest-lawyer-at-the-New-York-bar, as they call you," he mocked, "I guess it's begun to dawn on your intelligence by this time that you've been tricked.

"Now, naturally, you want to know what the game is, and why it has all happened; and I ain't going to be one to whet your curiosity unduly. I'll lay my hand face up on the table, and then you can play to it as you see fit.

"You've been brought here, you may as well understand, not to be robbed or anything of that kind, and not to be hurt so long as you're good; but simply to give us some much-desired information.

"There's a certain little piece of paper with the John Hancocks of several well-known parties on it, a sort of gentlemen's agreement as it were— Ah, I see you know what I mean," as Brink's eyes flashed.

"Well, we know that that paper isn't safe in your hands, for the reason that it's able to send these aforesaid well-known parties up the road; so we're going to relieve you of it.

"If you give me an order calling for its delivery, you shall be turned loose from here unharmed, just as soon as we have the paper safe in our hands, and have had a chance to make a clean getaway.

"Now," he concluded, "you know what's wanted, and why; and you can make up your mind what you're going to do."

Yes, indeed, Brink did know what was wanted and why; for the paper referred to was the keystone of the laborious case he had built up against the wealthy looters of the railroad company, his one chance of giving them their deserts.

He set his teeth in a grim determination never to give it up so long as the power remained with him to utter his refusal.

"What's the alternative, eh, if you don't come across with it?" said Haskell, affecting to misunderstand the meaning of his expression. "Well, there's some things that's pleasanter not to discuss in a friendly little confab like this.

"Let me point out to you, though," with a brutal leer, "that we've got plenty of time on our hands to use all sorts of persuasion. Nobody's going to be looking for you until to-morrow morning at the earliest, and in the meantime we can do all kinds of stunts to you, or we might even send some of the boys here down to call on your wife and daughter, who are all alone in that country house of yours."

Brink could not restrain an involuntary shudder at this proposition, as he glanced around at the ring of ruffianly faces.

"Ah, that kind of gets your goat, don't it?" cried Haskell. "But we can do even worse than that, if you prove too bull-headed to listen to any reason whatever. The next best thing to getting that paper out of the way, is to get you out of the way yourself; and a man of your brains will understand how easy that can be done.

"All we've got to do is slit your windpipe, stuff you into the furnace yonder, and start the fire going; and who will ever know what has become of you?"

The lawyer realized that much of this talk was for effect, and yet he did not doubt, on the other hand, that if forced to it these men were prepared to go the limit. Their wealthy employers were desperate enough to stand for anything in the effort to save themselves from impending exposure and disgrace. That was shown by the fact that they had taken the risk of dealing with such blackguards as these.

He fell to wondering if maybe he did not have as strong a card in this unholy alliance as in the paper which was demanded of him? If he could show up these rascals in high position as ready to connive at abduction, murder, any crime, would it not be proof—"

But Haskell, by some sort of uncanny intuition, seemed to read the thoughts which were coursing through his brain.

"It won't work, old man," with a shake of his head. "Believe me, it'll never work. You're pretty cute; but you'd never be cute enough to trace this thing back to them that's responsible. They'd be the last people on earth ever to give an order to do a job of this sort. I do it all on my own authority. A hint merely comes down to me through half a dozen hands that such and such a thing is wanted; but even I could never show that I had the sanction of any of the head people.

"No," he added, "you're up against the real thing, Brink; so what's the use of wasting time? Give me the order for the paper, and be done with it. Come, is it a go? Shake your head, yes or no."

The lawyer responded with a decided negative; and, in reply to a score of other crafty appeals and arguments put to him from time to time, with intervals between "to think it over," his answer was always the same.

At last, his opponent's patience became exhausted. The mocking smile with which he had started had long since become a scowl, and now he finally lost his temper.

"All right, then," he snarled. "Since you won't listen to reason, we'll try something a little stronger.

"Jack, bring out that charcoal brazier and set it going. We'll toast the soles of his feet for him as a starter."

With the utmost *sang-froid* the order was obeyed.

With fascinated gaze, Brink watched while the brazier was brought forth, and the coals within it ignited and blown to a white heat.

When everything at last was ready, two of the band sprang upon him and tore off his shoes and stockings.

"Now, for the last time," threatened

Haskell, "will you give up that paper, or will you not?"

But for some while Brink had been working the gag away from his lips, and now with a supreme effort he jerked his head free and raised his voice in a couple of stentorian calls:

"Help! Help!"

He put all the power of his lungs into the cries; but it was in vain. The only response was the dulled echo which resounded from the low cellar roof.

And before he could cry again he had been seized, and the gag forced back into place more securely than ever.

CHAPTER XV.

HANDS UP!

THAT despairing cry of "Help!" wrung from Gideon Brink's tortured lips, had not, however, been unheard.

Fluno and Martha had just entered the window, and were crossing the basement on their way to the stairs, when the muffled cry came up to them, apparently from directly under their feet.

"What was that?" The girl clutched at his arm. "There must be some one in the house."

"There is," assented Fluno in a quick whisper. "You go back outside, Miss Brink. I am going to investigate."

"But wouldn't it be better to call the police?" she demurred.

"No time for that. When a person calls 'Help!' it generally means that quick action is wanted."

While he was speaking he had guided her back to the window and lifted her out, and then he lost no time in speeding away on his errand of assistance.

But, as he was hunting somewhat unsuccessfully for the steps to the cellar, he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and there was Martha to guide him in the desired direction.

"Go back!" he ordered her sharply; but she whispered obstinately that she would not, and told him curtly that he would save time and breath by not arguing the matter.

A wilful woman will have her way; and, although Fluno continued to oppose and protest, he found himself almost before he knew it at the foot of the cellar-steps with Miss Brink still sticking at his side.

And then the controversy between them abruptly ceased; for just ahead the young man could see the light of the lantern shining from under the door of the furnace-room, and could catch the murmur of voices within.

A word or two which reached his ears gave him to understand, moreover, that there must be no further delay if his presence on the scene was to prove of any avail.

"Wait here," he directed, turning to the girl; then glided noiselessly forward and glued his eye to the keyhole of the door from behind which shone the light.

When he returned a second later there was a certain crisp decision in his voice which indicated that he had already evolved a plan of rescue.

"Where does that door on the other side of the furnace-room lead?" he demanded, after he had outlined to Martha as considerately as possible the situation he had just witnessed.

"The door on the other side of the furnace-room?" she repeated. "Why, into the coal-cellar."

"And has the coal-cellar any other outlet?"

"Only this." She laid her hand upon a door beside them, which Fluno noted to his satisfaction was of stout timbers, and provided with a strong chain and padlock. "This, and the coal-hole above to the sidewalk."

"Then, we've got them!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "We've got them good and hard."

While he was speaking he had adjusted the chain and lock, and now whirled again to Martha.

"It's lucky, after all, that you insisted on coming with me," he said; "for you can do more good in this pinch than a squad of men. If I would dash in there on them, they might be upset and surprised; but they'd stop and wait to see whether I was alone, or just how many men I had with me, and in any event they would probably put up a fight.

"With you, though, it is different," he explained. "When they see a woman rushing in upon them, and hear me behind you making a noise like a dozen cops, they will break and run for that coal cellar, their only way of retreat, like all possessed.

"They will never dream for a minute, you see, that a girl like you would take such a chance unless she had the whole metropolitan police force behind her.

"The sole question, therefore," he added, "is, are you game to make the try, and do you think you will be able to carry off the bluff?"

Without an instant's hesitation she stepped forward to signify that she was ready.

"All right, then," muttered Fluno approvingly. "When I give the word, go through that door and at 'em just like you meant business and had an army at your back. I haven't got a gun with me, worse luck; but here"—he pressed his handy combination tool into her grasp—"this looks enough like one to serve all practical purposes, I guess."

Then, after another brief survey through the keyhole to make sure of his ground, and a few final instructions to Martha, he gave the word.

Boldly the girl sprang forward, and, swinging open the furnace-room door, leveled her make-believe revolver at the amazed and startled ruffians.

"Hands up, there!" she ordered sharply; then called over her shoulder to an imaginary host behind:

"This way, men! This way! They're all in here together!"

And at the same moment Fluno overturned a pile of boxes with a terrific clatter, and, beating on a board with hands and feet, gave a realistic impression of a multitude of rescuers hurrying to the scene.

The band within, never doubting that they were surprised and cornered, stayed not to investigate.

With a wild howl of dismay, they charged for the door of the coal-cellar as one man, cursing and struggling as they jammed and fought with one another at the narrow aperture.

Then, while they were fumbling at the locked outer door, Fluno brushed past Martha, and, rushing across the floor, slammed to upon them the portal through which they had just passed and secured it with the heavy iron furnace-poker as a bar. They were caught like rats in a trap.

"Like clockwork!" he exclaimed exultantly. "They have caged themselves up as tight as if they were already behind the bars of Sing Sing!"

There was still work for him to do, however, and there was no time to be lost in doing it.

Leaning over, he quickly cut the bonds from the shackled lawyer, and removed the gag from his mouth.

"Now," he directed, "Mr. Brink and I can safely see to it that they don't break out of either door. You run, Miss Brink, and call the police!"

And so at last the exciting sequence of the night's events was over.

Later, when the prisoners had been duly marched off to the station-house, and Fluno and the Brink family were gathered upstairs in the library, discussing the various thrilling incidents through which they had passed, and indulging in mutual explanations, the young water inspector turned to the mother of the family.

"And now, Mrs. Brink," he said, "since everything else has been made clear, suppose you tell Miss Martha what became of her pearl pin."

A rather peculiar expression passed over the old lady's face.

"Her pearl pin?" she faltered.

"Yes. Miss Martha thinks I stole it."

"Oh, no," she demurred. "Why, I took it myself. All the time I was sick I was accustomed to rove about the house when nobody was looking, although for some reason I had a strong antipathy to letting the fact be known. So, this afternoon, while on one of my expeditions, I saw your pin, Martha, lying exposed on the dresser, and, knowing that there was a strange man at work in the house, took possession of it, and put it safely away."

"But, how"—she turned to Fluno—"does it happen that you know anything about it?"

"Oh, that was easy." He smiled. "I could see every move you were making by means of the mirror in the bath-room."

"And why did you not tell me this before?" demanded Martha.

"Well," he said, "if you will remember, you hardly gave me the chance."

This is not a love-story; for if it were, it would have to end up conventionally with the scent of orange-blossoms and the strains of Mendelssohn's wedding march. But for those who are romantically inclined it may be stated that Fluno is now a rising young lawyer in Mr. Brink's office, and that he is a frequent and always welcome caller at the Brink home.

The reader may draw from these facts what conclusion he sees fit.

THE END.

THE ATTACK TO SAVE.

BY BURKE JENKINS.

A Tale of Arab Days in Which a Night Tragedy Is Made To Serve Implacable Purpose in the Morning.

IT must have been premonition that prompted me to examine my horse's girth just before the "Grand Entry" that particular night of the week we were playing "under canvas" in Brooklyn.

"Here, you, Crawley!" I cried in wrath, for the whole troop was waiting and the cue was almost due; "that's the second time I've found gross carelessness in the way you've saddled my mount. Once more, and I'll take it to the manager!"

I tugged away at the girth myself, planting my knee firmly, and cinched it securely after the fashion of the West, for I had learned my first horsemanship in Texas before it was fenced. Even as I did so I reflected what a come-down it was for an "old timer" to be thus rigged out in a false black beard, swathed in yards of filmy veiling surmounted with a turban, and perched up on a gaudy saddle shaped like a sawhorse.

But I had been forced to join the circus, for really my only accomplishment was ability to stick any brute that went on hoofs; and my sole comfort lay in the knowledge that there wasn't a man in the outfit that could beat me at it. Even the native Arab, Arbidni, who led that dashing mass of clashing desert horsemen and to whom I acted as lieutenant, let it be plainly seen that he little relished and thereby recognized my superiority.

Little did I realize at the time, though, that his enmity was so deep as to make him bribe the scoundrelly hostler, Crawley, to put me thus in immediate danger of a broken neck.

"Take it to the manager, will yer?" snarled Crawley sulkily, "get him to fight your troubles for you, eh?"

I have always been plenty ready with my fists, and the fellow's tone was more galling than the words themselves.

With the bridle in my left hand, and standing thus beside my horse, I whirled a quick pivot and caught him squarely under the chin. He went flat to the tan bark. That blow was destined to throw me into one of the greatest meshes of my life. I was far from realizing it at the time, for seconds were precious as the blare of the cue music from the band rang out from the other side of the entrance flap.

Scorning stirrup, I flung myself to the saddle, caught my place immediately behind Arbidni, our leader, and through the held-aside canvas we went full tilt.

Cornling Brothers' United Shows took just pride in that mad, tumultuous, gun-barking and arm-clashing *fantasia* of fifty "Wild Arabs of the Soudan." The thing was really done mighty well, the effect was realistic, and being the first event, it seemed always to start the performance with plenty of snap.

There, right ahead of me, rode Arbidni, a truly imposing figure. Up full in front of him he would throw that long gun of his, catch it mid-way and, with a twirl, there followed the crash of the blank charge it held. And the rest of us rode him a good second.

The first maneuver was a wild dash in veriest go-as-you-please career making a complete circuit of the "big top," and we bore off a trifle to the right as we entered. This first whirl was followed by what seemed the most *ad libitum* disorder, but what was in reality the most artfully planned system of figures. And it was Arbidni's leadership that made the thing a success.

But, on this night, came a change.

Our first semicircle went as per schedule, when, upon rounding the farther ellipse of the course, Arbidni brought his horse up short to his haunches.

The halt lasted only an instant, but in that second of time he flashed a most peculiar look at a man who occupied one of the boxes in the lower tier. Then, before the racing troop behind could ride him down, he dug spur viciously. He dropped his leadership of us from that moment and,

making directly for the exit flap, quickly disappeared.

The man in the box quietly rose and left the circus.

II.

ANY one who has ever been in the show business will tell you that no occurrence however startling, must be allowed to cause so much as a ripple in the running of the performance. And I don't believe there were ten people in that huge tent—other than the initiated—who realized that anything out of the ordinary had occurred.

For, though I was abundantly surprised at such unwonted procedure on the part of Arbidni, my course lay plain before me. Accordingly, I galloped my mount to his position and took his duties of leadership upon myself, the rest of the troop accepting the new order of things with characteristic promptness — a promptness in emergency known only to the profession.

There was absolutely no trace to be found of Arbidni. One of the peg boys told of having seen him make a hasty change to street costume; that was all.

When the show was finally over and I was divesting myself of those rolls of cloth I hated so cordially, tearing away at the false beard, and scrubbing off grease paint with cold cream, I got my first spare time to conjecture as to the possible explanation of the occurrence. But guessing was futile, so I finally resolved that, anyway, it was none of my funeral. Rather otherwise; for, should the Arab not reappear, it meant my own promotion.

I tumbled my costume and make-up box into my little cube of a trunk, locked it, caught up my hat, lit a cigarette, and got away from the circus grounds.

I caught a car that would take me to the Thirty-Fourth Street Ferry; for during the week before, when we had been playing at the "Garden," I had discovered a treasure of a boarding-house which I would rather take the trouble to cross the river for than to trust to Brooklyn's dubious offerings to duplicate. It was on East Thirty-Fifth Street, and so the ferry was very handy.

The men were just closing the vehicle gates when I ran through the ferry-house, and I was in the nick of time to reach the after deck just before the water foamed to the starting churning of the paddles. I lit another cigarette and stood there enjoying the cool night air.

The deck-hand snapped the clasp over the after-guard rails and, walking forward, lost himself in the shadows. Indeed I thought I was entirely alone aft, for, with that eagerness to alight which characterizes all New York, everybody had crowded to the forward deck to be first off when we reached the slip.

The unusual strain of the performance that night had tired me more than I had realized at first and I sat down on one of those low side cleats near the collapsing gates. I faced aft and amused myself blowing clouds in our wake.

I have an acute sense of approaching danger. It is an acquirement early attained by the plainsman. But in this instance I hadn't enough warning to put myself sufficiently on the defensive.

The dark flit of a shadow came to consciousness from over my shoulder, seemingly emerging from the gloom of the wagon-way, and before I could stand to full height and tenseness, I was caught in a husky grip about the middle. Slowly but surely I felt myself backed against the boat's rail, then as surely was I bent over toward the outboard side.

"I guess this'll about stow your gaff, you!"

The words came thick, gruff, and liquor-laden; but I now realized who my assailant was. I thought quick.

"Both of us then, Crawley, you scoundrel!" I cried and, just as I felt my balance going, I circled his bull neck with my right arm and locked the vise of my grip with my left.

Together we hit the chill of the dark waters.

The shock as we went under served to loosen my would-be assassin's hold, and it was at a distance of some feet apart that we came to the surface.

The glare of a brilliant electric display sign along the Manhattan shore gave me plenty of light to see about me. And one look at the flounderings of the rogue, Crawley, showed me that he couldn't swim.

I suppose it took only a moment for me to decide; but it certainly seemed longer before I had fought the thing out with my conscience as I continued to tread water. Should I attempt to rescue this man who had but a moment before sought my death?

As I look back on the instant I don't believe I decided the thing myself at all. I simply found myself swimming for him as

a gurgle in his throat told that he was about to go down.

This time it was a drowning man's clutch I was forced to cope with, not a murderer's. But I had learned the trick of an old longshore life-saver.

Coming up behind him, I caught the collar of his coat in my left hand. Controlling my distance thus, I turned his face sideways to me and struck him with all my force on the side of his face. There is a certain spot that will do the trick.

He went limp on the second, and I now had simply a human bundle to rescue from the fast outgoing tide of the East River. But I had my hands full at that; for the fellow was very heavy and I soon saw that any hope of reaching shore lay in giving way to the current and striving simply to make as much headway as I could at an angle to its force.

I swam on my back, holding the inert form of Crawley under the arm-pits. Of course, this way of swimming prevented me from seeing well where I was going. In fact, the first hint I had of my proximity to anything was a decidedly vigorous thump on the back of my head as I collided with the anchor cable of a vessel that lay nose to the tide.

The next second we were swept past the cutwater and were slipping swiftly along the steel plates of the boat's side. For one instant only I turned and looked in the direction of our progress, but that second showed me the dangling out-pole for boats; for it was the port side we had struck.

The twenty feet of cross-current battle that I now had to fight, winded me terribly; so that when I finally could reach up and grasp the little dangling rope ladder at the out-pole's end, it was all I could do to hold on. My strength had left me entirely, and I had sense enough not to try to do any climbing until I had rested a bit.

I had just decided to cry out for help from the vessel when I heard the near dip of oars and a voice sang out directly in my ear:

"Well, blow me, if there ain't two more. Hi, Dork, help haul in these blokes!"

Over the gunwale of a dingey they dragged us, and the minute I felt something solid under me I collapsed into about as listless a bundle as the stunned Crawley. But I did hear what was going on about me.

"Well, if this ain't luck," continued the fellow who had spoken first. "Here we wuz a wondering how in heck we'd get another two to make out the full twelve, when, drat my cats, if we don't pick up two husky culls; dead to the world at that. Doggoned if we ain't even saved the trouble and price of 'knockouts' fer 'em! We'll just let on rowing ashore a bit, eh, Dork?"

"Right as a trivet!" agreed the fellow Dork, bending again to the oars. And, true to the scheme, he rowed about some and finally brought up alongside the ladder of the very vessel I had encountered.

Here, in the partial daze that still held me, both myself and the inert Crawley were bundled up to the deck, where our helpless condition excited no comment. I heard the clink of money in payment, and then finally realized that we had fallen prey to a crimp who had been commissioned, as is often the case, to supply a crew, willy-nilly, drugged or willing.

My next realization was being tumbled to a berth in a dimly-lit forecastle, where I immediately slid into the profound slumber of utter exhaustion.

III.

It was the easy heave of the ground-swell that I next experienced, and the gray sky through the forecastle hatch showed me that day was breaking, and in the growing light I looked about me.

Several inert forms in twisted attitudes about me spoke of the rest of the shanghaied crew, and directly opposite where I lay I discovered Crawley. He, too, had come to himself, and we lay there on the edges of our bunks, gazing each other eye to eye.

Then I realized that he was in even worse predicament than I, for of course he reasoned that I would square myself for his attempt at ending me at the rail of the ferry-boat. But I am not a cherisher of malice, and besides I reckoned upon having troubles enough ahead without any enemy direct. So I said:

"Look here, Crawley! You and I have managed to get into the same boat, so I guess we'd better be on the 'ins' rather than the 'outs.' I'm willing to call it quits."

"So'm I," he replied simply, whereupon the surly rascal got to his feet and began forthwith rousing the rest of the crew from their doped lethargy.

One by one they yawned and blinked into consciousness, and we were all about to enter into consultation as to our united be-

havior in our predicament when we were summarily interrupted by the descent into our midst of a pudgy, bewhiskered little codger whom any one of us could have eaten alive.

"Here, you lily-livered, blood-eyed bunch of pigeon-toed swabs, tumble up on deck and learn your catechism!"

And, by the hook, up we tumbled, the sorriest-looking dozen bound south-east from Sandy Hook.

The little stump of a boatswain, as our pudgy gentleman proved to be, drove us aft and got us into some semblance of a line. In an interval of waiting we viewed the dropping shore of Jersey, and we had time to take in the type of vessel we were to man—an out-and-out, smashing-fine steam yacht of trimmest lines!

Then a tall man in blue serge emerged from the after companionway and strode easily toward us.

His voice was low but of carrying quality, and his speech marked by an accent new to me.

"Men," said he, "I am thoroughly aware of the way you must feel toward me, and it is only natural. All that I want you to do now is to understand my side of it.

"It was absolutely necessary that I sail last night. I needed a crew, and I employed a low order of scoundrel to get one for me, because, simply, he was the *only* one who could do the trick in time.

"Now, I don't doubt but what every one of you is more or less used to rough handling; but I am not a man to relish the method. I would rather be friendly with you than the reverse. So I put it to you squarely. You have a choice of either of two treatments.

"This voyage and an expedition which is to follow it is apt to last some four weeks. Its object I may see fit to disclose to you later. If you stick by me, forget the way you have been impressed into service, and obey me faithfully, two hundred dollars a man will be my parting with you. The alternative? Extremely simple. I have three officers, two engineers, two stewards, and a valet, and we are all carefully armed, whereas we have seen to it, in your stupor, that none of you is.

"Now, men, choose!"

It was just the line of talk to get in under the skins of that riff-raff, and it seemed almost like a well-rehearsed comic opera chorus as we all sang out:

"The two hundred dollars for us!"

"I thought so," said the owner simply as he turned and strolled aft again.

On that second it was that the intangible groping that I had been making in my clearing brain bore fruit. I hadn't seen the man but once before, but his was a countenance to remember.

A-ha! I had it! It was the man who had risen quietly from the box at the show the night before and left the tent at about the very instant the Arab, Arbidni, had made his astonishing exit through the entry-flap.

IV.

IMMEDIATELY upon our return to the forecastle conjecture ran high as to the purpose and end of this unusual voyage. When it comes to high flights of imagination, commend me to an ignorant sailor.

Why, inside of fifteen minutes those fellows had broached every guess from buried treasure to out-and-out piracy! Personally, I said nothing, for I was having my own little problem to thrash out.

Somehow it didn't seem to me that I should, by right, be classed with the rest of these vagabonds. I had come aboard under entirely different circumstances, and was entitled, I thought, to altogether better treatment.

In fact, I quitted the forecastle when I was told off for deck duty for the first time, primed with the resolve to seek out the owner at once and tell him my whole story. But by the time I had reached the bridge on my way aft there flashed to me abundant reason why I should not pursue such a course.

To begin with, wouldn't the actual and bare truth seem like the veriest "ghost yarn," topping any that that imaginative bunch could have "doped up"? I would not be believed.

Again, such a man as I thought I read this imperative owner to be, fired with as serious a purpose as this one seemed to offer, would be distinctly displeased to have any such complication creep into his plan. He wanted a crew simply to man his craft. And he wished no restoring of a man like myself to a position on the yacht such as I might deem my due.

Furthermore, I thought of the fellow Crawley. I had already agreed to call "quits" with our animosity, and I certainly could not tell my yarn without involving him.

"No"—I whirled the pivot of decision and began polishing at the brass-work to which I had been assigned—"I guess it'll be better for me just to take things as I find them. It isn't going to hurt me any to play sailor for four weeks. All in a lifetime!"

And so it was I came to make no initial stir to air my story.

But the merest incident—in fact, what one might call but a vague shadow—happened within the next hour, for I chanced to go below for my clasp-knife (with which we had all been supplied) to scrape at some verdigris that had formed under a cleat.

All about the deck, forward and aft, were my fellow sailors, and my first impression upon descending into the gloom of the forecastle was that it was entirely deserted. I waited at the foot of the ladder a moment, though, to get my eyes accustomed to the change from the sunlight above, and, as they began to adapt themselves to the dimness, I saw the outline of a man standing directly in front of the "snack" locker.

I did not recognize him at the time, and, taking him for a fellow who had got hungry for a "snack," I was about to go to my own bunk beneath for my knife, when I saw another shadow step hastily from a low door that communicated with the midships coal-bunkers.

The late arrival glided toward the first figure and tapped him on the shoulder. A start proved that it was genuine surprise, but a quick whisper which I could not hear immediately allayed any alarm to the fellow who stood before the locker.

On the contrary, he grunted acquiescence and forthwith handed over some food and a mug of coffee which he had been about to partake of himself.

Then, without delay, the second man retreated through the low door, which he drew shut noiselessly. Whereupon the first man portioned himself out another helping and stepped under the better light of the hatch to eat it. This brought him nearer me. I recognized him.

It was Crawley.

"Who was that?" I asked simply.

"Who?" he growled innocently.

"The fellow who just did the panhandle to you?" I pointed to the low door where the mysterious shadow had disappeared.

"Simple enough," answered Crawley, seeing that I knew what I was talking about and was not to be denied.

"Simple? How? What do you mean?"

"Why, jest a plain case of stowaway, Jarvis."

"Stowaway?" I cried in surprise.

"Yes, stowaway? See anything funny in that? I guess he ain't in any worse luck than the rest of us, eh?"

"But what in thunder would possess a chap to stow himself aboard a private yacht, and one the port of which no one knows at that?" I replied.

"You know as much about it as I do," grunted Crawley. "That's the first I knew he was aboard."

"But you gave him something to eat."

"O' course I did, and I reckon I would to any such devil. Wouldn't you?"

"Yes," I admitted, realizing that Crawley was about right in the matter of us all being in rather the same predicament. "But," I added, "what *could* have possessed him to climb onto this particular packet? I should have thought he'd 'a' chosen a regular liner with a regular and definite destination."

"Heavens, but you've got a rotten head sometimes, Jarvis," replied Crawley, a crafty look coming to his face. "Don't you suppose there's ever a time most any old packet'll do when you're pressed?"

"You mean?"

"O' course. Escape. Seems to me that Blackwell's Island ain't so dead far upstream in the East River from where this here hooker lay at anchor."

"You think that he's an escaped convict, then?" I whispered.

"Sure. What else can you make of it?"

"Maybe you are right," I admitted in a reluctance which I myself could not have defined as I turned to mount the ladder, having already secured my knife.

Half-way up to the deck Crawley stopped me with the remark:

"Say, Jarvis!"

"Well?"

"You ain't a going to peach on the cull, are you?"

"Of course not," I replied, surprised at the very question even. "What reason would I have for carrying any such news to the owner? It isn't any of my business, is it?"

"No; but I just thought—"

"Look here, Crawley," I snapped out hastily, "you'll learn to know me better."

And with that I left him and joined the rest of the crew on deck. Fifteen minutes afterward Crawley appeared, too, and went surlily to work.

But, somehow, I thought I read a new look on the forbidding visage—a look that was a blend of craftiness, expectation, and pleasure.

V.

THE first three days of the voyage I was treated by the crew as upon an equal footing, a comradeship that any one who has ever shipped as foremasthand recognizes and appreciates. Indeed, not to have attained such familiarity is misery itself to the luckless victim.

But along about noon of the fourth day I caught my first hint of a newness of behavior on the part of my mates. There seemed to be no open dislike of me; rather was it an avoiding. And several times, when I came upon a group of them conversing in low tones, they would stop what they were saying and change the subject abruptly.

It was evident that something was afoot in which I, for some unknown reason, was not included.

From the very first, the owner, his officers, engineers, and steward had bunked aft; and it being early discovered that Crawley possessed an aptitude toward cookery, he was duly installed as the "doctor" in the forecastle.

Such an arrangement necessarily left the men without any restraint when they were below, and I was not long in discovering that Crawley was availing himself of his prerogative as "boss" to frame up something which, I felt sure, boded not in line with what he would be pleased to have even me know.

But it was not till one morning when I was standing the two-to-four watch that I got a definite clue as to the way things lay. When I did get at the truth, though, I got it with a rush.

The morning broke in heavy fog which had followed a night of mean, drizzly rain, and I was pacing my noiseless step up and down the forward deck, clad in oilskins and rubber boots.

In the stillness of that early hour I distinctly heard the low and continued tone of a man's voice issuing from the fore hatch. The fellow evidently little realized the carrying quality of the atmosphere. There are times when things are much more distinctly heard than usual.

By nature, I abhor eavesdropping; but a furtiveness of the very tone, coupled to the fact that I recognized the voice as Crawley's, made me step swiftly nearer the hatch and bend a more attentive ear.

"I tell y', pals, the thing can't miss," went on Crawley, and I must give the scoundrel credit for a certain rude oratory. "Here's the stowaway chap gone and broken into one of those boxes he found in the hold, and every man Jack of us is armed with a rifle fitted with a bayonet. Five minutes after the rush the ship'll be ours."

"But why don't the bloke get us some cartridges?" demanded one of the men complainingly.

"He ain't been able to find the boxes—they must be 'way under the others with the guns. And, take it from me, cull, we don't need no cartridges. Surprise is the thing. Why, we've lain so low and kept sweet so long they ain't one, from the owner to the cabin-boy, as is got a hint. Even that dub Jarvis don't know the lay; and the first he does know will be my jab in his belly; fer I've got an old score to settle with him myself.

"It'll frame up as pretty as sunrise, and it seems to me we'd just about be getting ready now to—"

But I waited for no more. I had listened longer than I should have; but the enormity of what I had overheard, in tune with the usual vagueness of that hour of the day when everything seems so unnatural, made me feel almost as though I had dreamed it all.

But I cleared thought on an instant and, forsaking my place as forward watch, ran aft at top speed.

As I passed underneath the wheel-house I sang out an unintelligible warning to the pudgy little boatswain on duty there and continued on aft to the cabin companionway.

I clattered down the stairs and entered the saloon, around the sides of which opened the doors of the various staterooms.

I had no time for choice of method or wording of my news.

"Come hi, in there; there's mutiny aboard! They'll be here in a minute."

Within three seconds there was a head at every door except that of the owner's stateroom; but at the very instant I got the volley of excited questions from the officers, there came a violent banging and clatter from the chief's room.

But we had no time to break down the door in investigation; for, on that very moment, there swarmed down the stairs the m-

ley crew of nondescripts, each armed with the bristling fixed bayonet of one of the most modern small arms.

That fight was a silent one. There was a deadliness of intent, a fixed idea of slaughter that went with the gruesomeness of the breaking day. But there was no sound for a moment except the quick breathing of the contestants.

What favored our defense (for I, of course, was sided with the officers against the men) was the smallness of the saloon and the fact that we could meet them as they descended the companionway-stairs. And meet them we did, the struggle becoming one for possession of the guns.

It is no small trick to close in on a man armed with fixed bayonet; but three of us succeeded in doing so; and it was by no freak of chance that I found my fight to be with the scoundrelly ingrate, Crawley.

I managed to get full hold of the weapon before he could turn the bayonet's point to my breast; but I found the strength of his wrists the most hopeless task of my life. He was iron, and it seemed but the question of seconds before I should have to weaken in my grip.

All about us were the stumbling fighters, two and two, struggling in deadly strife, one gun between them. But no discharge of powder lent periods of sound to the battle.

The surprise had been too sudden, and my belated warning had given the officers no time to catch up their own weapons.

On went the fight for maybe five good minutes, each side about even, when the door of the owner's room swung open, and his tall figure stood framed in the mahogany.

In each hand he held an automatic of husky caliber. Six spiteful crackles from their steel-blue mouths put a new light on the situation. Powder and ball had once more claimed their supremacy.

Four of the mutineers crumpled to the floor just as I felt my grip slipping from the gun Crawley was wrenching from me.

"I guess that'll be about all," snapped the owner in a catch of the voice, for he was almost out of breath. "Here, Murchison, get your own weapons; and you, Scarsdale." He addressed two of the officers whose opponents he had downed.

"And up hands, you," he added, stepping a foot nearer Crawley and presenting his left-hand automatic in line with the ruffian's head.

The situation was ours. Ten minutes thereafter the six remaining mutineers, including Crawley, were securely handcuffed, ironed, and propped up in a ridiculous row about the wainscoting.

The owner turned to me.

"You are the man that gave the warning?" he inquired quietly.

"Yes," I admitted.

"Then step in here a minute."

He indicated his own stateroom. I entered, and he followed after a word of command as to a watch over the prisoners.

Once in the room, he seated himself before a small table in the center, and indicated for me to take the chair opposite.

"Now," he began, "I want you to tell me absolutely everything you know of this thing. In fact, I should like a most complete account of all that occurred up to your coming aboard the vessel."

"Very well, sir," I replied, leaning toward him across the table and striving to find a way to start the story.

And just as I had decided to tell merely the latest developments, I looked past his shoulder toward the berth set into the farther wall.

On it I descried the outline of a human form, swathed, gagged, and blindfolded to the nicety of a mummy with the blankets and other bedclothing.

"You, too, have a prisoner," I blurted out in surprise.

"Yes," he replied simply, striving to check me as I sprang toward the bunk.

But I got by him, and caught a fold of the cloth from before the face of the captive, and there I met the glaring hatred of the eyes of Arbidni—Arbidni, the leader of the troop of Arabs back there at the circus.

The stowaway, then, was the man who so unaccountably had left us to perform our act without him!

VI.

"WHAT?" cried the yacht owner, reading recognition on my face. "You know him?"

"Yes," and I forthwith opened out into full recountal of every incident that had befallen me since that memorable night in Brooklyn.

"And so you see," I ended, "that seeing him here strikes me as the most remarkable thing in my life."

"Well," said the owner, "I believe that I can lift that mystery for you, just as you have been good enough to tell me the truth

and straighten out things for me. But, to begin with, your name?"

"Jarvis—Tom Jarvis," I told him.

"Well, Mr. Jarvis," he went on in a tone of equality that informed me I was no longer to be treated as one of a shanghaied crew, "it is necessary that I begin at the beginning, and I want to beg of you to remember that, though we are living in the twentieth century, there is a country still living in the seventeenth."

"And that country?"

"Is Morocco, and, by the way, my native land. Here you have it, then. My name is Sarcena, and I am pasha of the city of Kraa, which is situated about five days' caravan journey from the Mediterranean seacoast. My father, the old pasha, died some ten years ago, leaving me the rule, and during all that time Kraa has seen not one year of quiet, though my one thought has been the city's good."

Here the pasha rose, and stepped over toward the bound Arbidni. Pointing to him as he lay there on the berth, glaring back in equal hatred, he went on:

"And there lies the cause of it all. That is my half-brother, the veriest rogue and cutthroat that ever led a robber band across a desert's sands. Twelve times during that ten years has he led his thieves to the plunder of Kraa. Eleven times he escaped back to his lair in the hills. But the last time I captured him and ten of his band.

"The heads of the ten ornamented the hooks on our city's wall, but I spared him *his* life; for he *is* my half-brother. Instead, I exiled him—dropped him from this very vessel on a West India island, penniless. But I see now that I was too soft, too lenient. I might have known that such a devil might come back to his own. He had joined that circus but to save money enough to get back to Morocco.

"In fact, in some way he must have been able to get word to his band; for spies that I have in his camp learned of extra preparations for the total conquest of the city, along with more than hints that they would be led by their beloved rogue, Arbidni.

"Moreover, so direct and positive became these rumors that I cursed myself heartily that I hadn't graced the gate of the city with that head there."

The pasha shook his fist at the bound robber, whose gagged mumblings strove to word the venom of his eyes.

"You doubtless know, Mr. Jarvis," continued the commander in a quieter tone, "that my countrymen are, for the most part, the essence of conservatism. European dress has never entered Kraa; there are no wagons; our customs never change. And, along with this sticking to the past, there is one thing most to be noted—you are attending?"

"Strictly!" I replied in intense interest.

"The type of weapon hasn't altered for two hundred years. The long tube of a gun, short-stocked, crook-butted, and highly ornamented, forms still the arm of the country. And it is that very fact that brought me this time to America.

"But, first, you are wondering about me myself—how I should be so 'advanced'? A word explains. My father was long-headed enough to realize that the old order of things was doomed, and that soon. Accordingly, in early youth he sent me to an American university. You see it now?"

"You mean," I cried, "that you have come to appreciate the latest Yankee rifles, and that this ship is loaded with them to save your city from this robber horde?"

"Exactly. My poor people of Kraa, so long at the mercy of these marauders when armed like them, will rout the fellows easily when equipped and instructed with these modern weapons.

"But how strange a chance it was that I should have, upon the very eve of sailing, taken to myself the whim of going to that circus. Perhaps, after all, it was only homesickness to see some riding; perhaps, though, it was Kismet.

"For Arbidni was there—Arbidni, you scoundrel!" turning on him once more. "You trailed me from the circus tent, did you? You even succeeded in smuggling yourself aboard my yacht. Oh, you're no weakling in machinations, and the scheme of the mutiny of my shanghaied crew to secure the weapons was no bad one. But Allah is with me. By just such means has he rendered you into my hands, and this time you will not escape the wall; your head will grin down as a warning to all enemies of Kraa!"

"Then you think that the fellow Crawley knew nothing of Arbidni's plans?" I put in, for I was gradually fitting everything together.

"No, nothing until he unfolded the project to him as he fed him from time to time. Indeed, I believe that the time you saw them was the inception of the plot."

"But how came Arbidni not to join the rest?"

"Aha, he would trust cutting my throat to no one but himself. The thing was so timed that he should crawl from the hold and knife me in bed just the moment before the rush, so that Arbidni could join the others in slaughtering my officers. But, Mr. Jarvis, you see I have learned to be a light sleeper."

He stooped and picked up a knife from the floor. Throwing it upon the table, he asked: "You doubtless heard the noise of the struggle?"

"The first of it," said I, admiring the strength of the man. "But we were soon too busy ourselves to lend you aid."

"Of course—I know," he replied easily. Then broke his tone to one of snappy practicality: "But, come now, to business."

"Yes," I agreed; "what are you going to do with him?"

A look of fierceness came into his face.

"I am going to take him to Kraa, a prisoner; and I think that I shall add your enemy, Crawley. A public execution in my country has a most salutary effect. We have ways, you know, that are very effective.

"But I confess that I am a bit undecided as to the others of the mutineers. You see, I must have some men to man the vessel even for the few days that remain of our voyage. Come, let's go in and look them over."

At his lead I reentered the saloon, where the group of handcuffed men were propped against the walls guarded by the addition of the pudgy boatswain and the engineers who had, by this time, come up from their nether regions.

The yacht lay in the trough of the easy sea that was running, her fires banked.

"Come, what think you, Jarvis?" said the pasha. "Is this scum to be trusted again?" He swept the line of prisoners with a gesture.

From their looks of dejection and the wholesome lesson to be read in the lifeless forms of four of their companions, I argued, by my experience with such riff-raff, that they had had their fill of mutiny.

"I think I can vouch for them, sir," I answered; "and, if you like, I'll constitute myself their leader."

"All but Crawley," said he meaningly.

"Aye," I admitted, "all but Crawley." And I cursed the villain generously into the bargain.

But two of our party had suffered casualty: the second officer and a steward, who had each been rather badly cut in the short conflict.

An hour after his decision to work the same crew, the pasha had rearranged his watches and relaid his course. Arbidni and Crawley were leg-ironed and thrown into the lazaretto under guard of the second steward.

The pricking on the chart proved us to be within two easy days' steaming of Gibraltar.

VII.

We even bettered that time, for by the second night we were well through the strait; and at sundown of the third day we came to anchor off a low-lying bit of shore from which hills rose smartly toward the interior. There was, however, at this point, no sign whatever of a harbor.

The pasha, coming up to me as I stood at the rail puzzling over the fact, smiled as he remarked:

"I couldn't trust a harbor; but I have something better. Can you make out anything in that small opening just beyond the scrub timber?"

I scanned through the dusk, and managed to discern some indistinct shadows, but the nature of them I couldn't guess.

"There's a pair of *feluccas* lying yonder that will transfer the gun cases and the cartridge boxes, which are in the after hold, to the shore to-night. Beyond the bend of the woodland is a camped caravan of forty camels and a hundred men waiting to convoy them over the desert to Kraa.

"The whole outfit has been waiting there for me at least two weeks. You see, I map things out pretty carefully."

"You certainly do," I agreed.

Beginning as soon as it was dark, and well up to midnight, the small sail craft plied between the anchored yacht and the shore, loaded to their low little gunwales with the cases of American guns and cartridges.

It was about a quarter to twelve that the pasha sent for me. I found him awaiting my appearance in his stateroom.

"Mr. Jarvis," said he cordially, "of course you realize that I never should have been guilty of forcing you to the service of the forecastle had I known the truth as to the way you came aboard my yacht. But circumstances have so turned out that it certainly was a blessing to me that you did so.

"Now, the least I can do, it seems to me, is to see that you are reimbursed for your time and inconvenience. And more, Murchison, the first officer, will land you at Gibraltar, where you can reship to America."

He proffered a well-lined pocketbook for "expenses."

"And you?" I inquired.

"Why, I shall go with the caravan to Kraa, of course. The people need me."

"Pasha," said I feelingly, for I had come to a great liking for the man, "will you let me go with you, too? You know I rather relish adventure."

For one steady minute he eyed me. Then he rose and grasped me by the hand.

"Yes," he said quietly, "and—thank you. I think that I can promise you that the people of Kraa will welcome you warmly."

In just what warmth I was destined to be welcomed he little knew; for, on that very second, there stumbled through the door the boatswain, his eyes bulging to intense excitement.

"The two!" he cried. "Arbidni and the other! They are not in the lazaretto! The cabin-boy thinks he saw them join the crew of one of the *feluccas*—the last one to leave for shore!"

VIII.

For the first time since I had known him, the pasha showed genuine perturbation.

"What?" he cried, running up to the deck, where the second *felucca* was awaiting the final and last trip ashore. He exchanged hasty words with the skipper in Arabic, then turned to me.

"He says they have gone but a scant five minutes. The breeze is lessening, and, as this boat is the swifter in moderate wind, there is a hope of overtaking them before they reach shore."

But we did not overtake the other *felucca*; nor have I been able to this day satisfactorily to account for the way in which the two effected their escape from the lazaretto. The most plausible theory, and one I most incline to, points to the treachery of the second steward, under whose guard they were kept at night.

But it mattered little now as to how they had got away. The point was that Arbidni, the thief whose very name served mothers to terrify their children with (so the pasha naively assured me), was at large in the very country he knew as a boy and which he was accustomed to scour with his band.

And, when we landed, what we learned made things look the blacker. For no sooner had the pasha stepped from the boat than a tall Arab, the leader of the caravan, expressed the greatest surprise upon seeing him.

It seems that Arbidni, in the gloom, had managed to cheat him into the belief that he was the pasha himself, and so had secured possession of two of the finest horses in the outfit. This he did on pretext of riding inland a distance on some imaginary mission.

"Jarvis," said the pasha, "this looks black. I shall not keep from you my distinct alarm."

"Oh," rejoined I, "the two scoundrels have slipped us, and there's an end of it! I'm not keen on too much vengeance myself."

"Aye, but that's *not* the end of it! Kraa lies five days' journey due south of this point; and there's but one route—that a hard one.

"With Arbidni mounted as he is—and I doubt not that Crawley chose a good horse for himself—they can reach the bandit camp by afternoon of to-morrow."

"Just what do you mean?" I queried. "Surely your force is a strong one—forty camels and their drivers, along with a hundred mounted men. Besides," I added, as a further thought struck me, "we have the modern rifles."

He shook his head and smiled whimsically.

"But not a man of them knows how to handle them, and there's not time now to learn. You forget what I told you of this land's conservatism. Those guns now form merely an added burden; for, determined as I am that my city of Kraa shall win her freedom by them, I am more than equally determined that they fall not into the hands of her enemies.

"Think, man, think what that would mean!"

He was genuinely affected, but soon swept aside his feelings to take charge of what must be done.

He superintended the final loading of the camels with the gun and cartridge cases, and gave orders as to the formation and direction of the line of march. Fifty men rode ahead, then came the pasha and myself. Behind us the loaded camels, with fifty men, brought up the rear.

We started immediately.

"No sleep to-night," muttered the pasha, "nor much sleep till Kraa; for miles count now."

And so on we made it through the most desolate wastes, the hardest going I had ever dreamed of even in my oldest Texas ranging. But our progress was exceptionally good, for we took little rest. A stony, silent, dead-in-earnest hike it proved to be.

We were about thinking of pitching camp on the afternoon of the fourth day when the surprise came.

The trail followed a narrow defile at this point, and was flanked by hills of rugged slope; and just as the sun was setting over the summits—down dashed a horde of Arab robbers.

Even in the stress of the moment, the beauty of the scene struck me—all its wild glamour, the rattle and thunder of it all, for they rode like mad, their arms clashing and the films of their veils floating behind.

There could be no mistaking the figure that rode ahead, though the gorgeousness of a wonderful red burnoose and the glitter of jeweled arms lent him a grandeur he never possessed in our circus days. Nor was this desert reality the same in any way.

Notwithstanding the fact that we had been in momentary expectation of just such an attack, we were unprepared. It seemed as though our four days of safety thus far had given us a false confidence.

But the pasha shrilled his orders; and the oncoming Arbidni, seconded by his band (among whom I could easily distinguish Crawley by his dress), met a solid circle formation, the center formed by the forty camels and their valued burden.

I went back centuries in that clash of conflict. It seemed almost as though I had reentered a previous incarnation. About me popped those absurd guns, jeweled and flashing in the setting rays. The swish of the simitar, and hiss as it met its opponent steel, went to the accompaniment of raucous cries, yells, curses.

But it was soon over.

My horse went from under me, and I rose from out the entanglement of saddle trappings to find myself a prisoner.

I was held in a grip of steel by three swarthy robbers under immediate command of Crawley. That fellow's grin was the hardest thing I've ever had to endure in my life.

A hasty glance around showed that, even in the short time the conflict had lasted, our defeat had been overwhelming, scarcely a score of our horsemen having survived. They had us beaten in numbers from the start.

I heard a low chuckle of satisfaction, and, whirling whence it came, saw Arbidni, unmounted now and pacing a taunting step up and down before the pasha, who stood defiantly, though bound from behind and threatened at that very instant by four upraised simitars.

Arbidni chose English for his tauntings, probably because he wished that I should not escape their scourging.

"Other heads will deck the walls of Kraa, O noble brother mine!" he scoffed. "And soon too, for I cannot wait to witness the ornament. And the death shall be equal to that planned for another two."

He indicated himself and the traitor Crawley mockingly.

And, as he stood there before his half-brother, I couldn't help remarking to myself how blood will tell in the marking of men. For, except for the tracings of a better nature brutalized on the countenance of Arbidni and a good nature bettered on that of the pasha, the likeness between the two was remarkable.

The fact that the pasha had already—upon the very landing—adopted his native costume, with all its graceful cloak, made the resemblance the more marked.

"Kraa will be ours to-morrow!" cried Arbidni in English; then, whirling to a circle of oratorical effect and changing his language to the Arabic, he yelled what was probably the same cry to his followers.

Up from those harsh throats went an answering yell of delight.

"And we'll carry the pasha there alive!" he went on. "Even as he purposed with myself!"

There could be no doubt of the loyalty of that swarm for the scoundrel.

"At daylight, then. And till then, sleep."

But there came little sleep to the pasha and myself where we lay bound in the open air, under the watchful surveillance of two malodorous, bearded cutthroats who had been told off to the duty.

IX.

THE pungent odor of camels was my first waking sensation. There was little to see

save what could be discerned by the dying embers of a spent fire. That I had been jostled to wake up, I felt sure; for I needed little to rouse me from the doze into which I had finally managed to drift.

It was the pasha's shoulder that rubbed me meaningly. He had managed already almost to free one hand from the coil.

"Come, Jarvis," he whispered. "Can you manage to help a bit with your teeth? The knot's a mean one."

My surprise must have been apparent even in the darkness; for he hastened to explain:

"I managed to settle our guard. Perhaps you have noticed a ring I'm accustomed to wear. And still again I must remind you to remember the century you've dropped back to. You know, only one drop of certain poisons is necessary sometimes, and a water jar is a very convenient means on occasion."

Then I noticed for the first time the distorted form of our guards, a broken water jug between them. In some wily fashion the pasha had managed to press out the contents of his ring before they drank in turn from it.

Two minutes thereafter we were free from our bonds, and had armed ourselves with the knives of our dead guards.

"But can we manage to get by the outposts?" I whispered. "That looks to me like our greatest difficulty. But once past them and I believe we stand a chance of escape."

Then it was that I got the surprise of my life.

The pasha drew himself up to his full height.

"Escape?" he repeated in scorn. "Escape? I? Flee for my own skin when my city is in such peril? No, I have a better way. Come, you agree?"

"I have little choice," I replied; "but it passes me what you intend to do."

"Nor have I time to give you details. Follow me closely, and make no sound."

And, to his leading, I crept toward a tent that stood in the midst of the camp—a tent larger than the others, and one that proclaimed an important occupant.

The two horses that were tethered beside it clinched my deduction to fact.

"Wait outside," breathed the pasha, as, with the snake-like worming of an Indian, he crawled his way under the drawn tent-flap.

In the gaining dawn I crouched there for what seemed eternity.

Then once more the flap swayed, and there stood before me the figure of—but, no, it was *not* Arbidni, though the flaming burnoose was the one he had worn during the fight.

The pasha passed me over a bundle of clothing. It was the familiar checked suit of Crawley. He had knifed them both.

"Get into these quick," he ordered, "and wrap this veil about your head. It is lucky the flying sands of the desert make such swathing a custom."

And while I did as he bade me, he in turn threw a similar veil about his own face. Then he spoke fast:

"But two things you must remember, Jarvis; for I haven't a minute to explain. One is, that you are to lead what I shall form into a second division. The other—look to your own safety at the moment when you will know intuitively what to do."

This was certainly vague, but I could voice no remonstrance.

"And now," he concluded, "that's an end to English."

The next instant we saddled the tethered horses and vaulted to our seats. I noticed then that he carried a bundle of some kind.

Never have I seen such transformation in a man! The blood of all his wild ancestry seemed to course through him on the moment he dug spur into that mettlesome stallion.

With a yell, he started a circuit of the camp. Loud and high rang his orders; and, caught thus in the mad spirit of their supposed leader, the Arab robbers sprang from slumber to frenzied activity. It was as though he had hypnotized the entire band.

If it were that he was giving actual similitude to the ways of Arbidni the Terrible, it is no wonder to me that his sway with them was so great.

But there was an order in all his wildness; for, at the very start of that charge, the troop formed themselves into two distinct divisions.

The first, of some fifty horsemen, riding a flank to the lumbering camels, was headed by himself. The rest of the band rode behind me, trusting to the foreign clothes I wore, and fooled as to countenance by the veil and by the very daring of it all.

Five hours of the most headlong career thus made me wonder at those beasts. But they, too, had caught that frenzied, fiery fury.

We topped a hill, and there, below us, lay the minarets of the city in the plain.

Never had these men questioned the order given; perhaps, after all, it was the way they generally had of doing things. So that, when the sun's glint on the house-tops and walls came into view, the yells went up louder and louder.

On down there, ahead of my division, I could descry the tall figure of the pasha, riding as I have never seen man ride. Behind him clattered his division, the camels full caught in the madness of it all.

It was a wonderful sight.

And so it went until they reached the level leading to the city's gates. Then it was that the stallion showed his superiority. Off and away in a spurt, he distanced the charging horde.

Straight for the gate rode the pasha; and, as he neared it close, I saw him unwrap the swathing veil from his face as he looked toward the swarming battlements of his city.

Meanwhile I, with my followers, thundered our second place down the hillside into the plain.

I could hear the cries that went up from the city's walls. They had recognized their ruler.

All in the twinkling of an eye the massive gates swung open, and into the city poured that first division of camels, carried, it would seem, by their very impetus.

Then I saw my chance; I realized what the pasha had meant when he said that I would know what to do on that moment.

Never have I dug more vigorous heel into more willing brute. The veil was of no use now; I flung it from me to guide the surer. On, on, I made for that gateway.

A swift glance behind showed a gain. And I bettered it. But not too much; for just as I clattered within the narrowed space waiting for me between the gates, they closed, and closed with the clatter of opposition from without.

Inside the walls the surprise had been overwhelming in effect. Not ten of the fifty robber horsemen lived to realize the trick that the pasha, in his moment's cry to his people, had apprised them of.

Then I saw a figure spring up to the summit of the rampart that ran above the very center of the gates.

It was the pasha; and in his hand he carried that bundle he had never once parted with since dawn.

Deliberately he uncovered it, and firmly he planted it on a pike set there for that very purpose. And thus it was the demoralized followers of Arbidni the Terrible looked over their retreating shoulders into the dead grin of the head that had organized them.

Kraa, the city of the plain, had been attacked—to save it.

ROY BURNS'S HANDICAP.

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN,

Author of "Devil's Own Island," "Steel Bracelets," "His Risen Past," etc.

In Which Is Set Forth the Fact that Job Hunting Has Sometimes More Than the Scarcity of Jobs to Make It a Heart-Breaking Pursuit.

CHAPTER I.

A TELEGRAM.

ROY BURNS left the serving-room a trifle wearily, carrying the pumpkin pie which was to be eaten by Tom Stelton. Stelton was habitually late to his meals, and, accordingly, no little of a trial to Burns.

Burns did not feel that it made much difference whether he was late in getting through to-night. But that did not help mitigate his general soreness toward Stelton. For, the reason why he did not care to join the practise of the football songs on the campus was that he was not going to the game; and he was not going to the game because his "table," including Stelton, was not sending him.

He was quite sure that he was as good a waiter as any of the other sixty-odd students in the hall who were earning their board by "slinging hash" for their more plutocratic fellow students, or the two hundred more who did the same work at the many restaurants all over town. Yet two-

thirds of the other tables had expressed their appreciation of the service they were getting by giving the student-waiters the money required for the trip to Boston and their entrance tickets.

Last year, with a table of seniors, he had been the only freshman waiter to get to the game. Now, with twelve of his own classmates to wait on, he must pass down the long hall to his own table and see six new men gulping down their own dinners in haste to get to the practise because they were going.

Metcalf, the one other waiter of his own class who had been sharing his disappointment, now added to it by waving a ten and a five-dollar bill as Burns passed with Stelton's pie.

Every fourth table had a negro waiter, whose duties involved the final clearing of the three nearest student-waiters' tables and their arrangement for the next meal. The burly fellow who would take charge when Burns got through with the table looked surlily from the end of his own, with which he had finished.

"How long you reckon you gwine be with yo' table?" he growled. "Ah don' want to stay heah all night."

Burns was not a Southerner, but he had long resented the colored man's impertinences. Now he flared up.

"You go to the deuce," he snarled.

Instantly he regretted the words. He had spoken thus to "his nigger" the year before; with the result that the colored head waiter had done his best to make things intolerable.

"Gee," Stelton complained a moment later, "this pie's sick. Is there any of the apple left?"

"Not a bit," Burns replied sourly, glad of the chance to inflict a little punishment on the late-comer.

Stelton tried a second morsel of the pie.

"Say, Burns, bring me some of the pudding, will you?" he asked. "I can't go this."

Heartily Burns wished that the pudding was gone, like the apple pie. Too honest to lie about the matter, he walked slowly back to the serving-room. He returned to his table with Stelton's third choice of dessert and his own entire dinner nicely balanced upon his arm.

Ordinarily he would have set out his own meal near enough to Stelton's place for the carrying on of conversation. Stelton would have talked with him as freely and easily as with any other classmate. Perhaps there is not another college in the world where the all-pervading wealth distinction is so nearly obliterated as in the particular one through which each of these sophomores in his own way was working.

But to-night, Burns was feeling too unpleasant for conversation. He deposited the pudding in front of Stelton, then took his own provender to the opposite end of the table.

Ordinarily, too, Burns did not mind the tardy arrival of Stelton. He knew that the latter's position as editor of the university paper often compelled him to be late. Moreover, that position marked Stelton as one of the big men of the college and worth talking to.

Even that fact only added to the waiter's grouch against the youthful editor. As the most influential man at the table, Stelton should have led the others in providing Burns with the wherewithal for taking in to-morrow's game.

He was not, however, to be left alone in his ill-humor. Evidently the pudding proved satisfactory to Stelton. It put him in mood for conversation, even though it be at long distance.

"Going to the game?" he called the length of the table.

The question, the good-natured manner in which it was asked, seemed insult added to injury. A quick retort had to be smothered before Burns could make answer. A student-waiter might take a tip in the form of tickets to a big game; it was certainly below his dignity to let it be known that he expected it.

"No," he answered shortly, having cut out the rest of his reply.

"Why—why," Stelton stammered as if surprised at Roy's answer—"I thought—Well, I'll be darned!"

His hand grasped at his inside coat-pocket. He drew out an envelope.

"We got this together the first of the week," he explained with a laugh. "They told me to give it to you because I could pick out a good ticket at the *News* office. We've been having a row with the printers, and I got only as far as securing the ticket; then forgot the whole thing. It's lucky I did get the ticket; there isn't another good one left. Hope it isn't too late for you to change your plans."

Ten minutes before time for the last train

would have been plenty early enough for Burns to change his plans. He changed them on the spot. Likewise he changed his opinion of Stelton and the other men at his table. He went further and changed his opinion of the whole commons, the college, the world in general.

The rest of his dinner was put into the proper receptacle which nature provided for dinners with an alacrity for which nature never provided. Five minutes later, clad in his old sweater and more or less rusty coat, Roy Burns was out on the campus with a thousand other students, carefully drilling the college yell and those songs which seem to rise spontaneously upon the occasion of a big game.

Strenuously they howled and sang, those big boys—much more strenuously than most of them ever thought of studying. The leader, standing upon the pedestal of a statue, growled, snarled, derided—until the statue itself must almost have burst into song.

"Well, I suppose we'll have to quit at that," grunted the chorister at last. "It won't do to have you get hoarse until to-morrow."

Roy went whistling to his room. Nothing in the November fog could dampen his ardor now. In the doorway of the old building he met Metcalf, whose face was wreathed in smiles like Burns's own.

"Oh, you needn't think you're all the people that are going to the game," Roy cried happily. "Old Stelton had forgotten to give me mine till to-night."

"Hooray!" Metcalf shouted warmly.

Children? Of course they were children. Who is not a "big kid" about something? Heaven help the poor devil!

Roy Burns was approaching his nineteenth birthday. The son of a poor medical practitioner in a country town, he had willingly shouldered the responsibility of earning most of his expenses while securing an education for which his father could hardly afford even the price of his books and clothes. His tuition had been provided by a prize scholarship he had won in preparatory school.

He stood well in his classes. There was every prospect of his going forth into the world a strong man, well equipped to give a good account of himself.

"Oh, Roy!" he heard his roommate shout from below, as, still humming one of the war-songs, he turned on the gas in their room.

"Oh, Billy," he yelled back.

The fact that Billy Blake shared Roy Burns's modest room was indicative that he, too, was not over-blessed with this world's goods. But he had enough to escape the need of working his way, enough so that he was not likely to miss any of the big games. As he clattered up the stairs and burst into the door, Roy shouted the good news at him—

"I'm going, after all!"

But Billy spoke on without listening to Roy's whoop of glee—

"I've been looking for you over the whole blamed campus. The boy brought this just as I came in for my pipe after dinner."

With that sinking sense of danger which the sight of a yellow envelope usually causes in one unaccustomed to receiving telegrams, Burns opened the manila slip of paper. His face paled as he took in the brief message.

"Bad news?" Blake asked softly.

"It's my father—he's dying," Roy replied in a voice that trembled with emotion.

CHAPTER II.

BOY AND MAN.

A HURRIED consultation of time-tables showed Roy Burns that he had just half an hour in which to catch a train for New York, whence the suburban railway would take him in less than an hour to his home. He flung himself into his more presentable black suit of clothes, packed a change of underwear in his grip, and dashed for the trolley-car. A hurried good-by to his roommate, and he was off.

He had paid his fare from the money given him by the men of his table for the morrow's game. It did not even occur to his mind that he was unusually fortunate in having any money with which to buy his ticket.

Nothing else occurred to his mind. A dull, unfeeling sorrow it seemed to be. The slow night train did not arouse him to impatience. He did not worry as to whether he would be at home in time or not.

He was dazed by the suddenness of the thing. A few days before he had received

a letter from his younger sister in which she stated that his father had not been feeling very well. Day before yesterday his mother had written that the doctor had resumed his practise.

He had been surprised at this indication that the illness had been severe enough to cause his parent to stop work even for a day. But the knowledge that the attack had passed had caused him well-nigh to forget the matter.

And now—the telegram.

Some day, in another world, perhaps, it will be explained to us why the thing which is the only absolute certainty of our earthly existence seems always unthinkable as concerning us individually. Is it because death is not the natural end of life, but the penalty of our race-wide wrong, that we can never quite get used to the idea of it, that the visit of the dark angel comes ever as a horrible surprise?

Roy Burns had always loved and respected his father. He had never outgrown the notion that his parent was a really great man. In his concept of the world there yet lingered some of the childish feeling that that world rested largely upon Dr. Burns's stooping shoulders.

His father yet remained most nearly of all men the son's ideal of manly virtue, wisdom, justice. A pitifully antiquated state of mind it was for a boy of nineteen in these days to imagine that any one old enough to be his father could actually give advice which might be worth even considering.

And now the announcement that his father was dying seemed hardly less than a statement that the foundations had been pulled from beneath the earth. He sat in stupefied wonder and saw his whole world reduced to chaos, without grasping one detail of the universal destruction.

That this might mean the end of his college career did not enter his head. It seemed, rather, to mean the end of everything. He could not form an idea of life in which his father was not the big factor he had always been—the counselor in every decision, the companion of all the happiest hours.

Would God there were more such sons! Perhaps the wish were better put: Would God there were more such fathers!

At last—for all Roy knew it might have been a moment or a century from the time of starting—the train reached the great city. Mechanically, automatically, the youth seized his bag and ran for the car which would take him to the terminal of his home railroad.

With his faculties still in abeyance, he endured a wait of an hour for the "owl" train to the village so far out that suburban life had barely commenced to reach it. For another hour he heard the familiar names of the way-stations along the branch road, much as a busy man hears the ticking of a clock in the room.

Then he came to a still chamber in which his mother and two young sisters received his greetings in tearful silence. He turned from them to the other doctor of the town, bending over the unconscious form of his father.

One glance at the pallid face on the pillow brought the full realization, gripped his throat and seemed to choke him.

"Father—father," he cried in an agony of mind that shut off other words.

Into the staring eyes of the older man there came a gleam of reason's light. The white lips parted in a smile.

"My son—my big boy—God bless you," the lips whispered feebly.

Roy himself lifted a groping hand which had ever been used to do good and laid it upon his own head as he bowed his face into the coverlet. There it rested in benediction while the boy sobbed out his grief—until he comprehended that it would never be removed by his father's volition.

It was on the morning after the funeral that Roy put on his black suit and started for town to look for a position.

Only yesterday had he grasped the stern reality that he must now become the support of his mother and sisters. Up till that time the facts he had learned—that his father had barely been able to make ends meet, that there was no insurance because no company had been willing to risk the condition of his father's heart—these facts had seemed without significance.

At the side of the grave he had stood a little apart from his mother, though he had dutifully held her arm as he led her from the carriage. He listened apathetically to the solemn words of the burial service—"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Then he had seen her sway as if about to faint. A sister of hers had stepped

toward her to support her. Roy came out of his self-centered grief and reached her side in a single step.

And as he bore her weight upon his arm it came to him that henceforth it must be thus. From now on he must take his place as the head of the family. He must earn for them a livelihood.

"You're not going back to-morrow morning?" his mother had asked wistfully as they were driven home in the somber vehicle. "You can miss another day, can't you?"

And he had pressed her hand reassuringly and tried to smile and to forget what it was going to cost him as he said:

"I'm not going back at all—as long as you and the girls need me here."

His first call was at the office of his father's old friend, Justice of the Peace Morgan, whose little place of business fronted the street half a block from the railroad station. Mr. Morgan was a lawyer who did little, save of the quietest sort in the settlement of estates and the rendering of occasional legal advice to his friends. It was generally known that he had early retired from active practise, content with the income of a small fortune left him by his father.

"I came to see if you could advise me as to some position I might secure," Roy began.

The lawyer smiled deprecatingly:

"I'm afraid I couldn't help you much that way. I don't know anything about your tastes and inclinations. What's worse, I don't know anything about loose jobs.

"But I'm glad you came in," he added. "I was just trying to make up my mind to walk up and see you. My rheumatism is bothering me to-day.

"You see—there's some money coming to you—didn't know that, did you? Well, it ain't much. And, by the time you get hold of it, it isn't likely to be as much as it is now.

"It's this way: Your grandfather left an estate of some eight thousand dollars, to be divided among his seven children. A little of it was in money, and that *was* divided. The most of it was the farm up in Sussex County. I suppose you've been there a good many times.

"As you know, your father was the only son. He did not feel inclined to insist on a partition sale as long as any of his sisters wished to live there. And they all lived there in single blessedness, managing to eke out a living by hiring a man or two to do the work they could not do themselves — until all but one of them, your Aunt Margaret, died and went to heaven.

"Then your Aunt Margaret consoled herself by marrying in haste. I don't know as you ever met your Uncle William Stivers. You didn't miss much. Your aunt did not live long after she married him. Perhaps you did meet Stivers at the funeral last year.

"And now he is occupying the farm. That is about all he is doing to it. It is going to rack and ruin. And, legally, he has a right to just one-half of it. The other half belongs to your family.

"It seems to me that you need your share rather worse than he does. I wanted to know whether you cared to fight for it. I asked your mother, and she told me to talk to you about it.

"Of course you, as a minor, can take no steps in your own name. But, in point of fact, you are now the man of your house. Whatever is done will be done because you say so."

"About how much would our share of the property be worth now?" asked Roy, to whom the idea that he had any claim upon any property was news.

"It ought to be worth about forty-five hundred dollars. In spite of the deterioration of the estate, the natural increase in the land values would bring it up to that."

A sudden gleam of hope shot itself into Burns's mind. With that amount of money he could finish his course in college and yet support his mother and two sisters. At the end of the course he would be in a position to provide for them as he could not hope to do without completing his education.

"I think I owe it to myself as well as to mother and the girls to make every effort to get possession of our share of that property," he said determinedly.

"Just what I thought," Mr. Morgan cordially assented.

"Well"—Roy spoke cheerfully enough —"I guess, then, that it will not be necessary for me to hunt for a job. That will provide enough so that I can wait until I finish my studies."

The old lawyer smiled.

"Not so fast, young man. You may be able to do that eventually. But unless you

have enough to keep going on for a year, or think your credit is good for that long, you'd better get the best job you can.

"Uncle William Stivers has a little money of his own. I imagine he will aim to keep all he thought he was getting by marrying your aunt. We'll be lucky if we can get the thing settled up inside of a year, and it will take some money to get the thing through the courts."

"A year, eh?" Roy spoke somewhat crestfallenly.

The past through which we have lived never grows longer in retrospect. We measure time as fractions of that past. At ten each of us had lived just as long as we will have lived at seventy. And to the ten-year-old a year is one-tenth of a fixed period of which a year is only a seventieth to the septuagenarian.

It seemed a long time to Roy Burns. To delay his education a year appeared as the losing of a very large portion of his life. That was because he was yet a boy.

But he quickly determined that he could endure the delay. He was able to regard a postponed education as vastly better than one foregone forever. And the hope of fulfilling his ambitions prepared him to stand many a strain buoyed up by the knowledge that it was not to last. And this patience showed that he was beginning to be a man.

CHAPTER III.

ELUSIVE JOBS.

Roy had gone to the office of the old lawyer with a heart of lead. The more he had thought upon the prospect of entering any line of business, the less had the idea appealed to him.

Up to this time his entire training had been directed toward the making of a professional man. His father's death had put training temporarily out of the question. And the very beginnings of any professional life demanded complete training.

He dreaded the thought of engaging upon whatever line of business might present an immediate position. He could see that his first job would go far toward determining those which should come after. Yet he must take whatever offered.

As he left Mr. Morgan's stuffy little room, things looked very different. The necessity of seeking immediate employment had not changed; but his whole attitude toward that present employment was altered.

Now he was looking for something to tide him over a difficult temporary situation. What he did now could have no effect on the future, save as it delayed him in making the preparation for his final life-work.

And so, when the justice of the peace had suggested that the only one of his acquaintances who might possibly find a place for Roy was the manager of a large chain of retail cigar-stores, Burns accepted a letter of introduction eagerly. It was one of the last things he would have thought of for a life-work. It promised well for the purpose of tiding over a year.

In due time he presented the letter to an office-boy, who eyed him disapprovingly as he took the message. He was told to wait a few minutes before he could see the busy manager.

The few minutes dragged themselves out nearly to an hour. Then a young lad, hardly older than Roy, stepped out of the inner office and approached the bench on which Burns had seated himself.

He glanced at Roy, then turned to the office-boy.

"Did Mr. Burns go out?" he asked.

Hearing his own name, Roy arose instantly and stepped forward as the boy pointed to him and announced:

"That's him."

"Er—oh!" the older youth half exclaimed, half gasped. "Mr. Burns, I'm glad to see you."

There was that in his tone which nettled Roy. It seemed to indicate that in some way Roy had failed to come up to the youth's expectations. But Burns could hardly object to what followed.

"Mr. McCoombs is very sorry that pressing business prevents him from seeing you this morning. He asked me to say that Mr. Morgan's letter is so entirely satisfactory that you may consider yourself employed. You will go with this card to the salesmen's school for a week, receiving the usual pay during the short course of training."

Two weeks later he might have regarded such prompt attainment of a position as well-nigh miraculous. This was his first experience in hunting for a job, and he had expected to get it. So he took the

proffered card, thanked the young man, and turned to leave the office.

He did not look back on hearing the sudden opening of the door from the inner office until he noticed his own name being called.

"Mr. Burns!" The voice which spoke was crisply pleasant. Roy wheeled round to look into a face which matched the voice.

It was that of a man about thirty years old, clean-shaven, healthy in color, topped with a slightly thinning hair just a trifle gray at the part. The man was attired in a natty gray suit, immaculate linen, a necktie which reminded Roy vaguely of some three-dollar affairs that had attracted his astonished notice at the time when he had come to select the black tie he now wore. His astonishment had been due to the fact that any one could pay such a price for so unimportant a bit of apparel.

"Has Mr. Burns gone?" the man asked of the youth who had just given Roy the card for the salesmen's school. Burns felt quite sure that the man must have seen him approaching.

"No, Mr. McCoombs, this is Mr. Burns," the young man replied as Roy came up.

A sudden change took place.

The frank, genial smile which the manager had evidently put on for the meeting with his future salesman lost its engaging quality while Mr. McCoombs hurriedly glanced over Roy's person, haltingly addressing him at the same time:

"Oh—ah—er—so you are Mr. Burns? I—er—just wanted to— Why—I'm awfully sorry about it; but I find that the vacancy I had intended for you has been filled already—that is to say, the young man who was leaving has decided to stay with us. Er—if there's anything I could do for you? I just got word from this other salesman on the phone."

It took Roy a moment to regain the faculty of speech. He had felt so certain of a fair position—he had seen the honest smile which the manager seemed to have worn for Mr. Burns unknown—and seen it fade when he had become known. Mr. McCoombs's voice as he first called had not been in the tone of one who dismisses another, but it had suddenly taken that tone.

"I—see," Roy stammered.

It was an untruth in the main, for he did not see through the thing at all. He did see, however, that he was not needed in this man's business.

"I'm very sorry," McCoombs repeated nervously. "No doubt there will be other openings for a man of your abilities. Just remember me to Squire Morgan when you see him, won't you?"

The last sentence conveyed utter finality, together with a perfectly apparent relief on the manager's part at being able to think of something pleasant to say.

Very pleasant, indeed!

Out on the sidewalk Roy tried to think the thing out. He was keenly disappointed. He had expected to get a position when he entered the office. He had thought he had secured it.

But the bare fact of having this expectation overturned was not so puzzling as the manner in which it had come about. He felt reasonably sure that the story of the telephone message had been invented impromptu, that Mr. McCoombs had come from his office with no thought other than employing him, and had changed his mind with inexplicable suddenness.

"It's funny, too," he mused, "why both the boy and the manager should have seemed to think I was not Burns. I certainly don't understand it."

There were two perfectly intelligible facts, though, which stood out to prevent Roy's wasting time on the problem of his treatment in the central office of the cigar company. One of these facts was that he still had no job; the other, that he still needed one promptly.

It was also very apparent that he had come to the city quite inadequately armed for the conquest of a position. His ammunition was exhausted by the very first shot he had taken. He did not know now where to look further.

But something must be done; and that very quickly.

He bethought him of the papers. A boy was passing with the six o'clock editions, though it was now about half past eleven. He bought one and began a search for the Help Wanted columns.

The paper had none. But it advertised in several out-of-the-way corners the fact that it printed a tremendous number of such in its morning edition. He started out on a quickly successful quest of a morning paper, and stood leaning against a park railing while looking hurriedly through the advertising lists.

Suddenly his eye lighted upon a name in a column next to that through which he was looking.

WARNER & SON,

Members of the New York Stock Exchange.

STOCKS, BONDS, SECURITIES AS INVESTMENTS.

Office, European Insurance Building.

His heart gave a leap. The "son" referred to had been one of the men on whom he had waited last year, the only one with whom he had been on terms of friendly intimacy.

He folded the paper, put it in his pocket, and started to hunt up the European Insurance Building. He found it sooner than he had expected. It faced the park in which he was standing.

A glance at the directory in its truly magnificent hall revealed the fact that the Warner office occupied a suite of rooms on the second floor. He lost no time in reaching them.

It was with a feeling of distinct pleasure that he gave his name to the office-boy and asked to see Mr. Harry Warner. He knew he would be warmly received, whether the reception would carry a position with it or no.

Harry came hurrying out. Roy's first impression was that the older man had improved tremendously in appearance since his graduation from college.

"Hallo, old man," Warner shouted quite cordially.

He was a big fellow with a fine, hearty manner—worth several thousand yearly to a man in his business.

"Why, you're playing hookey, aren't you," he grinned, before Burns could reply to his first greeting. "You always had plenty of cuts left, I suppose, and thought you'd just use up a few in a bunch, eh?"

"I'm afraid my cut will last a year," Roy smiled back.

"What? A year? What's the trouble?" Warner spoke sympathetically. "What the deuce could you do to get suspended?"

Harry Warner's pranks during his four years in the university had kept him ever within sight of possible expulsion or suspension. It was natural that the idea he had voiced should still present itself to his mind.

"My father died," Burns replied sadly.

It took Harry a moment to sober down properly. Roy's manner more than the words gave the young broker an idea of the extent of the other's loss. Warner's relations with his sire had not been such as to make the death of a parent intrinsically a thing to be regarded as a deep calamity.

"That *is* hard," he said with the air of one who seeks to speak the right thing.

"And," Burns resumed, hastening to get to a topic affording more mutually understandable ground, "of course there never was a whole lot of cash in our tribe. There is some money, but it will take a year to get hold of it. Meanwhile I'm up against the proposition of working for a living."

"That *is* hard," Warner spoke with real earnestness this time. "Where are you working?"

"I'm looking for a job," Roy answered. "You see, I've got to have something to tide the family and myself over this year."

"I see," Harry murmured thoughtfully.

"And so," Burns added with a grin, "while I should have been delighted to drop in here anyhow, I'm forced to confess that on this occasion I came to see if you could put me on the scent of work."

Harry Warner rubbed his forehead.

"Gee," he exclaimed, "I'll have to think a bit. My brain doesn't work well so early in the morning. Where are you going to lunch?"

"Why—I don't know," Roy confessed.

"Well, you come here and we'll lunch together. Meanwhile, you look up anything else you have in mind; and I'll try to get my think-tank to feeding thinks."

"What time?" asked Burns.

"Um-m-m, let's see—it's five minutes to twelve—Lord, I didn't know it was so late—just got down here. Well, make it half past one—if that suits you."

"Anything would suit me," Roy answered gratefully.

CHAPTER IV.

A PROSPECT.

Roy Burns felt some doubt as to Warner's practical ability to put him in the way of work. Wherefore he did not remain idle during the hour and a half which was his before the time Harry had set for their lunch.

He might as well have done so. His three attempts to see business men without introductions failed signally. He made up

his mind that he had better wait for a letter of commendation before he attempted another assault upon the battlements of a job.

"How did you make out?" Harry asked hopefully when they met.

"Nothing doing. Couldn't even get to see any one." Roy spoke ruefully.

"Well, come on, we'll talk while we feed."

They entered a large restaurant which fairly reeked with luxurious elegance, Roy feeling a trifle embarrassed in such fine company as must patronize such a place, Harry apparently very much at home as he nodded to a waiter, who hastened to draw back chairs from a small table and bowed obsequiously as he took their hats and coats.

"Have something for your appetite?" Warner asked as the waiter produced a tablet and pencil for their order.

"Oh, no; thanks," Roy laughed. "I'm hungry enough to eat a horse now."

"Well, I never take anything at this time of day myself," Warner responded. "Bring us some oysters, Charlie."

"Now," he began as the waiter disappeared, "I'm afraid I haven't got very far with the think act. I've been wondering if you'd like something in our line."

Burns's knowledge of stock brokers and brokerage was largely what he had gleaned by occasional reading of the papers. He would have regarded the cigar store proposition as infinitely more to his taste. But—

"It's only for a year, anyhow," he replied to Harry's question. "I'd like anything that would scare the wolf away from the door."

"Well—I'm not sure that I can do anything. The governor is down at Atlantic City and won't be back till day after tomorrow. I'd write to him, but I think I can do better by putting it up to him face to face.

"You see, he's always on the lookout for just the sort of young man he wants. Now, I'm going to see if I can't work it—"

"It's nice of you to put me in the class of young men who are just what he wants," Roy broke in.

"I didn't say so. That isn't the question, anyhow. I think you'd do all right. The thing is to make the old man think you're *it* with both letters capitals. And I'm going to undertake the task—if you want me to."

Burns hesitated.

"Wouldn't that be a little like sailing under false colors?" he asked.

"Oh, rats. You've got to put up a little bluff to get started. Time enough to lie down when you've shown you can't make good. And I would not be too darned particular to impress the old man with the fact, even if you don't think you're succeeding wonderfully at first."

"Aren't you a little afraid you'll lose money by taking on something as green as I am?"

"That isn't worrying me much. It's an open question whether it's wise to hire a man that knows too much about this business anyhow. Some of them fall into temptations to work some of the profits into their own pockets—and it's easy enough when you know how.

"Besides, you needn't suppose that we're going to start you right in with the management of an office. It would take you a year or two to learn enough for that—and you aren't looking to stay with us that long.

"Now, let me tell you a few things to look out for. Don't say anything to my dad about not wanting to stay longer than a year. He never had but one man he could keep longer than that, anyhow—but he has a theory about training men and keeping them.

"And—another thing—I'm going to tell him you want fifty a week. There—don't go to saying you're not worth it—I know that. But, if you say fifty he'll think you're worth taking—and it won't break us while things are going as they are now.

"And say—I know you won't mind my suggesting it—but I wouldn't wear mourning when you come to see him, if we get things that far. You know, mourning doesn't show up well—and dad's a great stickler for dress with the men; says it's an essential form of advertisement, you know. You won't mind, will you?"

Roy's assumption of mourning had been accomplished by the purchase of a black necktie and having his younger sister sew a broad band on his hat. His best clothes had been black, anyhow. His father had always said that black gave best wear.

He said that he did not mind putting off mourning at all. It seemed to him a very poor way of showing his grief—almost cheapening the memory of the dead.

During the remainder of the lunch they talked of various memories of days in col-

lege. Occasionally Harry bethought himself of some new "pointer," which he gave Roy for what it was worth.

Burns stored these things away in remembrance, though they gave him an uncomfortable sensation like that of trying to make a recitation without previous preparation. He had never considered himself a successful bluffer.

Yet he thought of the fifty dollars a week and of his mother and sisters, and he put away any foolish scruples about doing as the junior member of his prospective employing firm directed. After all, he reflected for his own consolation, it was for only a year.

The lunch dragged itself out away beyond the proportions of such a dinner as the college commons had afforded. Roy could hardly suppress a gasp as he saw the amount of change Harry got back from a twenty dollar bill he had placed on the waiter's tray.

"Well, so long, old man," Warner said in parting. "I'll write you all about it as soon as I see the governor. You're pretty sure to hear from me by Monday night—or Tuesday morning—in time so that we can settle it all up Wednesday—if there's anything to settle."

It was a quarter to four as Burns turned to go to the station on his way home. He had no other prospect in view as possibly bringing a position; he had had sufficient experience in trying to meet men whom he did not know.

He felt singularly cheerful. The thought of fifty dollars a week is apt to be cheering when one has been used to living on a share of something like twenty. He felt that he could well afford to make any sacrifice involved in his personal tastes.

The sight of an elaborate haberdashery display in the window of a small store halted him, recalling Harry's warning about putting off mourning for business purposes. He glanced into the mirror which backed up the display.

Yes, he did need some new collars—the one he had on was the best he could find in his meager outfit this morning, and it showed wear at the corners. And, perhaps, he would better get a new tie. Those he had worn at college might do—but he had best be on the safe side.

Out of a rather flat purse he counted a dollar and forty-eight cents in change, with which, and a sigh, he paid for his unwonted extravagance in so foolish a matter as apparel. Perhaps, he mused, he could afford such elegance on fifty dollars a week. It seemed rather dangerous to begin before getting the fifty.

Roy Burns had been brought up to economize, to live within his means. And those means had necessarily been doled out to him in silver rather than in bills.

He pondered, uncomfortable over his extravagance, for some time. At length he did some philosophizing on the gambler's chance which is involved in every business investment. It enabled him to feel a bit more at ease concerning the expenditure for haberdashery.

It was in strict accord with his rather over-careful nature that he told his mother and sisters only of his hope to secure some sort of position next Wednesday. He yielded to their pleas for more explicit information as to the nature of his work; but he gave them no satisfaction when they sought to know what salary he was to receive.

Well enough he knew that fifty dollars a week would seem to them like untold opulence. He also knew that there are many slips between a prospect and a *bona fide* position.

CHAPTER V.

SEEING MR. WARNER.

BURNS spent Monday in looking over his father's bank-account and his list of unpaid accounts both debit and credit. The bank-account would not cover the debit accounts by some fifty dollars. He knew all of the creditors more or less personally.

He concluded that, out of a mass of credits dating, some of them, from years before his own birth, he might have some hope of collecting seventy-five or a hundred dollars.

He felt some disappointment that the letter from Harry Warner did not arrive by the Monday evening mail. On his way home from the post-office, he stopped at Squire Morgan's office and learned that ten dollars was needed there for some clerk's fee which he did not understand.

The news was depressing. To a man brought up in near poverty to the maintenance of strict honesty nothing is more trying than a debt for which there is no certainty of payment. His depression

caused him misgivings about the prospects for Wednesday.

Somehow the fear arose within him that he was not prepared to make the right sort of appearance when called up before Mr. Warner, Sr.

He immediately examined his "best suit" rather critically.

It was a thing he had never done to a suit before. Up to now it had required no critical examination to discern the fact when his best must give place to a new one.

The suit, he concluded, was good enough for any one. One of the buttons had become slightly frayed and he decided to ask his mother next morning to replace it. He thought that it might be well to get her to press the trousers at the same time.

He left her with these tasks when he started for the morning mail the following day. He reached the post-office some time before the letters had been distributed, and stood eagerly watching the glass front of his father's box, half imagining he would be able to guess the contents of Harry's letter by the outside writing when he should see the envelope.

His heart sank as he noted the pile of unassorted mail rapidly diminishing without the placing of a single letter in his box. It very nearly reached the zero point when the little barred doors were thrown open and the people began to call for their numbers. The assortment of the letters was over—Harry had not written. That was very certain.

It was too late now to go to the city looking for another position. He must lose the day.

It had not seemed a loss before—there is a big difference between a day of waiting for a bright prospect and one of waiting for nothing. Now he realized that Saturday and Monday had both been lost as well. He muttered to himself some rather strong things about Warner—things which are not taught in the curriculums of universities, yet which may be learned there by any one not sufficiently instructed before entrance.

A miserable day he spent. There was not the slightest chance of the one o'clock mail bringing anything from town, since it came from the west; yet he had another look into the empty letter-box five minutes after that mail was distributed.

In vain he tried during the rest of the afternoon to offset the forlornness of his hope with a walk, a novel, a magazine, and a newspaper. Not until he had listlessly arrived at the sporting page and seen the big head-lines as to the results of the football game he had missed, did he discover that he was reading a daily over a week old.

That his team had been defeated did not add to his despair. He knew that their victory would not have helped it either. Then he fell to contrasting his present state of mind with that of ten days ago.

What a change!

Then he would have been consumed with interest in those pages which he had not even looked at for a week; now they did not arouse a flutter—he tried to read the detailed description of the game and found it dull. He concluded that he had suddenly aged. This thought did not serve to make him happier.

At last the five o'clock train shrieked through the little hamlet. He tried to convince himself that he would not be disappointed if it did not bring the word for which he no longer hoped. Yet he almost ran to the post-office, and he could hear his heart beating as he again watched the sorting of the mails. When it was all over he decided that he had not previously quite touched the depths of wo.

He had much to learn.

"Well," he said to himself fiercely as he trudged home, "there are other jobs—but I don't know where nor how to get at them. I guess I'd better get a general letter of recommendation from Mr. Morgan—and, maybe, Harry would give me another. Perhaps, he won't mind sending me to some friend who might send me to another who might—Rats."

He stopped again at the office of the justice of the peace. Squire Morgan gave him a cordial letter of introduction to whom it might concern.

But he could not give an appetite to the disappointed boy. Roy hardly tasted a mouthful of the roast his mother set before him. He did try to negotiate the dessert which he knew the dear old lady had specially prepared to tempt him. But it was a failure. He sat dumbly, wishing she and the girls would get through and let him leave, when there was a sudden ring at the telephone.

All of them started a little. The thing

had not been heard since the death of the doctor. Roy had written the company to come and take it out. He hurried to see who might be calling.

He came back looking much too cheerful for one so recently orphaned.

In answer to their inquiries:

"It was Harry Warner," he cried joyfully. "He'd written me a note and neglected to mail it—usually has the stenographer attend to that. I'm to be there at eleven to-morrow morning—everything is all cut and dried but signing the contract—

"Say, what did you do with my dessert? I believe I do begin to feel a little hungry."

And then he went on to tell them about the salary he was to receive in the new position. The others shared in his enthusiasm. The girls spent the evening in planning the future purchases of some thousand dollars' worth of things they fancied they needed.

Roy took particular pains in dressing the next morning. It was a detail to which he had heretofore given little attention. But Harry had advised him to appear at his best, and he felt he must follow directions.

He put on the new fifty-cent tie, carefully adjusting it beneath the fold of one of his new collars. He noticed that his mother had got one of the trouser-leg creases slightly out of line, but he did not regard the thing as serious. He got a damp cloth and endeavored to rub out a small spot on the lapel of his coat.

He did not mind the trouble.

He even took pains to wrap a loose thread at one of the buttonholes carefully about the button. When the task was completed he felt quite proud of the results.

To be sure, he reflected, the clothes were of last year's style, and there had been some changes. But they were as good as any one should expect a man of moderate means to wear.

A little before eleven, he was at the brokers' office. He was somewhat disappointed to learn that Harry was not in yet. But Mr. Warner, Sr., had left word that Mr. Burns was to wait for him.

Roy did not have long to wait. Hardly had he completed a hasty inspection of his attire to make sure nothing had gone awry, when a stout man walked briskly into the room.

Instinctively Burns knew that this was Harry's father. Unconsciously he compared the man with his own dead parent. He felt that many times Harry's wealth could not have made up the difference in any respect.

Mr. Warner nodded absently as he passed Roy, who had risen to meet him. The office-boy stood at what might be called attention.

"Walter," the broker asked of the boy, "has Mr. Burns come in yet?"

"Yes, sir," the boy replied in the voice of one who is fearful of punishment. "That's him over yonder."

Mr. Warner wheeled back and gazed for an instant at Roy. His gaze was about the most unpleasant thing Burns had ever faced.

Roy started stiffly toward him.

"Oh—ah—er—you are Mr. Burns, I believe." The head of the brokerage concern spoke coldly. "I'm glad to see you. Was there something you wished to see me about, Mr. Burns?"

And, once more, Roy realized that a job had vanished into thin nothingness upon first sight of his person.

Burns made some reference to the fact that he was looking for a position. Mr. Warner lost no time in stating that he knew of no opening. Roy Burns turned to walk out of the office with a sinking heart.

What was it about him, he wondered miserably, that so suddenly turned men from him? This was the second time he had been on the very brink of securing employment from some one who had not seen him, only to be turned away when the prospective employer had caught a first glimpse of his person.

He had never thought himself handsome—had never considered that matter seriously anyhow. But no one had ever accused him of being such a fright in appearance that he would necessarily turn people away in horror.

In the elevator he glanced furtively into a panel mirror, half afraid that he had acquired a mysterious smudge of soot upon his face. He could discover nothing startlingly disfiguring about his looks in the brief time it took to descend to the main floor.

As he was passing out of the street door he ran into Harry Warner.

"Hello," cried the junior broker.

"Where you going? Seen the governor? Why—what's up?"

"He—he didn't want me," Roy said gloomily.

A flush of anger swept across young Warner's face. He looked over Burns with an expression like that most of us wear when we particularly wish we dared spank some other man's youngster.

"Well, I don't wonder," he said testily.

"W—what?" Burns stammered in surprise. "Why not? What's the matter?"

"Matter enough," growled Harry. "Just listen to me."

(To be continued.)

Mr. Pilkington's Charmer Churn.

BY HARRY KING TOOTLE.

The Story of Six Hundred Dollars and the Indiana Rights to a Wonderful Patent.

HAD you been familiar with the point of view entertained by Mr. Pilkington—Mr. Charles Algernon Pilkington, of Chicago—you would have come readily to the conclusion that he could not have sought any other way of investing his money. When his father's Uncle Jabez died, Uncle Jabez who had lived twenty years too long because he dreaded the expense of a funeral, it was found that Charles Algernon had been remembered in his will.

True, it was only for six hundred dollars; but that was six hundred dollars more than any one had ever dreamed Uncle Jabez would devise to so distant a relative. This sum of money was more than Mr. Pilkington had ever possessed at any one time. When he received the money—fortunately at that moment having no debts and being out of love—the question was: How should he invest his legacy?

It was too small to buy real estate or make any other dignified investment. It was too large to lie idle, drawing a mere savings-bank rate of interest. Whereupon Fate—that mysterious influence that at great moments in our careers directs affairs without our yea or nay—Fate took Mr. Pilkington in hand and left him no alternative regarding his investment.

The message of Fate was a letter bearing the postmark of Peru, Indiana. It read:

> DEAR ALGIE:
>
> It's doubtful if you remember me, because I was some older than you when you and me lived in Vincennes. I've got a good thing I want to let go, because I've got a peach of a job as ticket-seller with Jimpson Brothers' Circus; and a good man can take down $20 walk-away money any day in the week. So I says to myself, "who shall I let have this good graft?"
>
> Then something in me answers quick-like, "there's Algie Pilkington. He wasn't a bit stuck up, and didn't think he was too good to speak to me when he was a kid. I'll let him in on the ground floor."
>
> There's a big clean-up in it this summer. Lots of people want it.
>
> So that nobody knows what you're here for when you run down to Peru, just register as my brother Algie. You'll understand when you get here. It will take five or six hundred to swing the deal. Wire me when you are coming so I can arrange to get away as soon as I have talked to you.
>
> Yours for business.
>
> JIM POTTLE.

Mr. Pilkington did not remember any Jim Pottle; in fact, no Pottles bulked large on the horizon of his Vincennes days. Yet here was a chance to make a quick turn which was presented him by the grateful Mr. Pottle, and he was not the one to refuse. The next day he went to Peru.

"Is my brother, James Pottle, here?" Mr. Pilkington asked the clerk at the hotel.

That dignitary glanced at the Pottle box for the key, then dipped a pen in the ink, and held it out for Mr. Pilkington.

"He's not in, but he said for you to register and get the room next to him."

In a firm hand Mr. Pilkington wrote, "Algernon Pottle, Chicago." The hand was firm, but he flushed a bit guiltily at this first deception.

Yet he felt reassured when he considered that this was a business venture. Captains of industry often traveled incognito, and he likewise was out for the money.

No sooner had the clerk taken the pen again than who should slap Charles Algernon on the back but Mr. James Pottle.

"Hallo, Algie, old boy! I'm glad to see you!" exclaimed Mr. Pottle.

Still pump-handling the new arrival, he turned to the clerk:

"Emery, shake hands with my brother, Algie. Nothing's too good for him here. We don't talk about money, so just put his account on my bill."

"No, I can't let you do that, Jim," protested Pilkington, trying all the time to make his pseudo brother fit into his Vincennes memories.

"Nonsense. I'd pawn my diamonds for you, boy." He wore several large yellow stones spattered over his person. "And I know you'd pay my bills if I needed the money, wouldn't you?"

"Surest thing you know." Mr. Pilkington felt that he was acting a part, and was now entering into it with relish.

Mr. Emery, being a good hotel clerk, smiled affably.

On their way up-stairs Mr. Pilkington took occasion to inspect his alleged brother.

His hair was close-cropped and somewhat redder than his smooth-shaven face. He had twinkling eyes that let nothing escape them. His jaw was square; and his shoulders, too. His shepherd-plaid suit was well-tailored, and across his fancy waistcoat meandered a profusion of gold watch-chain.

But you forgot all this obtrusive elegance when Mr. Pottle fixed you with his penetrating eyes and began to talk. His flow of language was not pure and limpid, but it was particularly forceful and most impressive.

"Here's the layout, Algie," he explained. "I bought the Indiana rights to sell Chaddington's Charmer Churn. It's a wonder. In three minutes it turns out butter that makes you think of mild-eyed kine knee-deep in June, and a child can handle it. They're going like hot cakes, and I'm keeping the factory working overtime just on what I've been able to do in the short while I've had it."

"Do you think I want to peddle churns?" exclaimed Mr. Pilkington as soon as he recovered from his surprise.

He was crestfallen at the turn affairs had taken.

"I think you want to make a pot of money. Here's the country-fair season just opening, and what more delightful vacation could you have? All you do is boss the job and take in the money. Dress up a little girl, put a doll in one hand, put the handle of the churn in the other, and every three minutes you merely take out the butter.

"The farmers can't unwrap the buckskin thongs about their fat old wallets quick enough. There's always a lot of ballyhoo men about fairs, and you can pick up one for twelve or fifteen dollars a week. Why, you can clear more than that every day before the first race starts."

The prospect was pleasing. A summer passed in this fashion would be far more enjoyable than one spent in an office and a hall bedroom. Pilkington made a rapid calculation mentally, figuring his profits at twenty dollars a day because the multiplication was easier, and decided that he ought to clear two thousand dollars on the season. Then he could appoint agents in each county and get a rake-off on every churn they sold.

By the time he finished figuring, Mr. Pilkington was living in a palatial residence at Englewood and motoring down to the office to glance over the orders in the morning mail before going to the golf-course.

"But why did you want me to register as your brother?" questioned the cautious Charles Algernon.

Mr. Pottle immediately glanced about fearsomely, although they were enjoying the privacy of his own room.

"If I can't make the last payment, some people who know what a big thing it is would get the Indiana rights. I've got a personal grievance because they froze me out in Ohio. That's why I want to get the laugh on them. They're watching me close, and they'd get out an injunction if they thought you was somebody going to buy Indiana off me."

"What do you want?"

"Six hundred dollars."

Mr. Pilkington, as he had seen shrewd bargainers in stage-plays do, rolled his eyes to heaven and called upon his guardian angel to bear witness to the fact that there wasn't that much money in the world.

"I'm giving it to you at that price, Algie," was the response in injured tones.

Forthwith Mr. Pottle produced a bundle of papers, his correspondence and contract with the Chaddington Charmer Churn Company. Mr. Pilkington was duly impressed by the pictures in four colors upon the letter-heads, of the acres and acres of factory. He also was awed to silence by the contract, adorned with a big red seal.

"I didn't think, Algie, that I could some day do you a good turn when you was a kid watching us big boys play ball down on the lot back of the mill. I knew you would turn out well; you was a shrewd little youngster, but I never dreamed it was me who could do you a good turn. What do you think of this chance to have a vacation all summer and bank big money at the same time?"

"If it's so good, why don't you stick to it?"

Mr. Pottle lowered his voice and smiled insinuatingly.

"It's a secret, but I won't keep it from you, Algie. You've got a business right to know; then, too—hang it all, I like you."

He dropped his voice still lower.

"I'm in love. It's more than the walk-away money that's taking me out with Jimpson Brothers' show. She's just the purtiest thing you ever seen in those spangles and tights and frilly skirt when she comes in on a big white horse. She's old Bill Jimpson's daughter, and I'm in right. It's because I'm dropping into such a good thing that I can afford to almost give my churn rights away. So, what do you say, Algie? Six hundred down on the nail and you get all of Indiana. It's rich pickings."

"I don't see it at six hundred." Mr. Pilkington was itching to get control of the rights if the churn was as good as it looked, but he hoped to drive a better bargain.

Mr. Pottle looked at his watch and frowned, just as if time was of the essence of the contract.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Algie," he conceded, "I've promised to join the show at Wheeling to-morrow. Just hand over five hundred dollars, and I'll indorse the contract over to you. That's fair, ain't it?"

"How do I know the churn will do what you say it will?" There was shrewdness and triumph in Pilkington's tones. "I never heard of a churn that could make butter in three minutes."

An expansive smile engulfed the shining visage of Mr. Pottle. It was an approving smile. He recognized that he was dealing with a man of business, and that is the kind your true business man likes best to deal with.

"That's the way to talk, Pilkington," he replied heartily. "By George, you'll make a hit dealing with these hard-headed old farmers. It's the man with the honest ring in his voice and integrity written all over him who gets right down under their hickory shirts. Of course you want to see the churn make good. I wouldn't take a cent of your money until you had a demonstration.

"Here, I'll tell you what. I'll indorse over this contract to you, but hold it. Then we'll take a churn, go out on the street and give a demonstration. After you see how it works and how the farmers eat 'em alive, then you pass me the five hundred iron men, I passes you the golden contract, wishes you well, and goes where love and duty calls me."

To this Mr. Pilkington agreed.

It was Saturday afternoon and there were a number of farmers in town. Mr. Pottle had three churns stored in a milk depot close to a corner where many sons of the soil congregated. These he brought out and ranged upon a packing-box. Two newsboys having brought a can of milk at his direction from the place where the churns had been kept, Mr. Pottle was ready for the demonstration.

"I don't usually make these *spiels* myself," he explained, "but I can't get hold of anybody here, and I just want to show you how easy it is. Besides, I've only got three churns left out of this consignment of fifty I got in a week or so ago. They cost me ten and I usually sell 'em for seventeen and a half. Of course you'll buy 'em by the car-load and get 'em for seven and a half. Ten dollars for Algie."

Mr. Pilkington felt that he was on the high road to fortune. His former townsman mounted the box and gathered a crowd about him with the ease of the trained barker who has no competition.

"Come closer, friends, come closer," was the persuasive invitation.

You could not tell whether he intended to sell tooth-powder that was guaranteed to remove the enamel with one application or cut the price of "Paris After Dark" to twenty-five cents a volume.

"Listen, friends, listen." It was almost a confidential whisper. "I'm not going to ask you for a cent of your money. I've only got a few of these left and the man that wants one will have to come up and ask me for it. What is it? Chaddington's Charmer Churn. The churn you've read about, the churn your wife begs you to buy. I know a man back in my home county in York State who got drunk and stayed away from home for a week. When he came back he brought as a peace offering one of these perfect, peerless, unimpeachable churns. He just stuck it on the back porch and went off to the barn for half an hour.

"When he come up to the house his wife threw her arms around him and begged him to stay drunk another week if he could bring home something else like that. But he couldn't, friends. Why? Because in the whole world there ain't such another wonderful invention as Chaddington's Charmer Churn."

The crowd guffawed. Mr. Pottle wiped his brow and smiled at Mr. Pilkington.

"Try it, then buy it; that's my motto. I'm going to make butter here before your very eyes in three minutes—in three-e-ee minutes. Impossible, you say. That's what the husband said when the doctor told him they was twins—but there they was.

"Prove it to yourself—don't ask me about it. Will the old gentleman—you, with the green coat—step up here and hold his watch so all can see? Thank you, I thought you would. Now, boy, come here. If your pa buys one of these you won't have to play hookey when your ma wants you to churn. It only takes three minutes, and a bright boy like you can spare three minutes any day."

While the farmer held his watch so all could see, the boy worked diligently, delighted to be the cynosure of all eyes. Several seconds before the three minutes had elapsed, Mr. Pottle stopped the churn. In a wooden dish he scooped out the soft butter and passed it around for all to see and sample.

"Marvelous! Mar-vel-ous! You can't equal it anywhere. The price of this churn is thirty dollars, and I've sold hundreds at that figger. But to get 'em started in this county, to get you to tell your neighbors about 'em, I'm selling 'em to-day for seventeen fifty.

"Think of it, neighbor! That hardware store next the milk place there would charge you thirty-five. When I sell it to you for half that I'm taking the shingles off my house and letting my children go without shoes. But I know you'll be the best advertisement a man could have; you'll tell your friends and neighbors. And your wife—she'll be sewing, cool and comfortable out in the front yard, while other women are spraining their backs and blistering their hands with old-fashioned churns that Noah brought out of the attic of the ark. Who wants the first one? Speak up, friends. There's only a few left."

"I'll take one," called a typical farmer from the edge of the crowd after Pottle had waited several seconds for a response. He wore a cheap straw hat and carried a whip.

"That's the way to talk, my friend. Step right up, and swap seventeen fifty for the greatest wonder of this or any age."

The deal was closed and the farmer departed with his bargain. Mr. Pilkington was satisfied and willing to pay over the money. Mr. Pottle would not hear to it, however, until he had given a second demonstration, this time producing the butter in two minutes and forty-five seconds.

The second sale was made to a venerable farmer with a white beard that made him look like Rip Van Winkle. He said he wanted it for a golden wedding present for his "old woman."

"You can have this third churn, Algie," said Pottle generously as he exchanged the contract for five hundred dollars in new crinkly bills. "I've got an engagement up-town and haven't got time to get rid of it. I'll see you at the hotel after a while."

After Pottle departed a sudden thought occurred to Charles Algernon. He would sell the remaining churn so that from his own experience he could tell his salesmen how easy it was. Procuring more cream and returning to his stand he soon had a crowd about the churn.

He got through the preliminary talk creditably, closely imitating Pottle in his manner of appealing to his auditors. Your ruralist, no matter what his State, has the characteristics of the man from Missouri, and must be shown before he is separated from his sluggishly circulating currency.

A grinning boy was at the churn's helm, working as hard as if it meant a ticket to the circus.

Two minutes! Two minutes and a half! Three minutes!

Presto! Mr. Pilkington opened the churn—to be confronted with a milky expanse that did not have a lump of butter floating upon it big enough to serve as an island for a pollywog.

Mr. Pilkington wrinkled his brow. Something was wrong. Two or three men on the edge of the crowd drifted away. The owner of the Indiana rights for Chaddington's Charmer Churn could not understand the failure of the butter to respond to the energetic coaxing of the young man who had spent three minutes faithfully following directions.

The boy was ordered to continue work. Four minutes passed, five, and six. Still no butter.

At the end of ten minutes the farmers in the crowd departed, making derisive remarks for Mr. Pilkington to hear. A possible sale to any one present had been killed by the failure of the demonstration. Mr. Pilkington walked over to the milk depot to remonstrate with the proprietor about the quality of the cream furnished him.

"The same as I gave for the other churns?" exclaimed the man. "That wasn't my cream. They brought that can here about an hour ago when they brought the churns. I don't know what was in it. They gave me half a dollar for keeping it."

Mr. Pilkington's mind was beginning to entertain a doubt. He hurried next door to the hardware store to make inquiries about Chaddington's Charmer Churn.

"Sure I know it," said the proprietor. "They claimed they could make butter in three minutes, but they never did. The concern busted two or three months ago because the churns didn't deliver the goods."

Remembering that Mr. Pottle had promised to meet him at the hotel "after awhile," Mr. Pilkington suddenly developed a feverish desire to gaze once more upon the kind friend who had remembered him from the days of his youth with such gratitude that he had decided to "let him in on the ground floor." His return to the hotel was more hasty than dignified.

"Is Pottle here?" he gasped, on reaching the desk.

"No, Mr. Pottle, your brother isn't here," answered Emery.

To hear himself called Pottle was as pleasant for Mr. Pilkington as being thrown into a pond in January.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. He's checked out, but he told me to tell you that you could have those two churns."

Mr. Pilkington turned in the direction indicated, then grasped the counter for support. Two strangely familiar churns had dawned upon his vision.

"Who—who left them?" he inquired faintly.

"You know," said Emery, surprised at the question. "Your brother's two pals—'Farmer' Burger and 'Grandpa' Jones. They're all going to follow the circus together this spring. I thought they told you they laid off here about ten days because the rain put a crimp in the circus business."

Mr. Pilkington walked over to a chair and dropped into it heavily. This did not contribute to his happiness, because there, directly in front of him, making him painfully aware of their presence by their awful yellow color, were the two Chaddington Charmer Churns.

Mr. Pilkington heaved a sigh, lifted himself heavily out of his chair, looked reproachfully at the three-minute butter-makers, and again walked up to the desk.

"What's my bill?"

Mr. Emery made a rapid calculation.

"One hundred and five dollars, Mr. Pottle."

Had the clerk said four dollars or five, Mr. Pilkington would have protested. As it was, he merely laughed.

"You've footed up the wrong bill, old man. I just came this morning."

"I know, Mr. Pottle. Your own bill is just two dollars. The rest is your brother's. He said you'd pay it."

"What!"

"Room, six days at three dollars a day, eighteen dollars; café, twenty-eight dollars; bar, fifty-seven dollars; total, one hundred and three dollars; and your own small bill makes it one hundred and five dollars."

"But I won't pay it! It's an outrage!"

A steely glitter came into Emery's eye.

"Yes, you will, Mr. Pottle." His voice had an exceedingly unpleasant ring to it. "When you came this morning and your brother spoke of how he would pay bills for you and how you would pay bills for him, you up and said: 'Surest thing you know.' So when your brother said you'd settle, I let him check out and take his baggage. Now, that was just in accordance with your own statement; wasn't it, Mr. Pottle?"

To be called Pottle was enough to churn Mr. Pilkington's feelings into a fine frenzy. Yet there was no use for him now to deny that he was Algernon Pottle.

In considering the matter he thought of how he would be regarded if he made *such* a complaint. What if the true story came to light? The whole thing would be telegraphed to Vincennes. This thought made his decision instantaneous. Vincennes should never know.

With a firm step Mr. Pilkington walked up to the cashier's window and laid down one hundred and five dollars. The cashier made out a receipted bill for Algernon Pottle. The owner of the Indiana rights for Chaddington's Charmer Churn now took stock of himself to discover just what were his visible assets. It did not take him long to find out.

A hurried search showed them to be $2.80 in currency and a return ticket to Chicago. Strange as it may seem to some, he did not list among his assets the three churns or the beautifully lithographed contract with its impressive red seal.

There was a train for Chicago in an hour, With never a glance at the two yellow specimens of Chaddington's Charmer Churn that graced the lobby, Mr. Pilkington walked gloomily out of the hotel and down to the depot.

Her Hero from Savannah.

BY MARIE B. SCHRADER,

Author of "Just Like An Actress," etc.

The Cross-Purpose Happenings on Board a Liner Between Georgia and New York.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

A FLING FROM DESTINY.

"AND what did the old gentleman say?" Tom Wendell looked at his friend with keen interest.

Ross, however, did not seem greatly disposed to answer the question. He merely shifted his comfortable position against the cushions of the trim motor-boat and gazed idly at the water.

The two had been away from Savannah on a two-weeks' trip, in which they made their home port any old port at all; but discovered that Tybee Island suited them a little better than any of the other places, perhaps for the reason that they met more people they knew there than elsewhere.

Now they were nearing Savannah again, and the next day would find the two young men back at the daily routine of office.

Wendell had just learned by chance of an interesting episode, which had occurred at Tybee earlier in the season, when Phil had whiled away an idle Sunday at the popular resort.

A visitor from New York had ventured too far out in the surf, had become exhausted in endeavoring to return, and was on the verge of going down for the last time when Ross rescued him.

"I can't make you out, Phil," continued Wendell.

"Why?" inquired Ross in indifferent tones.

"'Why?'" repeated Tom. "Reason enough. Here you have been a hero all this time, and you never mentioned the fact to me."

"Nothing very strange about that," said Phil. "You would have done the same. There was nothing to the thing, and the gentleman was very much obliged to me."

"And offered you a substantial reward —enough to last a lifetime, I suppose?" Wendell laughed.

"I've heard so much about the gratitude of those saved," he continued cynically. "They say a great deal, and don't live up to a word of it."

"Mr. Patton didn't offer me money," said Phil. "He wouldn't so insult me."

"Well, then, maybe he wanted to introduce you to his pretty daughter," insisted

Wendell in joking tones. "Did he have one?"

"He did," replied Phil. "That is, he has a daughter; but whether she is pretty or not I don't know, and never expect to find out."

"My dear boy," said Tom, "I see that you don't make the most of your opportunities. Old gentleman—grateful—pretty girl—"

"I tell you I have no idea what the daughter is like," protested Phil.

"At any rate, you should have found out," persisted Tom. "Didn't he invite you to call?"

"He did."

"And you didn't?"

"No. I did not."

Phil was beginning to get provoked. He was a modest fellow and genuinely disliked discussing his bravery.

"Mr. Patton was kind enough to offer me a position in his employ," he added.

"And you accepted at once?"

"I declined with thanks for the reason that I like Savannah and the Savannah people. I have a good position of my own at present. Am getting along well, with excellent chances of promotion—making a good salary. Why should I want to make a change and go to live among strangers, way up there in the North?"

That seemed to settle it in Phil's mind. But Wendell shook his head.

"This Mr. Patton must be wealthy," he remarked.

"I suppose he is," replied Phil. "He was stopping at the De Soto, and had two automobiles with him."

"Phew!" exclaimed Tom.

"Almost home!" broke out Phil, with a note of gladness in his voice. "I tell you there's no place like Savannah. You can have all the New Yorks you want, but give me this beautiful place to live in. Maybe you can't make quite so much money, but money isn't everything."

"It's well enough to say that while you have a good, easy position, Phil," his friend rejoined. "But if you lost it, you'd find Savannah just like other places when it comes to looking for a job—only worse, for opportunities aren't as many down South. You'd wish you had kept in touch with this Mr. Patton."

Wendell had lived North himself, and he had prided himself on the fact that he understood conditions there.

"Well, thank Heaven, I don't have to worry about my place," said Phil.

They were soon busy mooring their boat, and attracted considerable attention as they landed from their trim craft. Bronzed by the sea air, both looked exceedingly well in the latest cut white flannel yachting suits.

"Now for the baggage, and we're off!" cried Ross.

"Why bother about that now?" remarked Wendell. "We don't need it. I'll send the darky from my office after the suit-cases. Let's take a look at the old town first."

"Anybody would think we had been away for two years instead of two weeks," said Phil with a laugh as the two strolled toward the center of the city.

The palm trees shading the walks never seemed more attractive than they did just then. The air was soft and soothing and the cries of the negro women with flat baskets of fruit and vegetables on their heads were most persuasive.

The two friends parted company, each to go to his own office, for neither had received mail during their absence. Instructions had been left to this effect.

Phil walked quickly into the familiar building and opened the door of his own room.

An unexpected something in the atmosphere gave him a premonition of disaster. One of the under clerks came forward.

His face was grave and Phil saw at once that something had happened.

"What is it?" he asked.

"We tried to reach you, sir," said the man. "Thought you would be at Tybee, but they said you had left there three days ago."

"Yes, yes. That's so," assented Phil. "But what's the trouble? You look as if somebody were dead."

"That's just it, sir," replied the clerk. "Mr. Grant was buried this morning."

"What!" exclaimed Phil as he started forward as if shocked by an electric current.

"Yes, sir. I knew it would be an awful blow. We're all about crazy. With you away and all the trouble here, everything has been upside down.

"Dead!" exclaimed Phil. "Why I can't believe it!"

"It's only too true, Mr. Ross. I wish I could bring him back. He was the best

man I ever worked for and now—what are we all going to do?"

Phil sat down from sheer weakness. His shoulders shook convulsively as he endeavored to keep back the sobs that would come because of his loss in friend and employer.

For a moment he never thought of the business change that death had brought to him, but the clerk's words caused him to realize this.

"'Tain't easy huntin' for places in midsummer," commented his fellow-worker ruefully. "Of course you know that everything stops dead still here. The widow's goin' to sell out and that's the end."

"'The end.'"

Phil repeated the words. He recalled the conversation he had just a little while before with Wendell. It seemed that there was nothing sure in this world. Who could have surmised that a strong man, like his employer, would so soon pass away?

"Automobile," replied the clerk in answer to a question regarding the sudden demise.

"I'll have to see Mrs. Grant," said Phil.

"You can't. She's so overcome, she won't see anybody," replied the clerk. "She said to tell you she's sorry you and the rest of us will have to look for positions."

Phil turned disconsolately to his desk. A pile of mail lay there unopened. On top of the lot was a telegram.

He was in no mood for reading letters and was about to leave them where they were.

"Better look at the telegram, sir," suggested the clerk noticing his half-dazed state of mind. "It came several days ago. I signed for it. I hope it isn't important."

Phil tore open the envelope while the clerk waited by anxiously.

"I hope it ain't more bad news, sir?" he inquired sorrowfully.

Phil groaned.

"It *is* bad news," he said as he sat still holding the yellow paper crumpled in his hand. "If I had only been here, or if this could have been forwarded to me," he said.

"But you gave positive orders that nothing was to be sent on," the clerk reminded him.

"I never thought of such a thing as this."

Once more Ross read the lines hoping there might be some mistake, but there was none.

The message was brief and characteristically to the point. It was signed Floyd Patton and ran:

> Will be in Savannah on the eleventh. Call at De Soto Hotel without fail. Utmost importance. Must see you. Business proposition.

Phil knew that the wire referred to Mr. Patton's previous offer. His opportunity had come and gone while he was floating the summer sea in careless ignorance of the tricks destiny was playing with him behind his back.

The wire was three days old. Strange to say, it must have arrived at about the same time his employer had met with the fatal accident.

Ross knew that men like Floyd Patton did not wait to make business offers several times to unwilling persons.

This was the first time he had known Mr. Patton's full name, and it came as a revelation that the man whose life he had saved was none other than Floyd Patton, the multimillionaire—man of finance and a power in the great Northern business world.

Quickly he puzzled out a course of action. At least he would make an effort.

He went to the telephone and called up the De Soto Hotel. Possibly some unforeseen incident had delayed Mr. Patton.

"Mr. Floyd Patton?" repeated the operator. "Yes. He has been here several days. But he has left."

"I might have known it," groaned Phil. "When did he leave?" he asked.

"About an hour ago," replied the operator. "He sails this afternoon at three on the City of Savannah."

"'The City of Savannah.'"

Phil threw down the receiver with a half suppressed cry of exultation. There was yet time. He could catch him. He knew, however, that he would have to hustle to do it.

"I'll make that boat or die," he muttered as he hailed a passing surrey and instructed the old negro driver to kill his horse if necessary, but to get to the wharf before the big ship pulled out.

CHAPTER II.

A VOYAGE AT SHORT NOTICE.

THE rickety vehicle, under the guidance of the feeble driver, seemed to crawl along.

Phil consulted his watch every few seconds.

"You *must* make that boat," he said.

"I'm a doin' ther bes' I can, suh," answered the driver.

Phil groaned. Everything depended on his getting there on time.

Suddenly he sprang to the front seat and before the astonished negro could protest he took the reins and urged on the horse.

After what seemed an interminable period, the outlines of the smoke-stacks of the big ship loomed into view.

"She's still there, thank Heaven," exclaimed Phil.

The next moment he jumped from the surrey and ran quickly toward the gangplank. He had no difficulty in going on board at so late an hour for the official on duty was an acquaintance.

He explained that he merely wanted to see a man on business.

"You haven't much time, Mr. Ross," he was cautioned.

"Oh, I'll remember that," replied Phil. "Maybe you've seen Mr. Patton?"

"Patton?" repeated the official.

"Floyd Patton," explained Phil; "of New York."

"Oh, I know who you mean. The millionaire! No, I haven't seen him. They told me he was on board, but I wouldn't know him from a jack-rabbit."

Phil couldn't afford to waste his precious time in conversation, so he ran on board and began his search.

His first intention was to inquire of the purser regarding Mr. Patton's whereabouts. But when he observed the crowd of people in line, most of them impatient, he concluded that he couldn't wait to push ahead of them. It seemed to him that the wisest thing to do was to look about for himself.

Surely, Mr. Patton wouldn't be in his cabin when everybody else was watching the last piece of baggage being carried in.

Ross searched the faces of all about him. He went from one end of the steamer to the other, above, below, but not a sign of Mr. Patton could he unearth.

Once he thought he had found his man. The fellow turned suddenly and Phil saw his mistake. At the same time a pretty girl who was leaning over the rail rested a pair of inquiring eyes upon him. They seemed to say:

"You do seem to be in an awful state."

Phil suddenly remembered that they were the same pair of eyes which had been looking down on him while he stood talking at the gangway. He had been too busy and too worried then to pay attention, but now that they were at such close range he found himself suddenly fascinated by their dark brown depths.

But business was business and he couldn't bother about dark brown eyes at such a crucial moment.

He looked at the pretty girl again, but she had turned her head the other way as if she had never so much as noticed Phil.

On he went, but in vain. The New York man was nowhere to be found.

The last whistle sounded.

"All ashore," came the final warning.

But Phil didn't hear. He was at that moment one of the long line waiting to speak to the purser.

He pushed ahead of those near him.

"Excuse me," he said apologetically, "but it is most important. Where will I find Mr. Patton?"

"Suite B," quickly replied the purser as he turned to the next in line.

Phil heaved a sigh of relief, and just then became conscious that the steamer was moving.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed as he dashed out on deck.

Again the pretty girl was near by and heard him; at least she must have heard, although she gave no sign if she did, for after one casual glance she resumed her study of the passing scenery.

Phil was nearly distracted. What was to be done! It was too late to get off, but how could he continue on?

Here he was bound for New York, a three days' trip without money and minus baggage.

He looked at his white flannel suit and congratulated himself that it was new and just the thing for such a voyage, but what would he look like landing in New York in yachting rig?

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small roll of bills.

For the first time he remembered that he had not had a chance to go to the bank to deposit what remained after the two weeks' outing. Both Wendell and Ross had not spent all they had carried with them, for living in their boat was not so expensive as a vacation at a fashionable hotel. So they had congratulated them-

selves on the fact that they had come out ahead financially.

Ross counted the money to make sure it was real.

What luck! There was just enough to pay his passage one way with a dollar left over for car-fare in New York.

Many a young man would have been stunned by the shortage of ready money in such a case, but it didn't feeze Ross at all, for he quickly figured that one Mr. Floyd Patton was just the person who would set everything right.

There was no hurry now about seeing that gentleman, so he called the deck steward and told him to bring him a chair.

"Where do you want it, suh? Near your stateroom?"

Phil looked at the fellow for an instant in a dazed state.

"Why," he stammered, only half-aloud, "that's so. I haven't any stateroom."

"Ain't got no stateroom!" repeated the steward in amazement. "You'll never git one then, suh. This heah boat wuz crowded two months ago."

Phil turned sick at heart. He wished he had never come. Everything seemed against him.

The steward, however, brought a chair and he sat down to think things over.

The fresh salt air—for they had left the river behind by this time—gave him courage and he decided that the one thing to do was to see the purser and ascertain what he could do for him.

Once more he looked about for Mr. Patton, but he was nowhere to be found.

He sent a steward to Suite B, and the negro returned with the information that this was the millionaire's suite, but no one answered the knock.

Phil then went below and found the purser at leisure.

"I would like a stateroom—or, at least, a berth—if you haven't anything better," he said.

The purser looked at him in astonishment.

"Do you mean to say you haven't a berth?" he asked.

"Nothing—not even my ticket," replied Phil. "I was carried off. I will pay my passage now," and he took out his money.

The purser appeared a bit relieved as he handed him the change for the fare.

"I don't know what I can do for you, sir," he said. "Practically all the accommodations on this trip were taken weeks ago. There isn't a thing at present. However," he added, noticing Phil's dejected look, "I'll see if I can't stow you away somewhere. We can't let you sit up for three nights."

"Thank you," said Phil. "And you will do me a great favor if you will notify me when you can locate Mr. Patton!"

"I'll be glad to do so," politely replied the purser. "Come to think of it, I haven't seen him yet."

As he spoke a dark-complexioned, thickset young man with a beard stepped forward.

"Who wishes to see Mr. Patton?" he inquired, looking at Phil.

"I do," replied Phil. "But why do you ask?"

"I am Mr. Patton's secretary," answered the stranger. "I have come to tell you," he added, speaking to the purser, "that Mr. Patton is not sailing with you, after all. Urgent business called him to New York by rail at the last moment."

"Not sailing—" gasped Phil. "Do you mean to say he is not on board?"

The stranger smiled.

"He's on the Limited to New York by now."

"But his *cabin de luxe?*" inquired the purser.

"He turned it over to me," replied the secretary, "that is, *his* part of it."

"And Mr. Patton is not on board?" persisted Phil.

"May I ask if your business with Mr. Patton was urgent?" inquired the secretary. "I know everything about Mr. Patton's affairs."

"My business *is* most urgent," replied the young man. "My name is Ross, Philip Ross, of Savannah. Maybe you might have heard of me," he added modestly, "through Mr. Patton."

A light of understanding gleamed in the secretary's eyes.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Ross," he said, with a cool, steady glance, "I have heard of you. And that reminds me. I have a message for you from Mr. Patton."

CHAPTER III.

A DOUSE OF COLD WATER.

"You have a message for me from Mr. Patton?" repeated Phil, hardly knowing

what he said in his disappointment over the news that the millionaire was not on board.

The stranger nodded his head.

"Yes. I was hoping that I would see you up to the last minute before we left Savannah," he continued in easy tones calculated to inspire Phil's confidence.

"We," repeated Phil.

"I mean Mr. Patton and myself," replied the secretary. "Perhaps you did not know that I accompanied him on his trip South?"

"I knew nothing about the matter," said Phil. "I didn't even know that Mr. Patton had a secretary."

"Oh, indeed," exclaimed that gentleman, with a badly disguised look of disbelief on his face.

"To tell the truth I never thought anything about Mr. Patton or his affairs until to-day," went on Phil, frankly.

"And I venture to guess that I can tell you why you suddenly became interested," said the secretary, laying an apparently friendly hand on Ross's shoulder.

Ross looked at him inquiringly.

"It was on account of a wire from Mr. Patton."

He seemed to wait anxiously for Ross's reply.

"Exactly," answered Phil.

"Ah, ha! I thought so," triumphantly exclaimed the secretary.

"Oh, I might have known that you knew all about the matter," said Phil.

"I generally do know all Mr. Patton's business arrangements," continued the secretary. "By the way, my name is Hartley—Edwin Hartley. If I can be of any assistance—"

"Thank you so much, Mr. Hartley," said Phil. "Perhaps you can. To tell the truth, I'm in a pretty bad fix, on account of not finding Mr. Patton here. I don't know what I shall do. Are you absolutely certain that he is not on board?"

"Absolutely," answered Hartley coolly. "I have his cabin myself."

"But they told me at the De Soto Hotel that Mr. Patton was sailing this afternoon—that he had only left a short while before."

"All of which is perfectly true as far as the management of the hotel knew," explained Hartley. "I dare say you have never been associated closely with millionaires, have you?"

"No, I haven't," replied Phil.

"If you had," resumed the secretary, "you would know that they never let their right hand know what their left is doing."

"I see," said Phil; "but you said just now that *you* knew all about Mr. Patton's affairs."

"Oh, a millionaire's secretary is a different proposition altogether," smoothly replied Hartley. "As I started to say, Mr. Patton had every intention of leaving on the City of Savannah. He had paid for his suite and made all arrangements when suddenly he received a tip on some unexpected deals in Wall Street, so decided that the sooner he got back to New York the less danger there was of being done out of a couple of hundred thousand. So that is how I happen to be on board instead of Mr. Patton. It was originally planned that I return by rail, but he wanted me to look after—"

He paused and exclaimed suddenly:

"Did you see a shark just now?"

Phil looked over the rail.

"No, I didn't see anything," he answered.

A suspicion crossed his mind that Hartley had purposely changed the subject, but why? He couldn't understand.

He was dying to ask the secretary what Mr. Patton's message for him was, but he did not like to force matters. He knew that Hartley was the sort of man who would deliver it when he got ready and not before. Evidently he was in no hurry to do so.

The fact, however, that he had said he had word for him from the millionaire somewhat eased Phil's anxiety. Hartley knew all about things, and, no doubt, would be as much interested in helping him as Mr. Patton himself.

"You are the young man who saved Mr. Patton's life at Tybee Island a few weeks ago, are you not?" asked Hartley.

"Oh, I pulled him in," admitted Phil, modestly.

"And Mr. Patton offered you a position, then, I believe," continued the secretary.

"Yes, but I refused it."

"Why?"

"Because I had a good position in Savannah and I didn't wish to be rewarded for what any one under similar circumstances would have done."

"Oh!" exclaimed the secretary. "Mr. Patton was making a short stay at Savan-

nah at the time, as I remember. I remained in New York. Did—" he hesitated; "did you meet any member of his family then? His mother—or his sister, for instance?"

Phil wondered why he wanted to know this, but he replied frankly:

"No. I didn't have the pleasure of knowing Mr. Patton's people. He invited me to call at the hotel and said something about his daughter, but I didn't take advantage of his offer."

"Oh, I see," said the secretary. "Not anxious to meet pretty girls, eh? Maybe you have one already picked out from among these Savannah beauties?"

"No," answered Phil. "You spoke of Miss Patton as if she were pretty?"

"Oh, did I," carelessly answered Hartley. "I wouldn't care to express myself about her appearance, but I may say that she has a *very kind heart*."

"Oh!" exclaimed Phil, disappointedly.

"Did you ever notice that millionaire's daughters are seldom pretty," remarked Hartley, wisely. "They usually have bad figures, dress wretchedly, and all that."

"No," rejoined Phil. "I haven't been thrown with millionaires, you see."

"Well, we are wandering from our subject," continued Hartley. "You haven't told me yet what decided you to change your mind and after a lapse of several weeks apply for a position with Mr. Patton."

"I didn't apply for a position," remarked Phil. "How could I after having refused his kind offer?"

"For the most natural reason in the world," said Hartley. "You got tired of your job and wanted to make a change."

"Oh, it wasn't that," rejoined Phil. "My employer died very suddenly. When I returned from a two weeks' cruise—"

"Oh, you were on the water then? That was why you didn't show up while we were in Savannah?"

"Yes."

"But I don't understand. If you didn't apply for the position how did you happen to get a wire from Mr. Patton. You said you received one."

"So I did, but no one was more astonished than I was when I read it!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Hartley. "Tell me all about it."

"Why, I didn't even know Mr. Patton's whole name," said Phil, "until I saw it at the bottom of the telegram. I had no idea he was Mr. *Floyd* Patton. As I started to tell you, on my return from my vacation I was dazed with the intelligence of the death of my employer. Just as I was wondering what on earth I should do in order to get another position without delay, my eye fell on this telegram."

"And what did it say?" asked Hartley.

"Don't you remember?" asked Phil. "Maybe you sent it yourself."

"No, I didn't send it, but, of course, I knew about it."

"It asked me to call at the hotel," answered Phil.

"Yes. I understand that, but did—didn't it mention any details?"

"No," replied Phil, "not a thing."

"Oh!" exclaimed the secretary with a sigh which Phil couldn't quite interpret. "Then Mr. Patton didn't offer you anything definite? He didn't mention, for instance, any certain vacancy in his forces which you might fill."

"Nothing at all," said Phil.

"I have so many things to remember for Mr. Patton," went on Hartley, "that it is confusing at times."

"It must be," said Phil vaguely.

"Well, what are your plans now?" asked Hartley.

"Nothing much," said Phil dejectedly, as he thought of his solitary dollar. "The only thing I can do is to be patient until I get to New York and can see Mr. Patton. I am sure that the moment I tell him how things are he will be only too glad to help me to a position. His wiring me looks as if he meant business, don't you think?" he inquired anxiously.

Hartley shook his head.

"My dear fellow," he answered, "you can't tell a thing on earth about the whims and caprices of these bloated rich men. They are all enthusiasm about a project to-day and to-morrow they have completely lost interest in it. Mr. Patton is no different from the others."

"You surprise me," exclaimed Phil. "From what I have read of Mr. Patton in the newspapers, I thought him a man of purpose and firm character."

"You mustn't believe all you read in the papers," said Hartley with a sneer.

"It isn't the newspapers alone that gave me that impression," continued Phil. "My short acquaintance with the man himself caused me to think so."

"Well, you never can tell nowadays. Of course when a man has just been pulled out of the water half drowned he is apt to be full of gratitude for the time being and all that sort of thing. It is only natural."

"But how do you account for his having telegraphed me so long after the accident?" asked Phil. "That looks to me as if he were sincere."

Hartley smiled knowingly.

"Just an impulse," he declared. "See here, Ross," he broke off suddenly, "are you *really* counting on seeing Mr. Patton when you get to New York?"

"I *must* see him," replied Phil, as he thought of his limited means.

"Well, then," proceeded the secretary, "I am sorry to be obliged to give you a severe disappointment, but it will be impossible for you to secure an interview with Mr. Patton."

"But why is it impossible?" demanded Phil.

"I believe I told you I had a message for you," continued Hartley. "It is this. Just before leaving Savannah Mr. Patton gave me instructions that if by any chance I ran into you I should tell you that he had considered you for a small position on his staff, but, not hearing from you, the place had been filled and he has nothing else to offer."

CHAPTER IV.

A GLEAM ONLY OF SUNSHINE.

THE steamer seemed suddenly to stand still to Ross while the ocean became a sea of glass on which the flying fish were merely painted.

He passed his right hand over his eyes and looked out at the quiet green water stretching in monotonous expanse to the horizon.

Was it all a dream. Would he wake up and discover that his employer had never died, that Mr. Patton had never wired him, and that life would continue to move along in its delicious languor just as it had done during most of the years of existence?

As he withdrew his steady stare from the sea he found the cool, gray eyes of Hartley studying him intently.

Phil came to himself with a start.

"I can't believe it," he murmured.

"Do you mean to insinuate that you doubt my words," indignantly exclaimed Hartley.

"Oh, excuse me," said Ross hastily; "I didn't mean that. Don't misunderstand me. Certainly not! I should have explained that I can't believe things are as they are—so heart-breaking—so to speak. Why, I've never had so many disappointments in my whole life put together."

"I'm sorry to have been the bearer of bad news," and Hartley spoke sympathetically, "but it was best to tell you before you fixed your expectations. What kind of a position did you expect to secure with Mr. Patton?"

"I hadn't thought about what sort," replied Phil. "Any kind would do for the present. You spoke of a *small* place. Even for that I would have been grateful. Times are dull just now. It's midsummer, you see, and midsummer with us is a bit more dead than it is up your way, I reckon."

"To tell the truth, Ross," said Hartley, "I wouldn't feel so upset over the matter. I am sure you wouldn't have considered the kind of position that Mr. Patton intended offering you. Since I have met you personally, I know you would have refused it."

Phil shook his head dubiously.

"At any rate," he said, "I am grateful to Mr. Patton for having thought of me in connection with even a small and undesirable place."

"I shall tell him so when I see him," rejoined Hartley.

"Oh, I wouldn't put you to that trouble for anything," protested Phil."

"No trouble at all," politely said the secretary.

"Besides," continued Phil. "I shall thank Mr. Patton myself."

"But how can you do that?"

"Easily enough," replied Phil. "I wouldn't think of going home without thanking Mr. Patton for all his kindness."

"But, my dear fellow," persisted Hartley, "he has done nothing for which you should be so grateful."

"Oh, yes, he has, too," said Phil. "Even if nothing came of the matter, his intentions were good."

"And you expect to thank him for mere *intentions?* We haven't time to bother about such things in the North."

"Well, it's a little different with us down here. Maybe it's the climate, perhaps it's because we have more time. I

don't know. But anyhow I wouldn't leave New York without having a talk with Mr. Patton. I want him to know that I appreciate all he has tried to do for me."

"Nonsense," remarked Hartley.

"If you will tell me the best time to call at Mr. Patton's office—" suggested Phil.

"That's just it. It seems that to-day is your unlucky day, for I must add another disappointment to your list."

"And what is that?"

"Simply this; by the time we arrive in New York Mr. Patton will be on the high seas—well on his way to London where he has extensive financial interests."

"But, but—" stammered Phil, "how can that be when he has just left Savannah?"

"Mr. Patton left Savannah this afternoon," said Hartley, "by rail, remember. *We* are traveling by sea and it will be three days before we land. Mr. Patton had planned to remain in New York only long enough to look after his Wall Street affairs."

"Of all the unfortunate happenings!" exclaimed Phil. "How long will he be abroad."

"Several weeks," replied Hartley.

"What on earth will I do?" and Phil heaved a sigh of despair.

Oh, why had he ever been so thoughtless as to be left on board when the Savannah sailed? Here he was doomed to a three-day trip with nothing ahead of him but worry and trouble. Not another soul did he know on board with the exception of the man who had permitted him to look for Mr. Patton, and he didn't know him well enough to remember his name.

This glorious sea-trip which would have appealed to him under any other conditions became a nightmare.

The Savannah sailed the water like a bird. The air was delightfully bracing and every one on board was settling himself down to the full enjoyment of the voyage—every one except himself.

"There seems to me to be only one possible plan for you," said Hartley after a long silence.

"And that is—" began Phil.

"If you will allow me to make a suggestion—that you return to Savannah as soon as possible. Positions are no easier secured in New York in midsummer than they are in your city. I tell you what I will do for you?"

"Yes?" said Phil, his hopes rising.

"I will keep my eyes open in the fall, and, if anything comes around which I think may suit you, I will wire you to come on at once."

"But don't you see that I can't wait until fall for work," explained Phil. "I must have something at once."

He wanted to tell Hartley that he had only one dollar in his pocket, but for the life of him he couldn't. His pride was too great. Somehow he would rather have told any other person on board about his financial condition than the man to whom he was talking. Hartley seemed like a bird of ill omen. He had brought nothing but bad news. Phil felt that he wanted to get away from him.

"Maybe," began the secretary, as intelligence dawned upon him regarding the state of Phil's pocketbook, "maybe because of your unexpected coming away—" he hesitated as he looked into Phil's eyes, "maybe you are a trifle embarrassed—in—in regard to money," he finished at last with difficulty.

"Oh, no," replied Phil, flushing. "Not at all."

"I was about to say that if I can be of any assistance—"

The secretary pulled out a great roll of bills.

"Call on me for any amount," he added.

"You are very kind, but I can get along," answered Phil.

He then excused himself and went below to see the purser in regard to his accommodations. Phil knew very well that no matter how luxurious they might be he would be able to sleep very little that night, although the sea was as smooth as the wonderful automobile course at Savannah.

"You're a lucky chap," remarked the purser as Ross presented himself at his window.

Phil was surprised to know that some luck lay in store for him.

"I have a stateroom for you," continued the official. "One I overlooked. The party didn't sail at the last minute. And to make you real comfortable you can have the absent gentleman's seat at the captain's table, right next a very pretty girl."

"Oh!" exclaimed Phil as he thought of the girl with the beautiful brown eyes.

"Has she brown eyes?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know," answered the purser. "I haven't seen her yet. They say she's pretty. If she has gray eyes, however, and you would prefer them brown,

I'll have to see what I can do for you," he added with a good-natured laugh.

"Who is the young lady you refer to?" asked Phil.

But before the purser could reply his attention was called to a matter of greater importance and after waiting a few moments Phil strolled away.

The purser's remark caused him to turn his thoughts momentarily from the subject of his difficulties.

If it only might be that the young lady next him proved to be the one whom he had seen watching him as he was pursuing his search for Mr. Patton, the journey might not prove quite so disheartening.

He brightened up a bit and went aft. There he found Hartley.

"Feeling better, Ross?" asked the secretary. "Made up your mind what to do yet?"

"Yes," replied Phil. "I shall go back to Savannah, of course."

He didn't say when he would return, but he had a vague plan of earning a little money somehow, just enough to take him home.

"At any rate," he added, "things won't be quite so dismal. I'm going to try and cheer up and enjoy my trip. I am to sit next a pretty girl at the captain's table, I am told."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Hartley. "How did you manage to get at that table?"

"Quite by accident," answered Phil. "Somebody didn't sail, so there I am. What luck!"

"You are lucky, after all," commented Hartley with an impassive face.

Somehow, Phil gained the impression that Hartley was not at all pleased over the matter.

"I hope she happens to be the young lady with the large, brown eyes," went on Phil. "She is very, very pretty. That pinkish suit—"

"Oh, you saw her?" exclaimed the other.

"Why, yes. The first thing when I came on board."

"Did she see you?" asked Hartley.

"I rather think she did, although I am not sure. I wonder who she is?"

Suddenly he clutched Hartley's arm.

The girl with the brown eyes was actually smiling in their direction, but her smile was plainly directed at the secretary.

Hartley nodded and turned away abruptly.

"You know her?" inquired Phil, enthusiastically.

"Rather," replied Hartley, in frigid tones. "She's the future Mrs. Hartley."

CHAPTER V.

SCORE ONE FOR HARTLEY.

ANOTHER disappointment.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Hartley," said Phil at last in dull tones.

"Thank you," briefly replied the secretary.

The young lady now appeared to be coming in their direction and Phil could not help noticing that the secretary led him toward a different part of the vessel.

This amused and at the same time provoked the young man from Savannah.

"May I ask when the wedding is to take place?" he inquired.

"The date hasn't been fixed as yet," replied the secretary, "but I have planned for some time in November."

He had "planned!"

Phil caught the tone of dominance in the fellow's voice and resented it. In the South all details of a wedding are left to the young lady. A mere man would not think of attempting to interfere—at least not in such an emphatic manner.

Phil began to dislike Hartley. To tell the truth he hadn't liked him from the start, but the fact was only now dawning upon him.

"I wonder—" he began.

"Yes," struck in Hartley.

"Did you see a shark just then?" asked Phil.

"No, where?" and Hartley gazed intently at the water.

"I don't know—thought I saw one," said Phil.

"As a matter of fact he only employed Hartley's ruse to cover his embarrassment over a remark which he had nearly made. Indeed Phil had almost said aloud that he wondered what the pretty girl could see in Hartley.

"Miss—" began Ross, then paused, trusting that Hartley would supply the young lady's name, but the secretary pretended not to hear. "Your *fiancée*," he continued, "seems to be a jolly kind of a girl."

"Jolly? Indeed?" remarked Hartley. "On the contrary, she is quite exclusive,

dislikes strangers greatly and never makes acquaintances on ship board."

"That settles it," decided Phil. "I shall never know her through Hartley.

Suddenly he remembered about the pretty girl who was to sit beside him at dinner.

"I'll wait," decided Phil, "and leave it to fate."

He saw with pleasure that the light was fading over the sea. Evening was approaching and he wouldn't have to wait long until the crucial moment when dinner was announced.

One by one the voyagers disappeared into their staterooms.

The trip so far had been on such a quiet sea that very few persons would be absent from their places at table.

Phil noted this with satisfaction. There would be no excuse for her not appearing.

"It's time to go in and dress for dinner," remarked Hartley as he consulted his watch.

Phil flushed at the thought.

He had an instantaneous picture of the secretary attired in correct evening clothes while he was compelled to appear in his white flannel yachting suit.

"Of course you will make a change," suggested the secretary with the tone of a man who knows that he is asking an idle question.

"We *do* dress for dinner in the South," replied Phil in cool tones, "but I think I shall wear what I have on, just to be a bit different from the others."

Hartley smiled in a comprehensive fashion and disappeared.

Phil leaned over the railing and mechanically studied the waves as they lapped the sides of the ship. Soon he noticed people going into the dining-salon and followed them.

He was pleased to find his seat only two removed from the captain and noticed two chairs on his right vacant.

She hadn't come down yet.

He settled himself back to study the *menu,* meantime watching the doorway with interest.

"At last!" he muttered.

There she was in a simple dress of filmy cream which brought out her rich coloring and made her eyes more beautiful than ever.

Behind her he could see Hartley, immaculate.

Phil withdrew his gaze and studied the bill of fare again.

He didn't want Hartley to see that he was still so greatly interested.

After keeping his eyes on the dinner card for a few seconds he began to realize that the couple were a long time in arriving at their places. Ah! There they were at last.

Phil heard the two chairs turned as his right hand neighbors seated themselves.

He knew of course that Hartley would place the young lady on the other side of himself, but even so, Phil determined to be on speaking terms with her before the meal was over. Surely Hartley could not get out of making an introduction. His own self-pride would not permit him to appear so very small.

"Might I trouble you for the *menu?*"

Such a voice! Thin, high and disillusionizing!

Phil looked up with a start and gazed directly into the worn face of a woman about fifty-five years of age.

The shock was great. He hardly knew what he handed her. Instinctively he looked about the dining-saloon.

There at a far table sat Hartley and the pretty girl.

The secretary threw him a look of triumph.

CHAPTER VI.

A FACER.

PHIL enjoyed his dinner, for he was hungry. As course after course was placed before him, he felt his spirits rise. He was young and normal, and followed all the traditions in regard to the genuine satisfaction derived from partaking of a well-served meal.

The captain proved to be a person with a decided sense of humor, which kept those at his table interested in all he had to say.

Indeed, every one seemed inclined to be sociable. There wasn't a stiff-necked specimen in the lot, and Phil breathed a sigh of relief. But ever and anon his thoughts reverted to the couple at the far table.

"Why did he go over there?" he asked himself.

Somehow he wondered if it were not on his account. Still, he confessed that he couldn't understand the type of man who would do such a thing for so trivial a reason. If he did not care to have Phil know his *fiancée,* he could have suggested the fact in a way that would have been unmistakable.

Hartley's action in running before possible danger appeared to Phil as something little short of cowardice.

"If she were my *fiancée*," he decided, "and I were afraid some one else would walk off with her, I would at least pretend to be unconscious of such a calamity."

But Phil was too modest to flatter himself with the explanation that Hartley considered him a rival. That was too absurd for words. The girl had barely noticed him in passing, and had taken good care that Phil should not think she had seen him at all.

True, he had expressed himself in admiring terms of the young lady, but then, surely any man would admire her.

Phil looked at her as he ordered his salad. Was he mistaken, or had she been gazing in his direction?

Just as he looked, she quickly turned her head away.

Phil hoped she had noticed him.

He had not been certain that Hartley and the girl had intended to sit at the captain's table, but somehow he couldn't imagine them anywhere else. Certainly a man of Mr. Patton's position would have been placed there. As a matter of course, the secretary who occupied his cabin would also fill his chair in the dining-salon. His *fiancée* naturally would sit beside him.

Then, too, the purser had spoken of a pretty girl. Where was she?

"May I trouble you for the *menu?*" asked the old lady on Phil's right.

If she had asked him that question once, she had repeated it at least half a dozen times during the dinner.

"Certainly," replied Phil in as pleasant a tone as he could assume.

Then the old lady became talkative.

"My husband and I were so fortunate to secure seats at the captain's table," she said confidentially.

"Yes," replied Phil absentmindedly.

"It was only by accident that we got them," she continued.

"Yes," assented Phil, beginning to wonder if he wouldn't, after all, secure a solution of the matter. "An accident."

"We asked to be placed here when we bought our tickets," she went on, "but we were told that all the places had been assigned. Now, we have been to Europe at least a dozen times, and we always sit at the captain's table, so you can imagine how we felt when we discovered that we would be placed off in the corner—over there," she finished, looking in the direction of Hartley, "where that pretty girl is."

"I see," said Phil. "But how did you get here?"

"It seems that Mr. Floyd Patton—you know him, of course—Patton, the millionaire—had these very places reserved, but he isn't sailing with us—important business kept him. His secretary, for some reason, decided to sit at another table. Funny, wasn't it? Can you imagine any sane person preferring to sit at any other table than the captain's?"

So things were as Phil had surmised.

He promptly decided then and there that he would give Mr. Hartley something real to worry about. Since he had resorted to such means to avoid introducing Phil to his *fiancée*, Phil would show him a thing or two.

How to proceed, he didn't know. He couldn't ask any one else but Hartley to introduce him, for no one else seemed to be acquainted with the young lady.

At last he planned deliberately to place himself in Hartley's way so that he could not avoid an introduction without showing himself a cad.

Of course, Phil was counting on the cooperation of the young woman herself, for something told him that she would by no means be averse to knowing him.

The rest of the dinner seemed to drag horribly.

Now that he had made up his mind as to his course of procedure, he was anxious to carry it out as quickly as possible.

Immediately after coffee and nuts, he would go on deck and meet the pair accidentally on purpose.

At last he rose and glanced at the other table. Hartley and the girl had gone.

Phil hurried on deck and walked from one end of the ship to the other.

It was some little time after that Hartley appeared. He was alone, but Phil observed that he carried an armful of wraps, which he knew could belong to no one but the future Mrs. Hartley, of whom he was taking such good care.

Hartley arranged them all on a chair beside him, stretched himself out comfortably, and lit a fine cigar. Phil could smell its expensive flavor where he stood, and he longed for a cigar himself—any old sort would do—but he didn't dare spend even a part of his solitary dollar.

It was now dark on deck, for the moon

was not scheduled to rise until much later. Phil thought of this, and envied Hartley his quiet *tête-a-tête* with the pretty girl. The scene made him conscious of his own lonesomeness.

Surely she would soon be coming on deck.

He decided to walk over to Hartley and begin a conversation so that she would find him there.

"Hallo, Hartley!" exclaimed Phil in a nonchalant fashion.

"Oh, it's you, Ross," returned the secretary as he half rose. "Taking a walk?"

"No. Just lounging about. I like it here as well as anywhere."

Hartley's cigar burned a fierce light for a moment, and in that moment he caught sight of a pair of very determined eyes fastened steadily upon him.

"Oh, do you?" replied the secretary.

Phil made no effort to move. Hartley glanced nervously about.

"Splendid dinner, wasn't it?" remarked Phil.

"Very good, very good."

"The captain is a great entertainer. His stories are corkers. Have you heard that one about the green fish?"

"No, I haven't," gruffly retorted Hartley, trying his best to control his impatience.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Phil. "You ought to get him to tell it to you. I am sure he would do so if you asked him."

"Oh, do you really think so?" inquired the secretary sarcastically.

"Yes. Too bad you gave up your seats at our table," went on Phil. "There are such delightful people there. The old lady who took your places was so happy in securing them. She said she couldn't for the life of her imagine why you wanted to sit way off in a corner.

"Indeed!" commented Hartley.

"To tell the truth, I rather wondered myself," continued Phil.

"Oh, did you?" sneered Hartley. "I changed my seats *to please my fiancée.*"

This announcement came in the nature of a surprise to Phil.

"For reasons of her own she preferred the table at which we are now sitting. I told you that she did not care to make acquaintances on board ship.

He looked straight at Phil. The insult was beyond misinterpretation.

"You mean *me,* I suppose?" demanded Phil, turning white.

"I haven't mentioned any names." Hartley rose to his feet as he spoke. "If the shoe fits—why, then—"

"Suppose we leave it to the young lady herself?" suggested Ross, controlling himself.

"Do you mean to insinuate that she desires to make your acquaintance?" demanded Hartley.

Phil recalled the beautiful brown eyes, and for the life of him he couldn't fancy them as ever being unkind to even a beggar, so he replied:

"Nothing of the sort. I only meant to say that if she were here now she would not refuse an introduction."

Just at this moment the young lady herself appeared. She had heard Phil's remark and, by way of answer, ignored him, and, turning to the secretary, said in frigid tones:

"Suppose we go inside, Mr. Hartley?"

The next instant Phil was left alone, too dazed for words.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ATTITUDE OF INDEPENDENCE.

Ross had been cut, directly, unmistakably!

What could possibly be the reason for the girl's action?

Another mystery added to those which had perplexed him ever since the Savannah set sail with him as an unwilling passenger.

He stood watching the pair as they disappeared through the nearest door.

His sense of defeat and humiliation was intense, and he realized that it was a moment of complete triumph for Hartley.

Could he have offended the girl in any way?

The answer to that question was obvious.

How could he have given offense, when he didn't even know her, when he had only looked at her from afar in the most respectful manner?

He decided that he would dismiss the pretty girl from his mind. Besides, she was engaged to Hartley, and, after all, he had no right to insist upon meeting her against Hartley's wishes. He had merely persisted in a spirit of bravado in order to get even with the secretary for what he had thought snobbish treatment. After all, it seemed that the girl was as big a snob as the man she was going to marry.

Somehow, however, Phil could not dis-

like her for what she had just done, although he tried very hard to do so. Instead, he found himself wishing more than ever that some kind fate would cause them to meet and he might himself ask her frankly the cause of her action.

He did not turn in until late that night, and even then was unable to sleep. As he tossed from side to side, he found himself wishing he had never seen Mr. Patton.

He was on deck early the next morning, wondering how on earth he would be able to put in a whole day on board ship with no one to talk to.

At breakfast he saw that Hartley was at his table, but his *fiancée* was absent.

He determined not to speak to the secretary again, for he felt sure that, unless he himself took the initiative, Hartley would bestow upon him another insult like the one of the previous evening, and Phil felt that he had had enough.

What was his surprise, then, upon going on deck, to find Hartley leaning over the rail, evidently waiting for him.

"Good morning, Ross," said the secretary, with a cheerful smile.

Phil hesitated, and replied merely by a short: "Morning."

"Did you sleep well?" went on Hartley in the most friendly tones.

Whatever his game, Phil decided to see that he got as good a reception as he was offering.

"Very well, thanks," he replied, and waited for the next move.

"I hope—er—that—er—" The other hesitated and seemed a trifle in doubt as to how to proceed. "I hope," he said at last, clearing his throat, "that you have no unkind feeling on account—on account of the disagreeable little episode of last evening?"

At length it was out! But why had he mentioned it? Phil couldn't understand.

"Why speak of it?" he rejoined.

"Because I want to apologize," continued Hartley. "Evidently you didn't think I was in earnest when I mentioned the fact that my *fiancée* was averse to knowing strangers on board ship."

Phil did not deign to reply.

"Perhaps"—the secretary watched Phil narrowly as he spoke—"perhaps you even thought that I might merely have made such a statement through a fit of jealousy—that I did not want you to meet her because I was afraid—she might—possibly prefer you to me."

"I beg your pardon," replied Phil. "I would be a strange specimen of a man if I ever entertained so extraordinary an idea."

"Well, then," continued Hartley, "you saw for yourself that I had not exaggerated things. It was by her own wish that I took her inside last night. If she had wanted to know you—er—very naturally she would have remained long enough to permit an introduction, don't you think so?"

He eyed Phil steadily to note the effect of his words.

"Miss — er — your *fiancée* has rather a brutal way of expressing her distaste for strangers," replied Phil. "However, that is her affair, or rather yours," he finished significantly.

"You must pardon the abrupt manner she displayed," said Hartley. "She is rather peculiar at times, and doesn't mince matters."

"Evidently. If you will excuse me now, Hartley, I will leave you."

The other, however, seemed loath to end the interview.

"It's glorious weather," he said. "Day after to-morrow we will be in New York. We dock at six o'clock, I believe. You mustn't fail to be up when the ship enters the harbor. It's a wonderful sight."

Phil looked at him curiously.

"By the way," went on Hartley pleasantly, "have you made any change in your plans?"

"What plans?" asked Phil.

"Why, about returning to Savannah?"

"My plans are quite fixed."

"It's most unfortunate that Mr. Patton should be stopping such a short while in town."

"Most unfortunate," repeated Phil. "However, you will explain matters to him for me."

"Oh, yes, I promised to do that," answered the secretary easily.

By this time Phil was so completely disgusted with his trip and experiences that he determined to return to his native town as quickly as possible. He never wanted to see Mr. Patton again, for he decided that, even were everything moving smoothly and a position within his grasp, he did not care to be anywhere where he would be brought in contact with so disagreeable a person as Hartley.

Phil knew that the secretary, in his heart, disliked him, and he reasoned that were he to become a member of Mr. Patton's forces

Hartley would always stand between him and success. He recalled, too, having read of the tremendous influence exerted over millionaires by their secretaries.

It was with a heavy heart that he walked the decks that day. He heard his fellow passengers exclaim over passing vessels, flying-fish, sharks, and every other possible object which becomes of two-fold interest when one is miles from land. But these things ceased to entertain him. His sole desire was to reach New York so he could get home again.

His white flannel suit became very distasteful to him when he saw that Hartley changed his attire several times a day.

After the conversation with the secretary that morning, Phil had avoided him steadily, and this fact seemed in no way to displease Hartley.

The girl with the brown eyes was nowhere to be seen.

But Phil didn't want to see her now, although he hadn't as yet been able to convince himself that he disliked her.

He accepted the secretary's explanation of her brusk action. What other motive could she possibly have for refusing to meet him?

The next afternoon—the third day at sea—he was lounging idly against the rail watching the green depths below, when he caught the swish of skirts.

A stiff breeze blew a dainty flounce against him as its wearer passed.

Phil looked up.

It was Hartley's *fiancée*.

She did not notice Phil, but continued on her way until she reached her steamer-chair, where she settled herself comfortably, arranged some books, and began to read.

From time to time as Phil passed he noted that she was still reading. He failed to see, however, that as soon as he had gone by the young woman dropped her book in her lap and watched him with evident curiosity.

Phil wondered where Hartley was. Evidently he was secure in the knowledge that the young man from Savannah would trouble him no more.

After a while the girl became tired of reading and began to write.

Phil took particular pains to keep his eyes straight ahead as soon as he neared her vicinity.

She should see that he didn't care!

He was passing her for the dozenth time, when suddenly he was startled by a little exclamation of dismay.

"I'm *so* sorry!" said a sweet, low voice. "Oh, what have I done?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A MISHAP AND A REVELATION.

"CAN she be speaking to me?" wondered Phil, for he knew as well as if he had been told that the voice belonged to no one but Hartley's *fiancée*.

"Impossible," he decided, and was about to pass on.

However, there could be no harm in merely turning his head in order to see what had upset the young lady to such an extent. Of course she wasn't addressing him, but he wanted to see the person who was so favored by her notice.

To his astonishment, the pretty girl was looking directly at him. Her face was a delicious pink, and her brown eyes were full of regret.

One hand was outstretched, and in it was a fountain-pen.

Phil looked from the eyes to the pen and then back again.

"Oh, I'm so very sorry," she said again. "How can I ever apologize?"

Phil thought at once that she referred to the incident of the evening before.

He had always understood that women were capricious creatures, and surely this one was more so than all the others he had ever known.

"It's all right," he answered. "I can't blame you."

"But I *am* to blame," she answered. "Such a stunning suit, too, and now it's ruined."

Then, for the first time, Phil began to realize that she was not referring to what he thought she was.

He followed her gaze, and discovered that the left leg of his white flannel trousers was liberally bespattered with black ink.

"I was writing," she explained, "and just as you passed I shook my fountain-pen to clear it. The ink had stopped flowing. I didn't know any one was near—and that's how it happened."

She was the picture of sincere dismay.

In an instant Phil had forgotten all the unpleasantness.

"Please don't think about it," he said gallantly.

"But I'm so sorry," persisted the girl. "What can I do? I hope I haven't inconvenienced you in any way?"

"Not in the least," bravely replied Phil, who, at her words, began to wonder what under the sun he would do, since he hadn't another suit of clothes with him.

He was truly in a fine plight. He fancied himself walking along Broadway with ink-spattered clothes

He was about to pass on, but she detained him.

"The weather is perfectly delightful, isn't it?" she remarked.

Phil looked at her in surprise. She certainly was a perplexing person. She had snubbed him last night, and to-day she evidently wanted to chat.

"Couldn't be better," he replied.

"Of course you are going to New York?" she said.

"Certainly," answered Phil, smiling at the thought that there was no other place he could very well go, since the ship sailed from Savannah, without stopping, to the great metropolis.

"I saw you when you came aboard," she went on.

"Did you?" asked Phil, endeavoring not to appear in any way interested.

"Yes. You seemed to be looking for some one."

"I was."

"One meets so few people one really likes on board ship," pursued the girl. "At least that has been my experience. I love to know strangers, and I have had the good fortune to make some real friends, but on a short trip like this one it is hardly worth while becoming acquainted, don't you think so yourself?"

"I don't know," replied Phil. "This is my first experience, and I would call it a long trip instead of a short one. It has seemed interminable to me."

"Really!" she exclaimed. "I have felt the same way."

Certainly what she had just said was by no means flattering to Hartley's powers as an entertainer. She complained of the length of the trip.

"Do you live in Savannah?" she went on.

They were standing side by side now, leaning over the railing. Her brown hair was touching his cheek as a tantalizing breeze came their way. Her brown eyes gazed steadily into his own.

Was it possible that this girl was a snob?

This was a question which Phil found difficult to answer in the affirmative.

"I've lived there all my life," he replied.

"But haven't you ever wanted to live in New York?" she asked. "Maybe you're going to remain when you get there?"

"No," replied Phil. "I'm going right back. Savannah is good enough for me."

"It's a wonderfully beautiful city," she said. "There is an air of dignity, of good breeding and refinement about it that is unmistakable. The quaint houses — at least, the Southern style of architecture seems quaint to us Northerners—the soft, balmy air with its scent of the tropics, the magnolias, the Cape jasmine, the garlands of hanging moss out at your Bonaventure — even your cemetery is inviting — it is different from any other place I have ever been. I love it. New York is too busy to be beautiful."

"And Savannah is too beautiful to be busy, maybe," added Phil.

"I knew you were a Southerner the moment I saw you. I can always tell them."

"You mean that my clothes weren't made by a Fifth Avenue tailor?" asked Phil with a laugh.

"Oh, no; of course not. I admired them particularly," she replied.

"Down South," said Phil, "we have an idea that Atlanta has as good tailors as Fifth Avenue."

Things began to look brighter for Ross as they chatted on.

He didn't care now how long the voyage lasted, and decided that there must be some mistake about the unhappy evening when she had ignored him.

But where was the ever-present Hartley?

Phil laughed to himself as he wondered what that cautious gentleman would say were he to come on deck suddenly and find him chatting with his *fiancée*.

"I—I am afraid I am detaining you," he said at last, and he started to go.

"Oh, not at all," she replied. "I—I like to talk with you. You have such sane ideas.

"Won't you sit down?" she added, motioning to an empty chair which Phil knew belonged to Hartley himself.

"I am afraid I am intruding," he demurred.

"Oh, no, you aren't," she assured him.

"But isn't this your—Mr. Hartley's chair?" he inquired.

"Yes. But that doesn't make any difference."

"Still I am afraid he may return and not like my—my taking his place," Ross finished in an embarrassed tone.

"What of that?" she asked.

Of course Phil could not answer her question, so they fell to chatting on books and music and various things, but not one word did she say in reference to her haughty action of that first evening.

"If Hartley could only see me now," thought Phil. "I wish he would come on deck."

"I fear I am detaining you," from the girl. "Perhaps you are in a hurry to change your clothes. Too bad I was so careless."

Phil grew red as he wondered what she would say if she knew that he had no other clothes to change to.

"Oh, no; I'm in no hurry," he said. "I'd much rather chat with you."

"Really," she remarked as she looked out at the sea.

"Yes, and you know it," he went on. "Perhaps I shouldn't say so, but you knew it from the first—from the time I caught even just a little glimpse of you."

"How could I know?" she asked naively.

"Where is Hartley?" queried Phil abruptly, aware that he had said more than he should.

"Why do you worry so much about his whereabouts?" she asked with a careless laugh.

"Perhaps for the reason that he has been worrying about mine ever since I came on board," replied Phil.

"He is a peculiar man," observed the girl.

Phil thought it strange that she should refer to her future husband in such a manner, but he made no comment.

"I have an idea that he didn't like something I said about you," she continued.

"What was that, may I ask?"

"Why—why—" she hesitated, then plunged boldly in. "I told him to bring you over and introduce you. I saw him talking with you."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Phil almost stunned.

"But of course after *what you said to him,*" she went on, "there was nothing else for me to do but to snub you the way I did the other evening."

"What I said to him!" exclaimed Phil, who was beginning to see through the versatile secretary.

"Yes. He said that he wanted to introduce you, but you refused, because your *fiancée* didn't want you to meet other girls. But since we met by accident she can't blame you, can she?"

"'My *fiancée*,'" again exclaimed Phil. "The scoundrel! I haven't any. But here comes *yours.*"

The girl's eyes opened wide with astonishment as they followed his glance and rested on Hartley.

"Mine! Why, what do you mean?" she demanded as Hartley drew near.

But Phil, with a gallant bow, did not answer and with a lift of his cap went on his way.

CHAPTER IX.

A MATTER OF CLOTHES.

ONE only remained of the three evenings aboard ship, and Phil began to look forward to the final night with feelings very different from those which had upset him on the previous ones.

The steamer was moving along on schedule time and the captain gave his word that—barring unexpected disaster—the Savannah would land her passengers between six and seven the next morning.

Phil realized that the time was short, but he meant to make the best of it, for he had gathered from the pretty girl's words and manner that even if she were engaged to Hartley she was not madly in love with him, consequently there could be no harm in a quiet *tête à tête* or two, and Phil had every intention of securing these interviews some time that evening. He confessed to himself that he was more interested than ever in the young lady, and he thought it a shame that she could be hoodwinked by a fellow like Hartley.

Ross couldn't brand Hartley with any particular yellow streak except his narrow-natured jealousy, and, after all, perhaps jealousy was more natural to some persons than to others.

His blood boiled, however, when he thought of the low trick Hartley had played on him as proved by the girl's words. Phil had never been engaged in his life and he determined to tell the pretty girl so if the secretary ever gave him the chance by leaving her long enough alone.

He feared, however, that Hartley would take good care not to quit her side.

Ross now recalled the fountain-pen episode, and he glanced down at his bespattered trousers. Several of the passengers seated near-by were inspecting the string of ink spots curiously.

"How can I ever go in to dinner this way?" Phil asked himself.

At this point he was surprised to see the pretty girl coming his way.

Evidently she had dismissed Hartley for he was nowhere to be seen. After all she had pluck of her own and wouldn't permit herself to be managed by the secretary.

"You look rather lonesome," she said.

"I am," replied Phil.

"So am I."

"Do you mean it?" eagerly from Ross.

"Yes," she said looking out at sea.

"But—where, where's Hartley?" Phil wanted to know.

"Why worry about him?" she inquired with a laugh.

"Because, it seems to me he is something to be worried over," retorted Phil.

"Think so?" she asked archly with an upward glance which showed her eyes at their full value.

Phil was puzzled by her apparent indifference to her *fiancé*. Could it be that she was merely pretending?

"He never did and never could worry me," she said at last with emphasis.

"Why, I don't understand," exclaimed Phil, hope beginning to assert itself within his breast.

"Somehow," she continued. "you gave me the impression that you had an idea that Mr. Hartley and I are engaged?"

"I—I had no idea that I offended you," said Phil.

"Offended me?" she repeated. "Oh, no, you didn't do that. That wasn't what I meant. You only astonished me."

"You did seem astonished," said Phil. "Perhaps I shouldn't have referred to it."

"You shouldn't have done so," answered the girl.

"I beg your pardon. If I had known that it was something you didn't want mentioned—"

"It isn't that," she continued. "It's only that you are quite mistaken in your surmise about Mr. Hartley and myself. We have never been engaged, and, what is more, we never will be."

Phil somehow felt as if a stone had been rolled from his breast. He breathed a sigh of relief.

"How strange that you should have imagined such a thing," she went on.

"I didn't imagine it," blurted out Phil.

"Well, how then—oh!" she exclaimed, intelligence dawning upon her. "He—Hartley must have told you."

"He did," said Phil.

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl indignantly. "What on earth could have been his object, I wonder?"

"Plain enough to me," replied Phil with a laugh.

He saw the whole game now. Hartley was really afraid of him. Perhaps he read more clearly than did Ross himself how strong was the young man's admiration for the girl with the brown eyes.

"But not clear to me," said the latter.

"Simply this," explained Phil. "When I first came on board I told Hartley about you—you don't mind, I hope—but I said it and I meant it. We Southerners have a habit of saying what we think. May I go on?"

"Oh, yes," said the girl.

"Well, then, I told Hartley that I had seen a very pretty girl with beautiful eyes and I wanted to find her."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, blushing furiously, "I shall never, never become accustomed to that delightful habit you Southern men have of saying such complimentary things right to one's face. It would really be better if they were said behind our backs instead."

"We say them both ways," said Phil earnestly, whereupon both laughed heartily.

"While Hartley and I were chatting about the pretty girl," continued Ross, "you appeared and I was foolish enough to tell him you were the one. It was an awful mistake."

"And what did he say?" she asked.

"He informed me that you were the future Mrs. Hartley!"

"Indeed!" indignantly.

Then she began to laugh.

"After all," she said when she at last got her breath, "it's funny, but it's your own fault. You fell right into his clever little trap. He said there was the 'future Mrs. Hartley.' Anybody could say that and yet there would be no engagement. I don't mind telling you that Mr. Hartley has been thinking for some time that—that I might consent to become Mrs. Hartley, but—"

then she laughed again— "the idea is too absurd for words and I always laugh at him when he mentions it to me."

"But I am sure he spoke of you any number of times as his *fiancée,*" persisted Phil.

"He wouldn't dare!" again exclaimed the girl.

"I am sorry," insisted Phil, "but he did dare! That's the reason I kept out of the way. He also told me that you were very exclusive and didn't care to make any acquaintances on board."

"Really!" exclaimed the girl. "This is serious. I wonder since when Mr. Hartley has taken it into his head that he can arrange my affairs for me. I'll have to look into this."

"Then when you cut me so unmistakably the other evening—I—I gave up all hope," went on Ross.

"And I cut you for the reason that Mr. Hartley told me that *you* were engaged, and your *fiancée* didn't want you to meet other girls," explained the girl — "exactly as I told you just before he joined me a few moments ago—that you *refused* to know me."

Both began to laugh.

"Foxy, wasn't he?" remarked Ross.

"You mean he *thought* himself foxy," amended the girl. "But it didn't turn out well after all—not well for him."

"But the very best for me," added Phil.

"Please don't leave *me* out, will you?" she asked in coaxing tones.

"Well, for us, then," said Phil.

Things were going along swimmingly. Ross felt as if he had known the pretty girl all his life. He wished that there were several days more to the trip. But, alas, they were to say good-by, perhaps forever, in the morning.

Just then the ship's bell sounded.

Phil and the girl counted the strokes together.

"Four bells," they said simultaneously.

"Time to dress for dinner," suggested the girl.

She looked down at the ink spots.

"When you put on your evening clothes," she said, "if you will send those trousers to me I will take the spots out for you. I read to-day of an excellent recipe. It won't be any trouble at all," she added. "And they will be all dry by the time you leave the ship."

Phil turned very red in the face and became greatly embarrassed.

"Why, what is the matter," exclaimed the girl, seeing that something was wrong.

"Thank you for your kindness," said Phil, "but—but—to tell the truth—"

"He has no others to change to," remarked a cold voice near by. "Can't I lend you a suit of clothes?"

Before Phil could reply Hartley had grasped the girl by the arm.

"Time to get ready for dinner," he said.

She withdrew from his grasp angrily.

"I will regulate my own affairs in the future, Mr. Hartley," she said. Then looking him full in the eyes, she added:

"If it is true that"—not knowing Phil's name she hesitated, then went rapidly on— "that he has no other clothes I will remain with him on deck until dinner time and go in just as I am."

CHAPTER X.

FINDING OUT THINGS.

HARTLEY saw that the girl was in deadly earnest.

Her indignation was beyond question. Her eyes burned through him, her cheeks were a brilliant rose and she dismissed him as if he were the dust beneath her feet.

Phil watched her with keen admiration which he made no attempt to disguise.

"I never was more amazed in my life!" she exclaimed as she turned her back on the secretary. "Why, I had no idea he was that kind of a man."

"Perhaps you are just finding him out," said Phil. "For that sort of fellow doesn't turn that way all of a sudden."

"I believe you are right," replied the girl. "And if he is like that socially, he must be so in a business way, too."

"No doubt," said Phil. "I'd hate to have him attend to my business. The trouble is with men like that, they are successful in cloaking their real natures when in the presence of their employers, who never see them except when they are carefully masked—always pretending to be on the alert for the other man's interests."

"I feel sorry for Mr. Patton," he added. "He'll wake up to Hartley some day. You don't know how glad I am that you are not going to marry the fellow," he added. "I hope you don't mind my taking the liberty

of saying that, but I mean it. You are the right kind of girl. Any man can see that! And Hartley would only break your heart."

"There could never be any danger of that," she retorted. "I never truly liked him, although I never stopped to find out what it was that caused me to feel the way I did. If it hadn't been for this trip from Savannah to New York perhaps I would never have seen him in his true colors. I have a great deal to thank you for—not only for myself, but in the interest of others."

"Oh, that's all right," hastily answered Phil. "I want to tell you how very much I appreciate what you did just now for me?"

"Why, what did I do for you?" asked the girl.

"You came to my aid in the face of that—that cur—if you don't mind my using the word."

"Oh, I don't mind at all. It fits him perfectly. In the North we call a spade a spade, you know. And I consider that you have let him down very easy when you call him only a 'cur.' If I were a man and he had tried to treat me the way he did you just now, I would have called him something much, much stronger, and have fastened an adjective to the word."

Phil looked at her with the most intense admiration.

"You—you're just wonderful," he said. "You know our Southern girls haven't half the—"

"The audacity that the Northern ones have," broke in the girl with a smile. "I don't mind your saying it, for I agree with you. We speak more freely in the North. It's just a difference in climate, I guess. I do admire the Southern girls. They are so refined, so sweet, so modest. I shouldn't have blamed you at all if you had been engaged to one of them. It would be only natural."

"Strange to say," replied Phil, "I haven't ever been engaged. I know lots of Southern girls, too. Was raised with them all my life. But you are the first real Northern one I ever knew well enough to learn just what they are like."

The girl laughed.

"Considering that you have actually known me only a few hours," she said, "it is remarkable how quickly you have found out all my weak points."

"You mean your good ones," corrected Phil. "It was just bully of you to come to my rescue as you did just now. I would have knocked the fellow down for his insolence—if it hadn't been that a lady was present. It was all I could do to restrain myself."

"I'm so glad you did," said the girl, with a glance from her expressive eyes. "It wouldn't do to have a scene. For it would have been in all the New York papers tomorrow morning."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Phil.

"That's something you have to think about if you live in New York," and the girl smiled.

She hadn't in any way referred to Hartley's speech about Phil's clothes, and he appreciated this delicacy on her part. He felt, however, that some explanation was due, only he didn't know just how to make it without going into the details of his story, and he didn't want to bore her with these.

"Suppose we walk," she suggested with a bewitching smile.

"Delighted, I am sure," replied Phil.

The sun was getting low and a fresh breeze had sprung up. It blew her veil directly against his cheek and he took hold of it to toss it back to her when he caught the scent of heliotrope.

"I love it," he said.

"What?" she asked.

"That perfume you use," he replied. "I have smelled that before—in Savannah, in our beautiful, old-fashioned gardens."

"Yes," she said. "I have noticed great bunches of heliotrope in the yards. I am very fond of lavender color, even in perfume."

Phil smiled at the idea of color in a scent.

"Somehow heliotrope is like you," he said thoughtfully. And he wished devoutly that that same friendly sea breeze would come his way again.

They walked the length of the ship several times.

"I wonder where Hartley is?" said Phil presently.

"What!" she exclaimed with a teasing smile. "Still worrying about him?"

"No," answered Ross, "that is—not in that way. I was just thinking that he may be looking for you to go in to dinner."

"Let him wait," said the young lady in decided tones. "Besides, I shall not dine until seven bells this evening."

"Oh," exclaimed Phil. "That's rather late, isn't it?"

"Is it too late for you?" she asked.

"Oh, no," replied Phil, who hoped she meant it as it sounded, but couldn't believe that she actually wanted him to enter the dining salon with her.

"Because, if it is, we can go in earlier," she said.

"Oh, no;" said Phil. "I am only too delighted to go in at any hour that pleases you."

"Well, then, that's all settled," she said.

"I am so sorry you aren't at my table," ventured Phil. "I can't tell you how disappointed I was when I discovered that you were way over there in the corner."

"I'm sorry, too, I assure you," admitted the girl.

"Do you mean it?" asked Phil.

"I wouldn't say so if I didn't," she replied.

"You know, I almost imagine I am dreaming," said Phil, as he looked at her.

"Why?"

"Because everything is so different from what it was only a little while ago. I hope I won't wake up."

"Oh, don't do that!" she laughed.

"Not if I can help it, I won't," he replied; "but I know somebody who will if he isn't careful."

"You mean Hartley?"

"Yes."

"Don't do anything rash," she cautioned, "for my sake."

For her sake! That was sufficient for Ross.

"You have no idea how such things travel. Before we reached New York everybody would know it. That's the worst of being before the public all the time whether you want to be or not."

Phil wondered what she could mean by that. Was it possible that she filled some public position — that of an actress, perhaps?

He dismissed the idea, however, almost as soon as it entered his head. For evidently this young girl had had little experience in the great struggling world. She had been carefully and comfortably reared —that was evident.

He could not ask her personal questions, so was obliged to await the time when of her own accord she chose to tell him something about herself.

She hadn't even mentioned her name. Hartley hadn't spoken it, and Phil had to content himself with wondering what it could be.

Of course she knew his, for Hartley must have mentioned it when he discussed him to his detriment.

The ship's bell sounded again.

"Seven bells," said Phil. "Now, if you hadn't been so anxious to have seats at the other table—"

"I don't understand," she broke in.

"The old lady who sits by me told me how Hartley had his places changed."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the girl; "and he told me it was impossible to secure seats at the captain's table. I thought it very strange. Oh, this is too much!"

"Here he comes now," remarked Phil quietly.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," Hartley said with a forced smile directed at the girl. "We shall be quite late this evening. Are you ready?"

"Quite ready, Mr. Hartley," replied the girl with an ominous flash of her eyes.

Hartley started forward with a smile, but she turned her back on him and said very sweetly to Phil:

"Won't you escort me in to dinner? I have so much to say, and I am sure Mr. Hartley won't mind giving up his seat to you this once, provided, of course, you will be so good as to let him have yours at the captain's table."

Phil could not suppress a natural look of triumph as the two passed Hartley and went below.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BIGGEST SURPRISE OF ALL.

THE tables were now completely turned.

From time to time Phil cast discreet glances in the direction of the secretary, who sat at the captain's table, hardly speaking to any one.

Ross knew that beneath that apparently calm exterior lurked a boiling hate, and from that time on he would have to cope with a man who had the advantage of him in many ways.

Phil was glad that he had found him out, however, so early in the game, for forewarned is forearmed.

Meantime he was enjoying himself hugely.

"I am sure you would have removed those ink stains in great shape," he said in the course of conversation, "but Hartley was right when he told you that—that I have no other clothes."

"There, now!" she exclaimed. "Why bother about that? It isn't the clothes which count; it's the man."

"Then, you—"

"Yes, I do," she said. "I don't care what you wear. We can be"—she hesitated and seemed fishing for appropriate words—"we can be good friends, even if you *do* look well in a white flannel suit."

"You're a brick!" cried Phil. "I must say in self-defense that, incredible as it may seem, I do possess other raiment."

"Oh!" she laughed.

"I am pretty sure that Hartley must have given you the impression that I am a pauper," he went on.

"Well, not exactly that," she said. "He did tell me that he was helping you to get some work."

"'Helping me,'" repeated Phil. "Why, he's the last person on earth to whom I would ever apply for assistance. The truth of the matter is, I went away on my vacation, leaving a splendid position, which I had filled for several years, and fully expected to fill for a good many more. On my return I found that my employer had died and the business was closed up, leaving me to look for another job."

"How unfortunate," said the girl.

"Yes. It was a terrible shock. Then I received word that"—he didn't want to tell her of his deed of heroism—"that a man, whom I am sure would have given me a position, was sailing on the Savannah."

"And you found that the man had changed his mind," interrupted the girl.

"Exactly."

"As *men* sometimes do, although they say that it's only *women* who arrogate to themselves that privilege."

"I had come ashore at Savannah in my yachting clothes," continued Phil, "thinking that I would stop just long enough to get my mail since I didn't have to report for work until the next day. I didn't have time to change them when I decided to follow my man to the Savannah.

"Then I couldn't find him on board, and the next thing I knew we were putting out to sea. There I was with a three days' voyage before me—not a change of clothes—and—"

"You have only been delayed in meeting your man," she broke in. "Cheer up! Don't lose courage! I find usually that things which have such unfortunate beginning generally have a surprisingly good ending."

"I wish I could feel it," muttered Phil gloomily.

"Well, three days isn't so very much after all," she went on. "You can hunt up your man when you get to New York, and everything will turn out all right. I feel that it will be so."

"But the man I was to see is on his way to Europe by now."

"Are you sure?" she inquired.

"Why yes; that is—"

Ross paused. He began to wonder if it were really true, after all, that Mr. Patton had gone to Europe. Hartley had played him false in regard to the girl. He was quite capable of playing him a trick in other things.

"I think I'll investigate this matter," Phil declared. "You have set me thinking. I have decided not to go back to Savannah right away, after all."

He did not tell her that it was Hartley who had told him that Mr. Patton had gone to Europe. Hartley had been responsible for so much already that the subject was getting to be exceedingly distasteful to him. He felt that he would be pleased never to see the secretary again as long as he lived.

Dinner seemed to come quickly to an end and they went on deck.

The girl excused herself long enough to get her wraps.

"We will sit out here and enjoy the moon," she announced.

Phil thought of the evening she had been there with Hartley.

How things had changed!

"But this is Mr. Hartley's chair," he said hesitatingly.

"He can find another one," coolly replied the young woman as she hastened away. "I'll be back in just a moment."

Phil sat down to think things over. As he did so Hartley himself strolled in his direction.

He sneered as he saw Phil sitting in his chair.

"You have my chair, I believe," he remarked in significant tones.

"Yes, and I intend to stay in it a while," replied Phil.

"You do, do you?"

"I do," answered Phil.

"By what right?" demanded Hartley.

"By right of an invitation from the most charming young lady I have ever had the pleasure of meeting," nonchalantly replied Ross.

"Oh, indeed!" sneered the secretary.

"I want to tell you right now," continued Phil, "that if it weren't for her, I'd throw you into the sea—you—you—"

"Say it," urged Hartley.

"No, I won't 'say it,'" said Phil. "I am more apt to act first."

"Dear me! How gallant!" sneered the secretary. "True Southern chivalry!"

Phil's blood boiled. He longed to choke the fellow and it was all he could do to restrain himself, but he remembered his promise.

"See here, Ross," went on Hartley, "I'm on to your little game."

"What do you mean?" demanded Phil.

"Money has charms for you as well as for others. You want to capture a few millions without having to work yourself to death to get them. But you are only one among several dozen, my boy. New York is full of them—all filled with the same ambition. Everybody wants to marry her—because she is 'so charming,' of course."

"I don't understand," protested Phil.

"Certainly not," retorted Hartley. "Oh, you're clever enough. But you haven't any chance at all, make sure of that!"

While Phil was wondering what he meant, the pretty girl came their way.

Phil looked from Hartley to her and caught his meaning.

"'Millions.' That was what Hartley said. But did he mean it? She looked so sweet and so simple, so modestly dressed—just like other girls and she was so free from ostentation.

How could it be possible? Phil had somehow got an idea that New York young women with millions were forward and ostentatious. It is a popular Southern notion and he couldn't reconcile this well-bred young woman with any such picture.

"As if you didn't know about it all along," continued Hartley. "Oh, you're a slick one, all right. I suppose you have changed your mind about going back to Savannah now?"

"That's my affair," rejoined Phil.

"Ah, ha! I thought so. Well, I'll promise you, you'll have a sweet time of it when you get to New York and try to compete with fellows like Reggie Huydenhoper and Vandenburgh Slater, and the rest of that set."

Phil listened in astonishment.

"Do you know how much orchids cost, Mr. Ross?" continued Hartley. "Several dollars each. Her favorite species costs exactly twenty dollars a bloom and she never gets less than six at a clip. Can you figure that out? Doesn't it make you dizzy? She never wears anything but orchids, you know! None others need apply. There are several boxes of them on ice at present, so that she can wear them at any time it suits her fancy."

"But I haven't seen her wearing orchids," exclaimed Phil.

"Merely because she wasn't in the humor," answered Hartley. "Haven't you noticed the perfume she uses?"

"Yes," replied Phil. "It's heliotrope."

"So you think, but it isn't. It's orchids."

Phil's thoughts went back to the conversation regarding perfume he had had with the girl when they had spoken of the bunches of heliotrope in the gardens of Savannah. And so it wasn't the simple flower at all she had meant. It was the blossom affected by millionaires instead.

He turned sick at heart for a moment.

The world had stopped still. What chance was there for him?

Hartley was right. A girl of her standing financially would give no serious heed to the attentions of a poor young man.

Phil came of a Southern family distinguished in his native State, but possessed of no money. The war had done away with all that, and somehow nobody had ever been able to get it back again. A comfortable living, with occasional luxuries, had sufficed him so far. He knew he could always get along, and, having had no one but himself to think about, he was content with life as it was.

When he learned of the pretty girl's wealth, it gave him a keen regret. Why hadn't he struggled and accumulated, instead of whiling away the hours in delicious ease? Why?

Hartley moved on.

"Think it over," he said in parting, "and you will see that you are in the wrong. Before you get through you will wish that you had never met her.

The pretty girl, who had stopped to listen to something one of the ship's officers

was telling her about a vessel in the distance, now came forward and seated herself in the chair beside Phil.

Ross had lapsed into a thoughtful mood, and it was she who spoke first.

"You seem to be thinking hard," she said.

"I am," he replied.

"I saw Hartley talking with you. Did—did he say something more—disagreeable, I mean?" she inquired.

"Oh, no," replied Phil. "I was just wondering about that delicious perfume you use."

"What a funny thing to look so serious about!" she said.

"I—I thought it was heliotrope," he continued.

"And what caused you to change your mind?" she asked. "For you said that as if you had discovered it wasn't heliotrope, and the discovery had been the means of upsetting you."

"It has," admitted Phil.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because orchids are so expensive," he replied, thinking aloud.

"Really!" she exclaimed. "What have orchids to do with heliotrope?"

"Nothing at all," he answered. "That's the trouble."

"I don't understand."

"Because—because I have learned that you prefer orchids, and orchid perfume to all others, and I would so much like to give you orchids," he added desperately.

"Won't you give me heliotrope instead?" she said, placing an entreating hand on his arm. "The perfume you liked was heliotrope," she said. "I bought it in Savannah, and I would have had some of the flowers, but there was no time. We left suddenly. I really don't care about orchids, after all."

Phil's eyes reflected the pleasure that had sprung up in his heart. Still, the fact that she liked heliotrope didn't make him a rich man. He began to wish that, after all, he had not had the misfortune to be carried off on this steamer.

"I had a disappointment, too," she continued. "Like you, I went to Savannah with the expectation of seeing a man, but he wasn't there. Then we had to come away. I wonder if you ever met him? He's the most wonderful man in the world," she said, "and I shall never be happy until I see him."

"What's his name?" asked Phil.

"Ross," she replied—"Philip Ross. Even his name is uncommonly attractive, don't you think so?"

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE TRUTH CAME OUT.

"PHILIP ROSS!" Phil was scarcely able to believe his own ears.

"That's his name," replied the young woman, smiling.

"Surely you don't know what you are saying!" continued Ross.

"Oh, yes, I do," persisted the girl.

"Do you actually mean that you have heard of Philip Ross?" he persisted.

"I have not only heard of him," was the reply, "but I have heard some delightful, some wonderful, things about him. I am crazy to know him."

Phil looked at her in amazement.

"But there is only one Philip Ross in Savannah," he declared.

"Well, I didn't expect to find half a dozen," laughed the girl. "I shouldn't think there could be many exactly like him."

It was on the tip of Phil's tongue to exclaim, "Why, I am Phil Ross," but curiosity got the better of him.

She hadn't told him who she was, and since, apparently, Hartley hadn't informed her regarding his identity, he decided to wait a little and find out what sort of a reputation he had with this fascinating creature.

The moon was high in the heavens now. It was an ideal evening, and Phil had a feeling that that would be be one of the eventful nights of his life.

"Mr. Philip Ross is an extremely elusive individual," his companion continued. "I have been wanting to get acquainted with him for a long time, but a thousand and one things seem to stand in the way. Business chiefly. Then, too, Savannah is some distance from New York."

"I should say it is," remarked Phil. "It is so far that I have never even been to New York, and wouldn't have come this time but for an accident."

"Well, it was almost an accident that gave me a chance to go to Savannah. You see, I just wanted to be sure that this Mr. Ross was all that everybody said he was."

"Really!" exclaimed Phil. "Is he?"

"All that, and more, too. I found this out while I was in Savannah."

"And yet you didn't meet him?"

"No. Of all the unfortunate things, he was out of town. I might have known it."

"That was too bad. I am sure if Mr. Ross could have had the slightest idea of what he missed by being out of town while you were there he would have taken the next train to New York. I shall certainly tell him this."

"Oh, please don't," she protested. "Of course, I don't know him, and I may not like him when I meet him; for I am determined to know him some day."

"Oh, really!" exclaimed Phil.

"Yes. We go South often, and the next time we pass through Savannah I shall take particular pains to be sure that my hero is in town."

"'Hero'?" repeated Phil.

"Indeed he is! Have you never heard of the wonderful thing he did at Tybee?"

"What was that?" asked Phil, light beginning to dawn upon him.

"He saved my father's life," replied the girl simply. "And I can never, never do enough for him because of that. I fairly love him for it!"

"Your father!" exclaimed Phil.

"Yes—my dear father. I adore him. If anything had happened to him I would have wanted to die."

"Your father!" The dazed Phil could only repeat the words.

"Yes," she said. "You seem surprised. It's strange you never heard of it. Father intends that Mr. Ross shall have a Carnegie medal for his bravery. It will be a surprise to him."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Phil, overwhelmed by the news. "Why, I hadn't any idea. I—that is, that he had done anything—anything out of the ordinary."

"That's because he is so retiring," said the girl. "Father says he never knew any one quite so modest."

"Oh!" exclaimed Phil, blushing.

"Why, he refused the offer of a fine position my father wished to give him—said he was 'very well off as he was,' and he 'hadn't done anything anybody else wouldn't do.' Just think of that!"

"He was right," said Phil.

"Yes, but father didn't think so. He owed his life to Mr. Ross, and he wanted to show his appreciation."

"Oh, I am sure he did," granted Phil.

"And I wanted to show mine. Father invited him to call at the hotel. He thought he would give a little dinner for him, and have him meet some of the prominent New York friends who were there on some business connected with the railroads, but he wouldn't come. I was so disappointed. Father mentioned that he had a daughter—and even that wouldn't persuade him to call."

"He was very stupid," said Phil. "Oh, if he had only known! I am sure he would have accepted the invitation that very evening. But how could he suspect that there was such a charming young lady waiting to see him."

"I don't know," she replied. "I suppose he wasn't to blame. Do you know him well?"

"Very well, indeed," replied Phil. "Better than any one else."

He could have kicked himself when he thought of his wasted opportunities.

"Have you any idea how long Mr. Ross remains on his vacation?" asked the girl.

"He should be back by this time," replied Phil, who could not suppress a twinkle of his eye. "That is, if something hasn't detained him."

"I am determined that father shall do something for him," she continued. "Whether Mr. Ross wants it or not, he deserves it, and he shall have it."

"I am sure, if he only knew this, he would be extremely grateful," Phil spoke very earnestly.

"Oh, I am not at all certain of that," she continued. "He was very emphatic in his declination before. I sent him a telegram before we left New York telling him to call at the De Soto. But he paid no attention to it. Of course, he must have received it wherever he was."

"But he didn't," said Phil.

"How do you know?"

"He, Ross, told me so," said Phil.

"Oh, then you have seen him lately?"

"Yes. I was with him on his trip. He came back with me."

"What a shame!" declared the girl. "If we might have stayed a little longer, but father was called back so unexpectedly."

"It was a mistake all around," said Phil.

"And you are sure he didn't receive the wire while he was away?"

"Quite sure," answered Phil. "He got it on his return to Savannah, too late to find your father, for he discovered by calling up the hotel that he had left."

"Oh, I am so glad to know all this," said

the girl. "It explains a great deal which I might have been a long time in finding out if I hadn't met you."

"I'm glad, too, if I have been of any service," said Phil.

"I couldn't understand why he ignored us," she said.

"And it was you who sent the telegram?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"That was so kind of you," said Phil.

"And you will tell Mr. Ross when you see him?"

"Yes, I promise; and next time, I promise you, you will be sure to find him."

The girl blushed.

"Do you know I have an idea that he must be something of your type," she said suddenly, looking steadily at Ross.

"You flatter me," said Phil.

"No. From the description father gave me of him, he must be very like you. Don't you like the name of Philip?"

"I never cared specially for it before," replied Ross. "But I am glad they called me that now," he added with a smile as he looked into her brown eyes.

"Why, is Phil your name, too?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "Phil is my name, too. Miss Patton, can't you put two and two together—two Phils, for instance. I told you there was only one Philip Ross in Savannah."

"Why—why—" she stammered. "It can't be possible! You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do."

Then she began to laugh, almost with tears in her eyes.

"Then you are really, really—"

"'Philip Ross,'" replied Phil with quiet dignity.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she cried. "So very, *very* glad! I can't tell you. To think that *you* of all people should prove to be my hero. I'm going to take you straight home with me to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XIII.

GUESSING AT MOTIVES.

How the long hours of that happy, happy night ever passed Phil never knew.

At last the dim morning light told him that it was time to arise if he wanted to be on deck when the ship entered the harbor of New York.

Hastily dressing, he hurried out of his cabin and made for the bow of the boat.

Miss Patton was there before him, and together they watched the majestic Savannah steam carefully in. It was a picturesque and beautiful sight as she was steered as an arrow between Forts Hamilton and Wadsworth.

The keen air of the awakening world caused Phil instinctively to feel that life itself was only at its dawn for him.

"Home at last!" exclaimed the girl, as the lines were thrown.

Then, as she scanned the faces of the waiting people on the pier, she waved her dainty handkerchief wildly and cried:

"There he is!"

"Who?" asked Phil, trying to follow her gaze.

"Father," she replied.

"Then he didn't go to Europe?"

"I should say not. I wanted to tell you so last night, but thought I would surprise you."

"Then I shall see him, after all," said Phil hopefully.

"Indeed you will. But you must promise to do exactly as he says. Father is not accustomed to being thwarted in his plans. And he has plans! I know all about them."

"Oh, you—and he are too good! But where's Hartley?" he added.

"Are you still worrying about him?" she laughed.

The secretary came up at this moment. He gave one icy glance in Phil's direction.

"I presume you don't need me?" he said in significant tones.

"No, Mr. Hartley, I do not," replied the girl.

"I can take care of Miss Patton," added Phil as they started below.

The next moment the girl had thrown her arms about the neck of a prosperous-looking gray-haired man who rushed forward to meet her.

"Oh, father, you can never, never guess what's happened," she cried.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Patton.

Then for the first time he noticed Phil.

"Why—" he began, and then looked about as if seeking some one. "Why, where's Hartley?" he demanded.

"That's just it, father," she replied. "It's a long story. I can't tell it to you now. Let's go home first, and you shall know everything. Hartley will show up later, trust to that. You can't lose him."

"My dear child, has Hartley done anything to annoy you?"

"Before I answer that, father," she replied, "aren't you forgetting to speak to an old friend?"

Mr. Patton glanced at the young man, but did not recognize him.

"An old friend?" he repeated.

"Yes, father; the best friend you ever had — Mr. Philip Ross, of Savannah, Georgia."

"Why, you don't mean it!" exclaimed Mr. Patton. "So it is. I didn't know you at first, my boy. Pardon me."

"Certainly," said Phil. "I would hardly expect you to remember me, considering the fact that we only met once."

"He's coming home with us, father; so I can tell you all about this wonderful trip."

The next thing Phil knew he was comfortably seated between the two in a seventy horse-power Mercedes, which dashed up Fifth Avenue and soon set them down before the handsomest house Phil had ever seen.

On the way, Miss Patton, or Helen, as Phil had now learned she was called, had begun to explain matters.

"Just think, father," she said, "I didn't know that he was our Mr. Ross until last night."

"Well, it was most fortunate that you found it out then," commented Mr. Patton. "Better late than never, you know. But I want to get at the bottom of this whole matter, and I will fix the blame where it belongs. There is something wrong here."

Meantime, they had entered a beautifully furnished library, where Mr. Patton hospitably told Phil to consider himself at home.

"In the first place," began the millionaire, "did you receive a telegram my daughter sent?"

"That's the first thing Hartley asked me when we met on board ship," said Phil.

"Hartley!" exclaimed Mr. Patton. "What did he know about it?"

"He seemed to know everything," replied Phil, "because he asked me if I hadn't changed my mind about declining a position. I told him about the death of my employer, and that I had come on board the Savannah to find you, for I thought you would be able to give me something to do."

"You made a mistake in telling Hartley anything," said Mr. Patton.

"I thought so too, afterward," assented Phil; "but, at the time, I supposed he was the proper person to speak to, since he assured me he knew all about your affairs."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Patton. "Hartley does know a great deal, but this is one thing he didn't know about."

"But he asked me if you hadn't said you wanted to see me in Savannah?" continued Phil, "and wanted to know if you had mentioned any particular position you might have in mind for me?"

"I *see*," said Mr. Patton thoughtfully.

"I told him that you had not, whereupon he said he had forgotten the details; that he had so much to think about."

"Very clever of him," remarked Mr. Patton. "Oh, he's smart enough!"

"I told him," proceeded Ross, "that, on account of its being summer, I was greatly disappointed in not being able to find you, since I would be glad to have anything you might offer. I felt that I was privileged to seek you out on account of your previous kindness, and then your telegram seemed promising — as if you had something in mind for me."

"So I had."

"But I fear I have lost my chance through my apparent negligence in not answering; but I explained to Miss Patton that no mail was forwarded to me at sea, and I only received the wire on my return. I jumped into a surrey and hastened to the ship which was thoughtful enough to leave Savannah with me on board."

"Yes, father, wasn't it strange the way everything has turned out?" interposed Helen.

"It has all been for the best," said Mr. Patton. "Naturally, when I didn't receive any word from you while I was in Savannah, I couldn't understand your—apparent rudeness. Then I began to figure it out that you might possibly be out of town. So I decided to write you later."

"Did you?" asked Phil eagerly. "Why, Hartley told me that when you heard nothing from me you were angry, and had given the position to some one else. That it wasn't anything I would have cared about, anyhow."

"Oh, he said that, did he?"

"I told him that he was mistaken, that *anything* would please me; for even unpleasant work is better than none at all, especially in the dull season of the year. I wanted to call and thank you for having

even thought of me, but he told me you would be on your way to Europe by the time the Savannah reached port."

"This is too much!" indignantly exclaimed Mr. Patton. "He knew very well that I hadn't the slightest intention of going to Europe. Why, I have my hands full down in Wall Street. Things are livelier than they have been for some time."

"And Hartley prevented me from becoming acquainted with Mr. Ross," broke in Helen. "He told him I was going to be Mrs. Hartley. Fancy! He also told me that Mr. Ross refused an introduction because he was engaged to a young girl in Savannah."

"I never was engaged in my life," said Phil. "I don't mean to say that I never expect to be," he added, then looked down at the floor in embarrassment as Helen blushed and began examining a convenient book:

"I am simply amazed by all you have both told me," said Mr. Patton. "I had begun to distrust Hartley of late. I discovered one or two little transactions in which he took part which caused me to believe that he placed his own interests before mine. A secretary can't afford to do that—not when he is being liberally paid to look after his employer's affairs."

"How could he do it?" exclaimed Phil.

"Well, he did," replied Mr. Patton; "but he thought he had covered up his tracks cleverly and I wouldn't find him out."

"But why did he do all he did to me?" inquired Phil. "I have been looking for the motive ever since I began to see through his trickery. I know that he is in love with Miss Patton, and perhaps—"

Phil hesitated about going on.

"And thought you might prove a dangerous rival," finished Helen.

"Why, yes; he might have thought such a thing," admitted Phil. "But I don't see why that should cause him to descend to all the treachery of which he has been guilty."

"It's as plain as the nose on your face," said Mr. Patton. "At least, it is to me. In the first place, Hartley is not in love with my daughter and never has been. He spends every cent he makes on a chorus girl in the Tenderloin."

"Father!" exclaimed Miss Patton.

"Oh, yes. I have just found that out. It was your money, my child, he was aching to possess."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Patton. "I'm so glad I never cared for him!"

"But his pretended jealousy over my daughter wasn't the true cause of his actions," continued Mr. Patton. "The real cause was—"

Just then the butler entered and announced:

"Mr. Hartley, sir."

"Tell him to come right in," commanded Mr. Patton with emphasis, as his mouth assumed an unrelenting straight line.

CHAPTER XIV.

INTO A BED OF HELIOTROPE.

"Good morning, Mr. Patton," said the secretary politely.

The next instant he drew back in surprise, and a look of consternation came over his face as he saw Phil.

"Morning," curtly replied the millionaire.

Ross rose to his feet. He felt that a disagreeable scene was bound to follow, and he thought that the time was ripe for him to withdraw.

"Stay right where you are!" ordered Mr. Patton. "I want you present during this interview, Mr. Ross."

Phil said nothing, but resumed his seat.

"May I stay, father?" asked Helen.

Mr. Patton nodded.

"Now, Hartley, what have you to say to me?"

The secretary glanced from one corner of the room to the other. For once he was on the verge of losing his consummate nerve.

"I—I just called, as usual, to ask your instructions for the day;" he stammered.

"I have none," shortly answered Mr. Patton.

"None?" repeated the secretary, his face turning white.

"Not to-day, nor any other day, Hartley," replied the millionaire. "The thing that surprises me is that it would ever cross your mind to take the trouble to come here and ask me such a fool question."

The secretary grasped a chair for support. Mr. Patton had not requested him to be seated.

"You mean—" he began.

"I mean, that, after your treatment of my daughter and her friend on board ship, it seems that common decency would tell you not to report to me further."

"You mean that you no longer require my services?" asked Hartley faintly.

"I mean nothing so gentlemanly as that," retorted Mr. Patton. "I mean that you are *kicked out,* to put it in plain American."

The millionaire planted his fist down on the mahogany table with a whack which left no doubt in regard to the sincerity of his statement.

The secretary turned toward the door. He hailed the sight of it with a feeling of thanksgiving. He wanted to get out as quickly as possible.

"Good morning," he said faintly.

"One moment, Hartley," said Mr. Patton; "I am not through with you yet."

The fellow's face turned a greenish white, and his hand sought the friendly back of the chair again.

Helen faced him coldly, and he shrank from her gaze.

"I have been on to your little curves for some time past," continued the millionaire. "You have been carrying on deals with some of my enemies. You thought I would never know, but I did. I decided to make sure, however. Then, this pretense of your being in love with my daughter—"

"Really, Mr. Patton. I—"

"It was her fortune you loved. What about Trixie Murray?"

Hartley gasped.

"Miss Murray herself has boasted of your 'mad infatuation,' and how you 'hoped to marry a rich girl,' and so on."

"Why, father," protested Helen, "I wouldn't have had him if he had been the last man on earth."

She looked Hartley over disdainfully.

"He isn't a *real man,*" she declared; "and I never thought he was."

"You wanted Mr. Ross here," went on Mr. Patton, "to think that you were preventing him from meeting my daughter because of your jealousy. *That wasn't the true reason.* That was this:

"In some way you had got an inkling that I intended to remove you from your present position and put Mr. Philip Ross in your place. As a matter of fact, you knew nothing about the telegram we sent him."

"Mr. Patton!" exclaimed Phil in surprise.

"Yes," continued the millionaire to Ross. "That was what I wanted to see you about in Savannah. I felt that, of all the young men I had ever met, you were the one for the position."

"But you know nothing about me," protested Phil. "You don't know what I can do."

"Oh, yes, he does, Mr. Ross," answered Helen. "We know all about you. Father has investigated your record in Savannah."

"And the answer was," continued Mr. Patton, "a unanmious verdict of 'none finer.' That's the sort of man I want to handle my affairs for me. Hartley knew of these reports, and he was afraid of you. He knew that once you entered my employ, I would do everything to advance you, both financially and socially, and he realized that he would have to take a back seat. He did his best to keep you away—"

"But, thanks to my fountain-pen, he didn't succeed," broke in Helen. "I'll tell you about that later, father."

"Now," said the millionaire to Hartley, "the door is open, and I will say very cordially that I sincerely hope never to have the annoyance of seeing you again."

The secretary found his way to the street, somehow, and we leave him to his own dismal reflections.

"Now, my boy," said Mr. Patton, turning to Phil, "we've got rid of him, let's talk about something pleasant. How do you think you will like New York?"

"I can't realize that I am going to stay here," replied Phil. "Do you mean that I shall start in on my duties right away?"

"That's exactly what I mean," replied the millionaire, with a smile. "So you might as well telephone for your trunk and make yourself at home. There's plenty to do. You can begin after luncheon."

"You don't mean that I am to live here—with you?"

"Exactly that," answered Mr. Patton. "Where else did you think you would go?"

"It's all so sudden," murmured Philip.

"Helen," said her father, "see that Mr. Ross gets his baggage right away. Have Evans take the car down to the dock and bring it up."

"But, Mr. Patton," began Phil in embarrassed tones, as he looked down at his white flannel suit.

Helen looked at it, too. Her eyes fell on the ink-spots, and she remembered.

"Mr. Ross didn't expect to come to New York, father," she said. "You remember, he sailed on the Savannah against his will."

"I see. I'll take you down to my tailor's, Mr. Ross; you can order what you like."

"But," again protested Phil as he extracted a lone dollar bill from his pocket, "I am sorry, but this is every dollar I have at present."

"Here," cried the millionaire, sitting down at his desk. "That's easy."

He drew up a check for two hundred dollars.

"Take this on account," he said. "By the way, I have invested a few thousands for you. They ought to be bringing something pretty soon."

"Oh, Mr. Patton!" was all Phil could think of saying.

Helen went over to him.

"So everything has ended well, after all," she said. "Stay here with us. You will be successful, I know. This is your home, and some day—"

She blushed and looked the other way.

"Some day," repeated Phil, as he gazed tenderly into her beautiful brown eyes, which were now looking frankly into his.

"Who knows—" she said. "You—you—I may let you buy orchids for me."

"In the meantime," suggested Phil, "won't you promise me that you will wear just heliotrope?"

THE END.

A RUSH JOB FOR FAIR.

BY IVOR MORRIS LOWRIE.

A New Year's Eve Story of Quick Happenings with Midnight as the Time Limit.

"REMEMBER now, under no circumstances whatever, deliver this envelope to any one but Mr. Jackman himself—and get it to him before midnight."

Vowing that he would obey the injunction implicitly, John Hastings, a draftsman in the employ of Victor Bothwell, contractor, received the envelope from his employer, the latter having addressed it as follows:

Mr. George Jackman,
Apartment C, The Woodbine,
3490 Carrolton Avenue,
New York City.

"This contains our bid for the erection of Jackman's proposed theater. The bidding closes at midnight of December 31—to-day. If ours isn't in his hands before it closes, we lose a chance to land the job. I trust you with this matter, Hastings, because I consider you reliable."

It was the first time the young draftsman had received any words of commendation from Mr. Bothwell, and he was naturally elated over the fact.

"I thank you, Mr. Bothwell, and can guarantee that the bid will reach its destination before midnight," he replied. "It is now ten-thirty—allowing me ample time to reach Mr. Jackman's apartment in the Bronx."

Placing the precious missive in an inner pocket, Hastings slipped into his overcoat, and, taking up his hat and gloves, left the office.

As he emerged from the building—a large one in Times Square—the tooting of horns and clanging of bells assailed his ears, causing his mind to revert to a certain little midnight supper with the one girl in the world he had planned as a fitting welcome to the approaching New Year.

New Year, with all its hopes and fears!

"The crowd is tuning up already. Why couldn't the boss have figured his bids several days ago? Gee! It's just my luck. Seems that something like this comes up every time I count on having a dandy time with Edith. I bet she felt put out when she received my message, saying I couldn't keep the engagement. Poor little darling girl!"

His thoughts rambled thus as, with coat-collar held close to his throat and hat forced low upon his brow to exclude the frosty wind, he hurried down Broadway to the Subway entrance.

He had gone but a short distance when he noted that he was passing the Café de Paris—by which name its Irish proprietor sought to lend a savor of the gay French capital.

A throng of merry greeters of the New Year were already crowding its doors.

"I suppose I'd better tell them to give my table to some one else. It's certainly tough after having it engaged two months in advance to be unable to use it."

Hastings began railing against fate, but his mutterings were rudely interrupted by his plunging headforemost into some person leaving the restaurant.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized as he regained his equilibrium.

"Pardon the deuce! Where in tarnation are my glasses?"

"Why, really, I haven't—"

"Fiddlesticks!" cried the irate old gentleman with whom Hastings had collided. "You knocked them from my nose. It's a wonder you wouldn't watch where you are going?"

Hastings was about to retort with a like query, but the impulse was stayed by the evident age and the present dilemma of the other.

"I'm very sorry, sir. I'll try to find them," and the younger man bent over in an effort to locate the glasses amid the maze of feet that covered the sidewalk.

"Here they are—" He paused, for the glasses were hopelessly wrecked.

"I'll pay for the damage I have caused," he added.

Hastings's endeavor to appease the rising wrath of the near-sighted man proved futile.

"Oh, you will, will you?" that person thundered. "Why, a thousand dollars wouldn't pay the bill. It's not the pecuniary value of the things. They can be duplicated at a very reasonable cost—but not to-night. How can I go groping about in this mad swirl of demented maniacs when I am not able to distinguish objects a foot from my nose?"

The old gentleman's plight was indeed pitiful.

"Why, I don't know," haltingly confessed Hastings.

"Of course you don't. If you had sufficient intellect to know that, you would have known better than to go rushing along with your head lowered in the manner of a battering-ram."

As he turned away in a heroic effort to press through the surging mob, the angry man hurled upon Hastings as a parting shot:

"First, I can't get a table; and then a blundering idiot rushes into me and shatters my glasses, making it impossible for me to seek a table elsewhere. It would make St. Peter swear."

"Oh, I say," cried Hastings, placing a detaining hand upon the other's arm, "were you trying to secure a table at the Café de Paris?"

"What's that to you?" was the snapping reply.

"Just this—I have a table reserved there for eleven-thirty, but won't be able to use it. Now, if allowing you to occupy it will in any way recompense you for my carelessness, you are welcome to it."

"What!" The expression of grouch quickly vanished from the old gentleman's face.

"Will it? Well, rather. You're all right, sonny. I'm rather glad you did crash into me."

He dealt Hastings a blow upon the head that was evidently aimed for his shoulder.

"Here's my card. Any time I can return the favor, command me."

Hastings took the bit of pasteboard and thrust it into his pocket as he readjusted his hat.

"Now," continued the other, "you just fix things up so I get your table, and I'll be eternally grateful."

The pair entered the café, and Hastings spoke the words that made the old gentleman the happy possessor of a window-table from eleven-thirty until—well, just until.

The pacified man requested that he be led to a phone-booth that he might tell the good news to "some one."

Leaving this gentle duty to an attendant, Hastings bade his newly made friend good-by and hastened away, his mission again taking predominance in his mind.

The Subway entrance was reached without further mishap, and a ride of half an hour found him descending the steps of a station in the Bronx district.

"If I am correctly informed, Carrolton Avenue is two blocks west," he mused as he turned in that direction.

It proved an easy matter to locate the desired avenue, and in due course he neared the Woodbine, a bachelor apartment-house that boasted the most extensive plot of open ground in the neighborhood, being completely encircled by a wide lawn.

The biting wintry air made the sight of the building a welcome one, and Hastings lost no time in bounding up the steps. As he did so the hall door was thrown open,

and a uniformed negro rushed out, revolver in hand.

Hastings drew away from the menace of the flourished weapon, but this precaution was needless—the holder of the revolver thrust it into the hand of the astonished draftsman, hoarsely whispering:

"He is in apartment C. It's on the third floor. Everybody in the building is away celebrating."

With this bit of vague information, the negro took to his heels, beating a hasty retreat down the avenue.

For a moment or two Hastings stood immobile, looking at the weapon he held; then, regaining his wits, he turned to recall the fleeing negro, only to find that he had completely vanished.

"'He's in apartment C,'" he repeated. "How could that fellow know I called to see Mr. Jackman—and why this revolver? Surely, Mr. Jackman isn't so dangerous a character that one need be armed when visiting him.

"By George!" he exclaimed at the conception of what to him seemed a capital idea. "It's a scheme of some competitor to frighten away all bids but his own until the time limit is up. Clever, but it won't work with me."

He felt highly pleased with himself at being able to see through the scheme, so boldly entered the building.

The negro having deserted his post at the elevator, Hastings was forced to use the stairs as a means to reach the desired floor. Although he mounted the first flight with absolute assurance and unconcern, some strange foreboding possessed him as he started up the second. He was careful to guard his footfalls as he neared the landing above, and maintained absolute silence as he stood before the door of apartment C.

As he extended one hand to the push-button he unconsciously drew forth the revolver with the other; then laughed nervously as he became aware of his action.

"Well, this has got my goat!" he confessed, and substituted a peep through the keyhole for the intended pressure upon the button. The look revealed nothing but inky blackness.

As he stood, mentally debating whether or not to announce his arrival, he heard steps approaching from inside. Then the knob was slowly turned, the door softly opened, and the figure of a man appeared.

The fellow's eyes opened wide as they rested upon Hastings, and threatened to bulge from their sockets at the sight of the revolver. Their owner quickly sprang back and started to close the door.

The man's guilty action instantly resolved Hastings upon a course of action. Throwing discretion to the winds, he hurled his weight against the door in a violent endeavor to prevent the other from securing it.

Suddenly the man on the inner side withdrew, and the door flew open wide, causing Hastings to stretch his length upon the floor. Although the impact of his fall somewhat stunned him, he quickly regained his feet, and hastened down the hallway in pursuit of the fleeing man, only to be again precipitated headlong, tripping over a bundle which the other had deserted in his haste, doubtless on account of its weight.

As he regained his feet a second time, Hastings saw his quarry raise a window at the far end of the hall and hastily climb over the sill.

At first he was at a loss to explain the fellow's action, but upon reaching the window he found a fire-escape.

Even as Hastings began mounting the sill the head of the pursued man disappeared below the surface of the iron balcony.

"He's going down the ladder!" panted Hastings as he in turn leaped out and hastened toward the ladder leading to the corresponding balcony below.

By the time he had descended several rungs the other had reached the balcony of the second floor and was hurrying toward the ladder that would enable him to gain the ground. This ladder, however, was suspended upon a weight, and had to be placed in position before use.

The fellow had succeeded in pushing it down into place and was in the act of descending when Hastings reached its top and endeavored to draw it up.

At this the fellow hurriedly retraced his steps, and, upon reaching Hastings's side, lent more than a willing hand in the withdrawal effort. In fact, he completely brushed the other aside in his labor to accomplish this.

Perplexed before, Hastings was now absolutely mystified. Unable to comprehend the other's scheme, he threw his arms about him, causing the latter to release his hold upon the ladder to defend himself against the attack.

A royal battle ensued. Tripping, they fell upon the floor of the balcony, the railing

of which prevented their toppling to the ground.

The attacked man fought furiously, like some ferocious animal at bay—clawing, biting, kicking, punching. At times Hastings would be uppermost, only to have his adversary reverse their positions.

Finally he secured a strangle-hold upon the fellow's throat, and was choking him into submission, when a hand was placed upon his coat-collar, and Hastings felt himself being unceremoniously jerked to his feet. The next instant he was whirled about to face—a policeman.

Hastings's antagonist, relieved of the pressure upon his windpipe, jumped to his feet, but was quickly taken in charge by a second officer, who had mounted the ladder down which the escaping man had been climbing, and who doubtless had been the cause of the latter's sudden retreat.

The sight of the blue uniforms was a welcome one to Hastings.

"You are just in time, officers!" he cried. "A more opportune arrival could not have been planned."

The addressed men made no reply, but merely exchanged glances, and, upon the part of one, the suspicion of a wink.

"This chap is a burglar," went on Hastings. "I found him in Mr. Jackman's apartment. You had better lock him up."

To this the policeman who had winked replied:

"We'll just do that," and placed his hand upon Hastings's arm.

"But, I say," ejaculated that person, "I'm no burglar. You don't understand—"

"Oh, yes, we do!" interposed the officer. "We understand too well to let a couple of birds like you pull off that old game on us."

"Old game?" queried Hastings.

"Yes, mighty old. Two guys get caught in the act, and one plays he is doin' a capture stunt so as to get himself in soft. Crude work. You'll have to come a better one than that to get past me and Mickey."

"But, listen!" And Hastings started to explain the situation at length.

"Nothin' doin'," broke in the officer who up to this time had held his peace. "You can tell your story to the judge in the mornin'. We ain't a goin' to stand here freezin', listenin' to yer gab."

Without more ado, the officers took their prisoners up the fire-escape and through the open window of apartment C, it being necessary for them to make a search of the place and insure it against further intrusion.

"I'll entertain our guests while you look about, Mickey. And, say, get a hustle on—it's almost midnight!"

Midnight!

Hastings would not have jumped higher had a current of electricity been passed through his body. In his present predicament he had momentarily forgotten his errand.

Uttering a half-articulate cry, he drew forth his watch, consulting it to verify the officer's words.

With some relief he noted that it was but a quarter past eleven. Yet, in his present plight, it might as well have been midnight, for not only had he failed to locate Mr. Jackman, but was now under arrest.

"What ails you?" bruskly queried the policeman.

"Why, I've got a most important engagement before midnight."

"You just bet you have," laughed the officer. "It's at the station-house."

"But, look here, this fellow can tell you that I was in the act of capturing him when you arrived." Hastings turned toward his fellow prisoner.

The man grinned maliciously.

"Say, pal, de game's up. Don't squeal. Take yer medicine."

"What!" gasped Hastings. "Why, you dirty cur!"

Goaded by his failure to deliver the bid, and further incensed by the burglar's audacity in implicating him in the crime, Hastings made a savage rush upon the fellow.

The second policeman, hearing the scuffle, hastened to the other's aid in preventing another clash.

"Steady, now, young fellow," he cautioned the belligerent Hastings. "This scrapping business ain't going to help you any."

"Perhaps not, but just the same I'd get a heap of satisfaction out of punching that chap's head."

Hastings's attempted assault evidently caused a shade of doubt to enter the mind of one of the officers.

"They don't act much like pals," he whispered to his companion. The words sounded like sweet music to Hastings.

"Please, gentlemen, please give me an opportunity to explain."

The policemen exchanged inquiring glances.

"Well, go on. Only hurry," said one. "We ought to have been back to the station-house long ago. It's over half an hour since the sergeant received the phone call."

The phone call!

The veil of mystery that had shrouded the mix-up was raised for Hastings.

The negro attendant had evidently seen or heard the burglar and telephoned to the precinct station-house; then, terror-stricken as he was, he mistook Hastings for an officer responding to his appeal for help. This, Hastings hastened to explain.

"Gee!" exclaimed the captured burglar, when the draftsman had finished, "I thought you wuz the guy what called the officers."

It was not until after the officers had granted Hastings his liberty that the burglar realized it was these words that had vindicated the draftsman.

"I guess that lets you out," spoke Mickey. "You can't be a pal of this fellow if he thought it was you who sent for us. If you will submit to being searched, and we find nothing suspicious on you, you will be at liberty to go."

"Certainly," acquiesced Hastings, and had his pockets gone through.

The revolver was brought to light, but its presence had been accounted for by his recital. The letter further strengthened his story. The ownership of his personal belongings was easily established.

Reaching in Hastings's overcoat pocket, the officer produced the card of the old gentleman with whom he had collided at the entrance to the Café de Paris.

"Well, I guess your visit to Mr. Jackman's apartment is legitimate all right," the policeman decided, as he returned the card to Hastings.

For the first time then the latter read it.

Mr. George Jackman,
Apartment C, The Woodbine,
3490 Carrolton Avenue,
New York City.

If the officers had thought Hastings's actions strange before, they surely must have considered him almost a lunatic now. Emitting a shriek like a volcano about to erupt, he rushed from the apartment and down the stairs.

His watch informed him that the time was eleven-thirty-five. Perhaps at that very moment Mr. Jackman was seating his company at Hastings's table in the Café de Paris.

Eleven thirty-five! Just twenty-five minutes to reach Times Square! A feat impossible for the Subway, yet he hurried on, hoping against hope.

As he turned a corner, his heart gave a mighty bound. Not a hundred feet away stood a taxicab.

If driven with an utter disregard of the speed laws, this machine might possibly bring him to his destination in time.

With this thought in mind, Hastings rushed forward. As he did so, a lady and gentleman came down the steps of the residence in front of which the taxicab was standing.

"Drive me to the Café de Paris, Times Square," shouted Hastings as he prepared to enter the vehicle.

"Sorry, sport, but this cab is engaged," replied the chauffeur.

As if to verify this statement the pair who had descended the steps bade some one in the vestibule "good night" and advanced, the gentleman giving the taxi driver a down-town address.

Fate seemed to take delight in offering Hastings means of bridging his difficulties, only to sweep them away as rapidly as erected.

"Pardon me, sir," he said to the gentleman who had hired the cab, "I'm on a most urgent mission. Would it inconvenience you to allow me to accompany you down-town?"

"It certainly would," was the sharp response.

"I'll pay the charges. Believe me, it is a matter of life or death." Hastings stretched the truth somewhat in his anxiety to compass his ends.

This appeal found a mark in the more kindly heart of the gentleman's companion.

"Oh, Jack, if it is as serious as that, we had better take him."

Although Hastings received a most unfriendly look from "Jack," he was accepted as a passenger. As he stepped in he found an opportunity to whisper to the chauffeur:

"Get me to the Café de Paris before midnight and I'll give you an extra ten-spot."

The violent jerk the occupants of the machine received in the start seemed to indicate that the man at the wheel was determined to annex the promised reward if possible.

The surliness of "Jack," the nervousness of his companion at the fearful speed

the machine maintained, the irritation of Hastings because that speed could not be doubled or trebled, and the fact that more than one representative of the law shot angry glances at the speeding taxi, need not be dwelt upon. Suffice it to say that Hastings's companions reached their destination before they had really got comfortably established in the vehicle, and, after they had made their exit from it, the former found himself free to give full vent to his pent-up feelings.

Too restless to keep his seat, he stood, clutching at the partition before him, and shouting at the top of his voice to "send her along."

It being New Year's Eve, onlookers evidently thought the cab held some inebriated celebrator taking a joy ride.

As they neared their destination, the assembled throng made it necessary to diminish their speed.

This enforced delay cast Hastings into a frenzy. He railed as the merrymakers hurled clouds of confetti through the cab window.

The festivity was approaching its acme; a near-by clock announced that it lacked but three minutes of midnight.

By this time Hastings was raving for the chauffeur to "run over the idiots."

After what seemed an age, they came within sight of the café. Being aware of the custom of extinguishing its lights for a minute preceding the arrival of the new year, and seeing that they were still brilliant, he knew that the fateful hour had not yet arrived.

Springing to the sidewalk, he called to the chauffeur to wait, and rushed into the café, striking against people right and left.

There was one thing in his favor, he knew the location of the party he sought and would not need to institute a search for the table.

Pushing his way forward, he wrought havoc among those he encountered. Here wine was spilled, there a roasted turkey executed a highland fling and fluttered upon the lap of a richly gowned woman, but Hastings's passage was not to be stayed. Leaving in his wake a score of angry people, he finally reached the table at which sat the old gentleman with whom he had collided earlier in the evening, in company with a man and woman.

Unceremoniously:

"Mr. Jackman," he panted, hoarse from his late vocal exertion, "I represent Mr. Victor Bothwell, the contractor. Here is our bid for the erection of your theater building," and he placed the precious envelope upon the table.

"You are mistaken, my young friend," was the reply that staggered Hastings as if struck a blow, "I am not Mr. Jackman."

The café proprietor, flanked on either side by burly waiters, advanced, and all the other guests directed their attention to the scene.

Hastings's face blanched as he gulped:

"But this card? You gave it to me when I secured you this table."

The old gentleman took the card and, holding it close to his eyes, managed to read the name on it.

"Well, that's one on me," he exclaimed. "You see I had no glasses when I gave you that. It is not my card but that of my guest here. I must have—"

Hastings did not wait for a further explanation—the slim gentleman opposite had been designated as the true Mr. Jackman. With one bound, he was at that person's side thrusting the envelope into his hands.

And then the lights went out.

THE WHITE THOUGHT.

We teeming transients of the sun,
Until our eager race be run,
Bestir us in a hundred ways
To leave, before the caverned dark
Engulf us, some small, vital spark—
A firefly in a somber maze—
To say to those who follow, we
Are not extinguished utterly;
Our mortal, that is less than naught,
Fixed in a white, immortal thought.

Richard Burton.

THE WOMAN HE FEARED.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN,

Author of "T. Z. B.," "In Savage Splendor," "Washington or—Worse," etc.

The Queer Happenings That Fell Out to the Chicago Man Who Hated the Pork Business.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW MAN.

MR. WILBUR POWELL, who manages the New York offices of Smith, Powell & Smith, of Chicago, lunches invariably at the Café Bratan.

There are two reasons for this. For one thing, Mr. Powell believes that the very best of cooking is none too good for him; for another, the swift and perfect service at Bratan's leaves Mr. Powell's bright young mind wholly free to consider the market reports in his paper.

So that on this particular day Mr. Powell merely hurried in, bustled to his table and spread his paper before him, allowing the highly trained "omnibus" to display his skill at placing the collection of knives and forks in their proper places without disturbing the sheet.

He gave his order without glancing up. He read on busily until dishes began to descend noiselessly on the white stretch before him. He propped the paper erect, then, and sat back with a contented sigh and a glance at the waiter.

The sigh stopped short! For an instant Mr. Powell's eyes squinted hard as they fell upon the tall, white-aproned person beside him. Then eyes and mouth opened wide, and Mr. Powell gasped:

"*You*! Bob—"

To which the waiter responded rather astonishingly from the corner of his mouth:

"Shut up, you ass!"

Really, it was a remark somewhat out of the ordinary; and the captain of waiters who ruled that portion of the big room seemed to sense it without hearing it. He beckoned the waiter with his eyes and inquired in a smiling, threatening whisper:

"What deed you say den? What?"

"The—the gentleman asked me—"

Whatever ominous thought were behind it, the captain's smile turned suddenly to sweetness.

"Enough. He calls you. Go!" he said.

Whereupon the waiter returned to Mr. Powell's side and, with his own best smile of solicitude, leaned over and said:

"My name is *Parker!* D'you understand? Parker! And for the love of Moses, get that darned idiotic gape off your face! . . . Yes, sir, the melon is quite ripe," he concluded, as the captain drew alongside and slowly passed!

"Parker!" Mr. Powell muttered throatily. "Parker!"

"Yes—and now *eat!*" said the white-aproned Mr. Parker fiercely.

"And so *this* is what became of you!" the guest observed, as his countenance broadened and broadened with its gleeful grin. "This is our pampered little Robert—"

"Wilbur!" The waiter stood erect and expressionless beside the other. "However funny this may seem to you, will you please cut out the 'Robert' business and consider that you've never seen me before in your life? I had no idea of meeting any one from Chicago here, and being recognized. I—I haven't made any fashionable acquaintances in New York. I'm not anxious to be recognized, you know!"

Mr. Powell sobered slowly as he ate. For possibly two minutes he divided his attention between luncheon and forcing back the smile that struggled to his lips.

He looked up at Parker then quite mirthlessly, and he seemed rather astonished.

He saw a man of twenty-five at most, tall and distinctly handsome. His build was broad and lean and very muscular and erect; his profile was clean-cut and impressive, and decidedly above the general run of profiles thereabouts, and—

"Thunder! But you've grown skinny!" murmured Mr. Powell.

"I've lost about forty pounds that I didn't need."

"And you look—rotten!" pursued the guest, rather concernedly.

"I don't feel very well," Parker admitted.

"What is it, old man?"

Oh—a confounded headache that's been hanging on to me for a week or so, I imagine. I—well, I haven't been snoozing around on beds of roses, Wilbur."

Powell stared at him again. The handsome waiter was gazing through the window with a distant and rather mournful expression; and the guest's countenance grew distinctly anxious as he said:

"Tell me about it, Bob!"

"There's nothing to tell."

"But all I know—all any one home knows—is that you had a rumpus with your dad and cleared out, pretty nearly a year ago now!"

"That's enough for any one to know!" said Parker bitterly.

"But—what—I thought you were—"

The waiter looked down at him oddly. There was a certain savagely stubborn gleam in his eye and his chin was even more set than usual; and at the same time, the eye betrayed a weary, lonely quality that crept into his voice as he muttered:

"Never mind what you or any one else thought. Just forget that you saw me, Will. And don't mention it when you get back to Chicago."

"But I'm living right here now!"

"So much the better. Don't mention it to any one anywhere, then!" said Parker as he turned on his heel and departed for the next course.

Mr. Powell munched an entire roll before his return, and thought hard.

When his delicate midday repast had been placed before him and the waiters around were out of immediate hearing, he faced Mr. Parker with some firmness.

"Bobby, you look like the deuce!" he said. "You look as if you'd been pulled through a knothole and then hammered with a club! Tell me about it! Tell me what in thunder *you're* doing here as a *waiter!*"

"Trying to earn a living."

"But you look starved! And I'll bet you *are* half-starved! What is it? Won't your dad—"

"I haven't appealed to him, and I'm not going to!" snapped Parker. "You wouldn't either, in my position!"

"I don't know what your position is, Bob! I suppose you left home in a bad temper—"

"Listen! Dad's rich—we know that. He and mother gave me the best up-bringing and the best education that could be had on this earth!" The waiter seemed to be warming to his theme. "And then I spent two years loafing all over the world with Kinsley for a tutor and guide!"

"Correct!"

"And when we got home, a year and a half ago—or whenever it was—the idea was that I'd received unusual advantages."

"Which you had."

"Which I had!" Parker agreed, somewhat hoarsely. "I'd been reared like—well, a gentleman, if one has to call it that. At all events, I'd been reared for something better than the pig business!"

Mr. Powell's fork dropped and he all but gaped again as he stared at Parker.

"The pig business was good enough to—" he began.

"It's all right for any one who likes it," the waiter mumbled on. "I don't like it. That's all. I've always wanted to get into the financial world, ever since I was a kid—into the banking and stock market end of business affairs."

"Yes!" said Mr. Powell grimly.

"Well, there's nothing criminal in having one's own preferences, is there?" Parker demanded.

"Nothing. Proceed, Robert."

"Father wouldn't listen to the notion, that's all. He wanted me to start in at the bottom of the pork business and work up. I didn't want to!"

"And you both have such weak, meek, submissive natures, too!" Powell observed to his plate. "I can almost fill in the entire details!"

Parker snorted audibly. The captain, passing, touched him on the arm and drew him some distance away as he hissed:

"What ees it? Are you crazy, or fighting with a guest? Is this conversation necessary?"

"The gentleman is talking to me. Sha'n't I answer him?"

"Briefly, and without the dramatic gestures!" responded the Swiss, as he moved away.

Parker returned slowly and with his

teeth gritting. Mr. Powell faced him with bland interest and:

"Go on!"

"We had a long and serious talk about it, and—I did what I saw fit!"

"Left the parental roof?"

"Yes."

"To become a great financier?"

Parker said nothing for a while. His fine face reddened a bit, and then grew paler than before; and at last he burst out forcefully:

"Well, what would you have done? When I told dad that I was going out to find my own work he—laughed. You know how he can laugh."

"I know, misguided youth. Go on."

"He said that the pork business was the place for me, just as it had been the place for him; but that the business was already found for me, where he had to found it for himself. He—maybe we both were mad. He said I hadn't wits enough to know that I had a better business chance than the average one man in fifty thousand. He said that if I went out and tried to make my own ideas pay dividends, I'd make a mess of it and starve to death.

"Then — well, he said that if I came back at the end of a year and showed him even one hundred dollars of my own earning, he'd present me with a half interest in the business and make me a full partner. That settled it. I said good-by to mother and got out."

"Um!" Powell sipped his chocolate pensively. "Same dear little boy that wanted to run the school; and later had some of it—only some—knocked out of him in college. Got the hundred saved, Bob?"

"No!" whistled through Parker's teeth. And, having gone so far with his confession, he seemed to see the comfort of going farther, for he continued hurriedly: "I've had a bad time, all things considered, Will. I came on here with the two hundred and something dollars that were in my pocket, and I didn't know how to hang on to them —then."

"Really?"

"I was a good while getting a job, and—oh, I didn't hold it very long. I've had four different jobs since then."

"And didn't hold them very long?"

"Business people want trained help," Parker said shortly. "Every infernal thing seems to be specialized down to—bah!"

"Discovery number two," Powell commented. "And coming down to the present date?"

"Well, I've been stone-broke for two weeks almost," the waiter said fiercely. "I've been eating just enough to keep alive on, and no more. This morning I got notice from the landlady that unless I turned up this evening with my room rent for the last two weeks, I'd better not turn up at all." His fingers were snapping unconsciously. "Then Schwimpel — that fat little waiter over there—came out of his room and overheard it, and said he could get me a job here. He lied his soul through fifteen kinds of perdition as to my experience, and—I'm here, and I'm wearing the suit of a man that was sent to jail last week. That's the whole story."

Mr. Powell laid aside his napkin.

"Bobby," he said gently, "I wonder if you really realize how many different varieties of jackass you put to shame for sheer jackasininity?"

The waiter did not reply. He was staring out of the window again, and himself wondering how many times in the last few months he had pondered that very question. And yet he hadn't given up, and he was not going to give up, and—

"Your highly esteemed papa, Robert, who happens to be a man of sound sense, is one of the wealthiest citizens of these great United States."

"Well?"

"While you—pardon me—are a third-rate waiter in a first-class restaurant."

"Well?"

"Well, does it not appeal to you," said Mr. Powell mildly, "that something is distinctly wrong?"

"I don't expect to be here for the rest of my life."

"Then your expectations are going to be fulfilled a good sight sooner than you imagine. You and I played together as kids, went through school together, and up to the time of your flight were together about every day of our lives. I'd be neglecting my duty as a self-respecting and responsible member of this community—not to mention my duty as a chum—if I didn't do precisely what I am going to do," said Mr. Powell gravely. "Shed those rags, you idiot, and come with me."

"Eh?" Parker's face darkened.

"Get on your street clothes and resign. You're coming to my establishment for a while. I'll find your decent job of some

kind if you're set on this facing-the-world mental kink of yours, but—"

"Thank you, *no!*" proclaimed the waiter.

"What?"

"I said thank you, and also no. I've started out on my own hook, and I'll finish up on my own hook."

"And you're not satisfied yet that—that you've made a mess of it?" Powell cried amazedly.

"No!" lied Mr. Parker.

"Then—by thunder! I'll wire on for your father and have him take you home. You've no business being loose. You belong in an asylum. You—"

"If you do that, you won't find me. I'll throw up even this job as soon as lunch is over," said Parker bitterly, as one hand went unconsciously to his head.

"But — oh, this is rot — rot — rot!" Powell snapped. "Being determined is one thing, and being a blasted wooden-headed mule is another. Here!" He looked hard at Parker, and his tone became almost pleading. "Don't be so infernally stubborn, Bob. I won't say anything if that pleases you any better. But for Heaven's sake — here! Borrow this, Bobby. Please borrow it."

Save for the five-dollar bill which he laid beside his plate, Mr. Powell tried to thrust the fat little roll of notes into Parker's hand. Parker's hands went behind him, and he smiled grimly.

"I haven't borrowed a cent yet, and I'm not going to begin now," he announced.

"But—"

"Look here, Wilbur," said the waiter gently. "I know how you feel about this infernally unfortunate meeting, and I know how I feel about it. I'm not saying that I haven't been something of a fool. I'm not saying that, perhaps, I wouldn't be glad to walk straight into the house home to-night. But I've picked out my own course, and I'm going to keep to it."

"Until you drop dead."

"I'm not going to drop dead," said Mr. Parker as he placed the lunch-check beside his whilom chum.

"Well, if I hadn't known you all your life, I might say you looked like a Greek god, or something like that; but, as it is, I may say that you look about as lean and miserable and underfed—"

Parker had left with the check and the bill. Mr. Powell scowled at the finger-bowl and drummed on the table, muttering impatiently, until at last the waiter arrived with his change—and the scowl was transferred momentarily as Powell growled:

"Shall I tip you?"

Parker's teeth showed. Mr. Powell arose with a faint grin.

"See here," he said softly, "I've always known that you had all your father's grit, without—er—all his sense. But I never in my life suspected that it was as bad as this. I'm not going to ask you anything more, because I know I won't find out. But—here! You can take this card without jarring your precious principles, can't you? All right. When you wake up, or come to your senses, or get into jail, or whatever it may be, call on me, Bobby—and there'll be plenty of cash and loving sympathy waiting for you. Good-by!"

The head waiter and the captain were side by side, looking at the two with markedly puzzled and questioning eyes. Mr. Powell smiled happily as he turned toward them, and faintly Parker heard:

"Really, *that* waiter was the best man you have ever given me."

CHAPTER II.

LUNCHEON FOR FOUR.

POWELL was gone.

Parker watched him walk into the corridor, get his hat, and disappear around the angle; and Parker heaved a subdued sigh.

What wretched streak of bad luck had ever sent Wilbur to discover him here in the last ditch? For it was the last ditch, fast enough.

He had not been what is sometimes known as a howling success in business; indeed, save for a good many details as to hogs and the methods by which they are profitably raised and profitably marketed, Parker had discovered that his knowledge of commercial affairs was distinctly limited.

He could spend an evening chatting about the Rhine country; he could swap endless tales about Paris and the Nile and Peking; he was thoroughly familiar with at least four languages. But when it came to attending to the duties of the bill-clerk or the shipping-clerk, at the required speed, Parker seemed to lack knowledge.

The mere fact that, whatever their education, most of his flitting business associates of the last ten or eleven months had started as office-boys at something like

three dollars per week, might disgust him. But it was the cold, cold fact, nevertheless.

And even in this last, desperate job of waiting in a fashionable restaurant he was no more than feeling around in the dark. In past years, to be sure, he had been accustomed to the precision of the Japanese butler and the clockwork smoothness of the formal dinner; but he had never opened the clock-case and looked at the works.

Good-hearted little Schwimpel, in the matter of thirty or forty minutes, had rushed enough details into his brain to fill a volume; but most of them were forgotten now, and the rest of them were jumbled up on a haze of whirring knives and forks and spoons and plates. And if he slipped up here, if all patrons were not so easily pleased as his first, if he was requested to leave Bratan's before he'd accumulated a few dollars—

Parker shuddered.

The eternal question had risen again: Was he, in actual fact, an abnormally determined young person, who would succeed in the end by sheer persistence and dogged hanging on? Or was the determination plain fool stubbornness, bound to land him nowhere at all — except, perhaps, in the poorhouse?

He could walk out now, wire his father for money, and have perhaps a thousand dollars in his pocket before night. That meant admitting that he was wrong, and ready to acknowledge it and go back and take his place among the other employees of the detested hog business!

Or—no, it wasn't actually detested, he admitted. His father had dragged millions out of those same hogs and their ancestors, and he would extract more from their descendants. And, of course, Parker would not be personally in touch with the porkers or their doings.

As a matter of fact, he'd be located in a luxurious office several miles from the nearest pig. And then it was probably quite true that any young man he had ever met would fly headlong at the alleged opportunity he had discarded, and—

That was enough of that kind of reasoning! Parker disliked the idea of the business, and every man has a right to choose his own work. Possibly the strictly proper thing would have been to take matters calmly, talk things over calmly, and then, if his father had been persuaded, try his hand at banking affairs nearer home.

But Parker and his papa were alike in one thing, albeit with widely different results. Neither was sufficiently stolid to spend days of placid, patient logic upon a proposition; neither was capable of reaching a slow decision; neither would brook opposition, once a decision had been reached. Only, in the father's case, this rapid-fire determination had been turned to the amassing of millions, while in Parker's case—

"You haf waited upon the gentleman at some other place—yes?" the captain's crisp accents crackled into Parker's ear.

Parker started.

"No."

"But he knew you?"

"He has probably seen me somewhere before."

"So! He was pleased!"

Mr. Parker tried to display a humble and gratified smile—and the attempt was all but a failure.

"Our rule is, however, unobtrusive service," the captain purred on. "Put yourself in evidence less. Haf less conversation and—"

He broke off short, and hurried forward toward a party of guests advancing under convoy of the majestic head waiter.

For a moment Parker reflected with genuine astonishment upon how thoroughly he would enjoy kicking that important little captain, for no earthly reason.

The captain was decidedly busy now in welcoming the group of four. He was purring and smiling and murmuring as he seated them—and they seemed to be people of importance. Big men and little men were trotting rapidly and silently around that table. Menu cards were descending, silverware was flashing, and the captain himself, with his body bent forward at an angle of exactly forty-five degrees and his very best smile, was waiting with his little pad poised in one hand and his pencil in the other.

Parker studied the causes of the excitement with mild interest.

Father—mother—yes, daughter, probably, and—somebody else, who could hardly have been young enough to pass as son.

The head of the party was a man nearer sixty than fifty, strongly built, rather hard of countenance, although his eyes held a merry twinkle when he glanced up and spoke. His air was hardly that of the aristocrat; indeed, from his big hands to

his square chin he was all a man of the people, apparently grown wealthy, and, Parker decided, probably a pretty good sort all around.

Opposite sat the lady of forty-five or so, delicately beautiful and bearing the indefinable marks of rather gentler birth and breeding. Mr. Parker, after a covert, flitting glance at the profile and the thick black hair, lightly lined with gray, approved her mentally—and passed on to an examination of the thick-set man in his later thirties.

Here was the type that Parker detested!

The gentleman was expensively clothed and quietly enough, too, perhaps, but every line of him lacked refinement. He was altogether too sleek and plump. His cheeks, altogether too red, lacked very little of an absolutely bloated effect. His eyes, pale blue and too prominent, had a quick, impudent stare for everything in sight.

His ready smile was much too confident and self-assured to please the critical new waiter at Bratan's. Smoothed and polished, valeted and barbered to a fault, one good look told the whole story of the high-living, moneyed man-about-town.

So that Parker looked away with an inaudible grunt of contempt and—his gaze fell upon the girl of twenty, or thereabouts, who had just laughed.

For a full minute his eyes remained fixed!

Tall, exquisitely made, perfectly tailored, she would have attracted notice in any gathering. Here in the atmosphere of rather overdressed artificiality, she stood absolutely and completely apart as the most superbly beautiful young woman Parker had ever encountered!

For she had glanced in his direction for an instant and he had caught a full view of her face—or, rather, it seemed to him, of her eyes. In a vague way, he knew that every feature was perfection, that the faintest olive tinge in her cheeks was the ultimate of coloring, that the wildest idealist never excelled upon canvas the chin and the lips that were before him in the flesh, that the wealth of black hair was no less than amazing in its rich darkness. But, her eyes—the great, brown, long-lashed twin mysteries—

At this point Mr. Parker caught the captain's stare and looked away, innocently, toward the balcony; and as he did so, he came to a sudden realization!

Whoever the remarkable young woman might be, she was very well calculated to arouse instantaneous, whole-souled adoration in most men. Yet Parker felt thoroughly glad that he had not encountered her while traveling his own proper social plane!

His young bosom not only declined to throb tumultuously, but something very strongly resembling pure dislike of the girl came to him!

Just what it might be, he neither knew nor considered it worth while speculating upon. It might have been the arrogant tilt of her head, it might have been the rather chilly drawl of her words. It might have been the queer, instinctive aversion which crops up occasionally in the odd human animal. Whatever it was, Parker gave a little sigh of relief.

Being a waiter, and a new one, had its advantages: no one could introduce him and force him to talk to her—and the oldest and best waiter in the place would unquestionably have whatever pleasure he could find in serving her food.

"You are dreaming—vot?" inquired the captain's whisper, just under his nose.

"Eh?" muttered Mr. Parker.

"I gif them to you. Jacques is not here!"

"Who?"

"Their regular waiter, fool!" the captain hissed pleasantly. "The party of four behind me. *The* Mr. Wyman—his family—quick!"

Parker's eyes narrowed.

"Say! Do I have to wait on—" escaped him in a whisper.

The little captain was looking at him, and Parker stopped upon the second and nodded grave obedience. About three more words, he fancied, and his engagement at Bratan's would have concluded!

There was a scribbled slip in his hand; he believed that the captain had passed it to him, and he glanced at it. Yes, it was their confounded luncheon order, and the little buses had done their part, and the elder gentleman was looking at him—and Parker fled to the pantry!

A kind Providence sent the benevolent little Schwimpel there at the same minute; and Schwimpel allowed his own concerns to rest while he instructed his protégé. This was to be served so; that was to be served upon the plate with the meat, and be sure that this and that relish were on the table

at the same time; and here with the other thing, one must be particular in the extreme as to the garnishing, whereas—

"Schwimpel reached the end of his instructions at last and patted Parker on the shoulder, with the assurance that "dot Vyman feller" was a swell tipper, always, and that Parker must do his best!

Well, he'd do it! He shut his teeth and grimly choked back the turmoil of emotions that sought relief in violent speech. He'd do his best, and make a success of serving food, at least! He might have made a mess with the rest of his affairs, but there'd be no mess with this waiting business.

Curiously, Schwimpel's hurried hints had ranged themselves single file in his brain. One by one, each popped up in its proper place—and Parker worked on with his luncheon for four.

There were, it seemed to him, something like one thousand dishes, of divers sizes and degrees of temperature—and yet they behaved really well, save when they came to the vivid young goddess. At her, like Parker, they seemed unaccountably to balk!

With the second course distributed upon the table without loss of life or limb, Parker stood back and dazedly considered the whole weird proposition. He'd done it, and done it all alone, and it was a really creditable job and nobody had murmured against it—save Miss Wyman, as the too ruddy person addressed her.

Nor had she spoken, for that matter. When the solitary fly in all Bratan's establishment had taken a headlong plunge from the high ceiling and sought suicide in her glass, she had merely glanced at him and at the glass; but the glance had sent a thrill of rage through Parker.

When, for the first time in Bratan's history, her cold consommé disgorged the indisputable end of a burnt match, she had glanced at him again, for a little longer period; and somehow an insane desire surged through Parker, as he removed the disgrace, to hurl it at her feet and make her scream!

When—what in blazes was she staring at him for now, her perfect brows arched this time? The waiter choked and glared questioningly at the array before her. She was shy one knife! And having supplied the deficiency and mumbled one word of apology, Parker took to watching lovingly for the particular bus who had set the table; he wanted to remember that face and meet it later, elsewhere.

It appeared, too, that she had taken sufficient cognizance of his unworthy being to address her father, for Parker noted her contemptuous little smile as she turned from him, and heard his quiet:

"No better service in the country than at Bratan's, Thyra. We're all human, you know."

Hot, humiliating anger mingled with cold terror in Parker's heart as he watched the eternal meal. This wouldn't be the last thing that would happen to her food—he felt fearlessly certain of that! And the next accident would probably earn him a rebuke, from one quarter or another, which he'd have to take with due humility, and *that*—

Yet the salad failed to reveal a fully expected assortment of wire nails and no one had put vinegar in her particular portion of dessert; and before he quite realized that it was nearly over, Parker was placing a plate of change at *the* Mr. Wyman's elbow.

A trifle more than two dollars remained of the twenty dollar note which had gone to the cashier. Wyman glanced at it—nodded at Parker with a slight smile—and for the first time in his existence, the waiter contrived a properly humble "Thank you" and pocketed a tip!

All the blood in his body seemed to rush to his head and set it pounding—and to rush out again and leave him shaking!

Dizzily, he understood that the quartet was leaving now. He had an idea that Mr. Wyman was speaking to the head waiter, and that the latter was bowing pleased acquiescence to his remarks.

The profession of waiting, as he knew quite well, was a perfectly honorable and honest one; it was hard, exacting work which could in no sense shame him. And, perhaps, if he had been serving busy men whom he had never seen before, the remnants of his erstwhile large supply of gameness would have held out. In fact, he was pretty certain that it would have held out!

But to be the despised target of those arrogant eyes, the tipped servant of a frigidly scornful young woman whom he would have avoided, had he met her in his proper sphere—

"Par-r-r-ker!" said the splendid head waiter, sharply.

The waiter faced him almost fiercely.

The imperial countenance smiled faintly and grudgingly, and the head murmured:

"To the office!"

CHAPTER III.

WYMAN PROPOSES.

"THE office?" repeated Parker.

"At once."

"What for?" the waiter inquired blankly.

"You haf been sent for. Go down."

Mr. Parker moistened his lips.

"The—er—the manager wishes to see me?"

"Yes—yes—yes!" snapped the head waiter impatiently. "Go."

He turned on his heel and glided, rather than walked, away—and Parker's heart went down with a rush!

Not half a minute back he had been cursing his job. Now, all in a twinkling, he had been jerked back to a realization of just what that job meant to him. For there was no doubt about the nature of the summons; he understood that as perfectly as if he were already standing out in the street, in his remaining respectable every-day suit.

Somewhere in that wretched Wyman luncheon he'd committed more unpardonable sins than he was already aware of, and some of the party had filed a complaint as to his incompetency. And yet, Heaven alone knew, despite those maddening eyes, he had done his best and he had thought it a pretty good best!

Well—it was over! He wouldn't bother going to the manager's office at all; he'd sneak out through the cellar or the coal-hole, or—no, that might get little Schwimpel into trouble. He'd go down and face it and get it over with.

He shed his apron and descended by the rear stairs, with teeth shut and eyes on the floor.

Half blindly, he located the inner door of the office and rapped, and a voice bade him enter. Mr. Parker brought up his extremely well-favored head with an angry jerk and walked in.

It was an inconspicuous little nook, that manager's office. Hardly noticeable from the broad lower corridor of the café, its plate-glass sides nevertheless revealed to its occupant everything that was going forward on the ground floor of his domain.

Just now the manager was standing beside his desk and—yes, talking to Wyman himself.

He turned and nodded at Parker with a quick little smile and—*he winked!*

The waiter caught his breath. This, he sensed, was not exactly the way waiters were dismissed; or, perhaps, that reassuring wink meant that he was to be formally discharged in the presence of the complainant, and reinstated when he had departed.

"Very well, Mr. Wyman," the manager of Bratan's was saying suavely. "I shall be busy up-stairs for ten or fifteen minutes. Is this the man who waited on you?"

"That is the man," replied Wyman's deep, quiet voice.

The manager smiled again, and passed out briskly.

They were alone—and Parker wondered why on earth they were alone. Was he guilty of anything that must be discussed in absolute privacy, or— No, of course he was guilty of nothing. But why was this Mr. Wyman allowing his strong, calm gaze to wander over Parker's person so carefully?

For he was taking Parker's measure, fast enough. A full minute's silent study of the erect, athletic form, and Wyman was looking into his eyes with a faint smile; until at last he seemed to have finished, for he said:

"What's your name?"

"Parker, sir."

"Parker—um." Wyman nodded. "Well, Parker, I wish to compliment you. I have patronized a great many hotels and restaurants, here and abroad, and I want to tell you that your handling of our little luncheon just now was the most perfect bit of service I have ever enjoyed."

Mr. Parker, by the barest margin, saved himself from gaping in amazement, as he managed:

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Wyman smiled, and the scrutiny was renewed. Indeed it continued until, after certainly another minute, Parker shifted, ducked his head in a rather dazed bow, and backed toward the door. It had been a startling little incident, and now that it was over he experienced vast relief. Compliments strong enough to force themselves upon the management's attention should be of advantage to any waiter, and—

"Here! Don't run away, Parker!"

"I beg pardon, sir?"

"I want to talk to you."

Wyman's smile grew to a little laugh; and, looking at him as he stepped forward again, Parker winced. He was a plain, homely, likable sort of citizen, whom one would have been glad to know on an equal footing; but now, with the best of intention, he was evidently going to emphasize the gap between them with an added gratuity and a few more words of patronizing praise.

He seemed to be in no hurry about it, however. He settled comfortably in the manager's chair, and the lips beneath his close-cut, grizzled beard pursed slowly.

"Er—Parker, how long have you been here at Bratan's?" he inquired.

"This is my first day, sir."

"Indeed! Where did you come from?"

"Where did I—" escaped Parker.

"I mean, where have you worked before?"

"Why—in several places in New York, sir," answered the waiter evasively.

"Um-um." Wyman hummed a little tune, which began nowhere and ended in the same place. "The beauty of it is, you don't *look* like a waiter!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Parker grimly.

"Well, what I mean is this," the rather remarkable gentleman explained. "A man in almost any line of endeavor—well, acquires expressions or mannerisms which stamp him as a worker in that line. Now, in your own case, you lack absolutely that peculiar air of—what shall I call it?—trained attentiveness, perhaps—the alertness of every first-class waiter I have ever watched."

Parker inclined his head in a nod meant to express humble gratitude. And if the other had listened, he might possibly have heard Parker's teeth grating.

"And at the same time," concluded Wyman, "your work is perfect—absolutely perfect. It is more like the scientifically accurate labor of the highly skilled worker."

Mr. Parker bowed again. For once in his life, at least, he had done a satisfactory job.

"All of which is extremely puzzling to you, Parker, eh?"

"Yes, sir," said Parker humbly and monotonously.

For a moment Wyman stared at him.

Then he thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets, and leaned back and laughed heartily.

"I think you're trying to imitate the conventional waiter now," he chuckled. "However, let's get to the point. Have you ever worked as a butler—in a private home, I mean?"

"No, sir."

Parker looked at him in some astonishment.

"But you are reasonably familiar with the duties?"

"Well, yes, I—am quite familiar with—the duties."

"There is no immediate prospect of your accumulating a fortune here, is there?"

"I'm afraid not, sir."

"Um-um." Wyman rose, and looked at Parker again. "As you may—or may not—know, I've come to live near New York and built a comfortable sort of little place out at Ardmont, on the Sound."

He paused. If an outburst was expected, he couldn't furnish it, Parker reflected. He knew that there was such a place as Ardmont, but—

"We are just settling down," Mr. Wyman pursued, "and everything is still rather new. As a matter of fact, we haven't the full complement of servants as yet. Would you like the post of butler at, say, one hundred dollars a month?"

Parker's mouth opened—and closed before the other noted the phenomenon.

For an instant he was tempted to roar at Mr. Wyman in his sudden rage. Waiting in a public restaurant, however much Parker might dislike it, was—yes, a business. And the job of butler in a private family was neither more nor less than that of a plain servant! And *he*—

Just here Parker held his tongue. Nearly a year of knocking about from pillar to post seemed to have taught him that occasionally it is unwise to speak one's mind without at least one-half second's consideration. After all, Wyman was offering him a job, and not a mortal insult; and, as soon as Parker's throat felt able to release calmer words, he could decline politely.

Butler! And of all families, butler to the family that owned Miss Wyman as a member! There was a certain savage humor in the idea of being at the beck and call of that disliked young person which brought a slight smile to Parker's lips as he moistened them and hesitated.

No! He might have considered himself badly off up-stairs, but when once he escaped the too approving Mr. Wyman he'd dance back and lug around luncheons as they had never been lugged before!

And yet—something closed Parker's lips again, just as they were opening.

His sole earthly ambition just now lay in actually earning one hundred dollars and enough more to take him to Chicago.

His one dream was that of walking into his father's study some fine evening, dropping a single one-hundred-dollar note on the big desk in his most nonchalant fashion, selecting a cigar from the old silver jar, and thereafter sitting down for an unconcerned chat—which would veil as many details as possible of his year of hardships.

If he could bring himself to take this place with Wyman, if he could hold the job, he'd be sure of a definite income at least. And—for another very considerable thing—he'd be out of the public view altogether, and there would be no repetition of the unfortunate Powell meeting.

Powell, to be sure, would say nothing whatever about having discovered him; but there were a host of people in his old home region who might not be so kindly disposed—and they might wander into New York to-day or to-morrow or the day after that, and stroll into Bratan's.

"You understand, of course, that I'm willing to make every allowance for your never having done the actual work before," Wyman broke in suddenly.

Mr. Parker looked up and cleared his throat. He couldn't do it, after all. For a moment he had imagined that he could, but—then a little gasp escaped him.

Right there, on the other side of the glass partition, passing down the corridor and heading for the elevator, walked Bert Trainor and—yes, his wife and her brother!

At home, they lived in the big sandstone house at the corner of the square.

At home, he had seen very nearly as much of them as of Powell—and now they were steering for the very room up-stairs where, within two minutes, he might be assigned to the serving of their luncheon!

"Well, what do you say, Parker?" Wyman asked with a little impatience.

"Thank you very much, indeed, sir! I shall be very glad indeed to try it, sir, if you think I'll do, sir!" said Parker.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE PLACE AT ARDMONT.

Mr. Wyman, as he drew on his gloves, smiled broadly.

"You will do, Parker, I assure you of that!" he said.

"Thank you, sir."

The smile grew rather puzzled as Wyman took a last survey of the waiter.

"The thing that I'm afraid of," he said frankly and flatteringly, "is that mentally you're capable of better things, and you—or I—may discover it and—"

His voice trailed away oddly, and then he dismissed his perplexity with a shrug and said briskly:

"When can you come?"

"When—"

"I want you as soon as possible. Can you leave here to-day?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I can leave at once!" said Parker, with deep conviction.

"Good. Um." Mr. Wyman felt in his inner pocket and produced a time-table. "Let's see. Here's—ah—here's a train that leaves the city at four and gets to Ardmont a little after five. Can you make that comfortably?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, Parker. Do so. I'll have you met at the depot."

He laid his hand on the outer door just as the manager entered, and smiled questioningly from the other portal.

Mr. Wyman nodded a distinctly satisfied affirmative.

"I'm sorry to steal the best man in your place," he said; "but I need him."

"And I am sure that he is to be congratulated, Mr. Wyman," the manager responded heartily.

"Hope so," said the other briefly, as the door opened.

Mr. Parker looked after him as in a dream. He saw him step rapidly to the sidewalk and the black motor-car at the curb—saw the chauffeur open and close the door and whisk away to the front of the machine—saw Miss Wyman speak—and the car had rolled out of sight!

"Well, you made a hit, Parker!" the manager said dryly.

"I—eh?" Parker awoke.

"He engaged you, did he?"

"Yes."

"Well, you've struck something decidedly soft, from all accounts," the manager observed, as he settled before his desk. "They say that Wyman's place—"

"Who on earth *is* this Wyman?" Parker demanded suddenly.

The manager faced him with open mouth.

"Who is he? You—what?" he cried. "Why, that's *the* Wyman—Nelson Wyman, the Pennsylvania steel man—the millionaire Wyman—millionaire about a hundred times over!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Parker.

"You've really heard of him, then?" the manager grinned. "See here, Parker, you know something about his ways, don't you?"

"No!"

"Well, among other things, he's a pretty good judge of men, and he takes people at their face value. After that, they have to live up to it, and—Heaven help 'em if they don't!"

"And—"

"And since you've done such an amazing stunt as waiter, you'll have to keep the butler business up to the same level, Parker. Ever worked as butler before?"

"No."

"Humph!" said the manager, with elevated brows. "That's bad! Well—remember that the butler of a wealthy family has certain perquisites to gather in, in justice to himself. Also remember that when people like Wyman give house-parties and week-end parties, and all that sort of thing, it is the kindly and attentive and ever-solicitous butler who collects the baby fortune in tips about the time the trunks are being taken down to the station. That's all I know about butlers. Get out! Tell Dusand that you're leaving."

Mr. Parker made his way stealthily to the upper floor.

From the seclusion of the pantry he peered out into the big, busy room. Even now he could walk out there and take his station again, with a certain amount of independence remaining to him. Whereas, if he kept to his bargain with Wyman—

Mr. Parker sighed heavily and ducked back out of sight. The Trainor crowd were at the table the Wymans had left! It was fate — simon-pure fate! He buttonholed little Schwimpel in passing and communicated the news; and his late benefactor stood back and beamed congratulations upon him, with:

"Yah! Und dot's vot it comes from dot face and dot cloak-model figure, I bet you! If I vould be a good-lookin' feller like you—"

Duty called and Schwimpel fled, and Parker passed on—to divest himself of the borrowed suit of the waiter whose bibulous tendencies had landed him upon a large island in the East River.

Desertions at the height of the lunch-hour are not calculated to bring one in the waiters' seventh heaven. Dusand, the head, dilated upon the subject in excellent and expressive French, but Parker declined to return to the floor. There was much to be done before four o'clock.

For one thing, he would have to make a clean break, so to speak, with his landlady, and recover his possessions peaceably. There seemed to be but one way clear. As yet, in spite of everything, he had balked at the pawn-shop; just now it became his duty to find the nearest establishment of that kind.

He located the place after a little hunt, and entered it with blazing cheeks and the certainty that every one he had ever met in his life was across the street and watching him. He discovered that, instead of about one hundred dollars, he could borrow about one-fifth of that amount on his handsome watch. But it was enough—and he crammed some bills into one pocket and the ticket into another and fled.

An investigating committee of one knocked at his door within two minutes of the time he had closed it. He paid his delayed rent, and signified his intention of leaving. Then, with the bureau emptied and his huge valise open on the bed, he sat down to pack.

It was an enormous thing, that grip. Porters had groaned under it, at the four corners of the earth. It had reached his first boarding-place in New York on a taxicab; it had come to the furnished-room house on an express wagon; and now—well, now, he could hope bitterly to find a conductor sufficiently good-natured to allow it on his car!

Mercifully, he was fairly supplied with clothes, for he had learned to cherish them very tenderly. He folded them tenderly and laid them in, piece by piece.

He paused to swear at his evening togs. A year ago they had been as necessary as shoes; now they were just as necessary—but in another way. Parker grunted savagely and went on with his packing.

And when the job was done and the big case locked, his head dropped to his hands and he groaned.

What the deuce was the matter with that head, anyway?

For the last week it had been demonstrating to him just how persistently a head

can ache when it really devotes itself to the task. There was no one pain to be located and doctored. There seemed to be a sort of headquarters in the back of his neck from which mean little impulses radiated, and—

Parker arose and snapped his fingers impatiently. It came from thinking too much and taking things too seriously. He had allowed to grow into world importance that hasty statement of his father's to the effect that he was bound to make a mess of things. He had taken to regarding himself as the most down-and-out, penniless failure of recent history.

Whereas, he had no more than to telegraph home, and—Parker's hands went into his pockets, and he stared at the rickety clock on the aged mantel. Should he surrender, or should he become the Wyman butler? On the one hand—

The clock struck half past three! Mr. Parker's teeth shut with a click, and he picked up his grip. The train left at four.

The four o'clock train to Ardmont is rather a painful proposition for a poverty-stricken man to encounter. There are two club cars and several Pullmans, filled, day in and day out, with the same well-fed, self-satisfied, elegant millionaire commuters.

Trailing forlornly at the rear of the train is a grimy passenger-coach and a dustier smoker, and into the former Parker hoisted his ponderous sole-leather case and climbed after himself. The conductor, who, after passing through seven cars of money, visits the last two only as an unpleasant duty, informed him abruptly that the case should have been checked, and ended by driving him into the smoker, where he might stand his baggage at the far end without disturbing the rest of the world. There, in a drift of violent gray smoke, Mr. Parker all but huddled down for the journey.

He was the first to leave at Ardmont, and for a moment—and a moment only—the generally familiar atmosphere quickened his steps. Motors galore were waiting beside the platform; very fancy teams of horses pranced and backed and fretted as the train pulled out. Very well dressed men bustled hither and thither, talking animatedly. Pretty, laughing, fashionably clothed women were in evidence here and there.

And as he was hurrying briskly into the throng, Parker stopped suddenly and set down his heavy grip with a thud, and ceased smiling. He was among them, but he was certainly not of them.

Then, one after the other, motors began their chugging. Teams pranced off up the beautiful roads. Cars hummed out of sight in a long, merry line. Four were left at the depot—and then three—and then a solitary, heavy, lengthy runabout remained, with a thin little man beside it.

He had caught Parker's eye half a dozen times, and each time seemed more puzzled. Now he came forward almost hesitatingly, with a respectful, tentative:

"Excuse me, but was—was Mr. Wyman to have you met?"

"Yes!" said the arrival shortly.

"Well, are you—say, are you the new butler?" the driver inquired flatly.

"Yes."

The little fellow stood back and grinned.

"Well, what d'you know about that?" he muttered. "I had you sized up for a gentleman."

"You—" escaped Mr. Parker, as his cheeks darkened.

The chauffeur laughed.

"Aw, don't get up on your ear!" he advised, as he turned unconcernedly to his cranking. "We're all gents. We understand that. You know what I mean."

He straightened up and grinned.

"What's your name? Parker, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, you've got the grand air, bo! You look more like ready money than the boss himself." He took to inspecting the massive grip, and his eyes opened in admiration. "Say, where'd you pinch the baby trunk?" he chuckled. "I'd like a chance to lift one of those."

Mr. Parker said nothing. He was quite too busy moistening his lips and swallowing the angry lump and stifling a strange instinct to batter the smaller man.

The driver stared at him, and not quite so amiably.

"My Heavens! But ain't we cold and haughty!" he observed. "You'll make a big hit with the other servants, you will! Well, stick your little box on back, and we'll get out of this, baron! There was a guy like you at the place where I worked before I got this job—" he added, more unpleasantly.

And just there Parker's grip descended upon the little trunk-rack with a slam that came near to shaking the ground. He was pushed aside angrily by the chauffeur, who murmured things unprintable as he tightened a strap.

He stepped into the car and the driver took a place beside him, and with a rattle and a roar that almost threw Parker to the road the car shot off.

He hadn't exactly made friends with the first of his fellow servitors; but he cared very little. The less they liked him, the more they'd let him alone, and just now he asked no more than this.

Three or four minutes they whizzed on, past houses that grew in magnificence as the distance between them increased, past private grounds and glittering motors and liveried rigs; until the machine slowed down somewhat and the chauffeur was speaking again:

"Say, how much did they trim *you* for?"

"Eh?"

"For the job, I mean?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Parker uninterestedly.

"The agency—the intelligence office—the place where you cooled your heels till Wyman came along and hired you. How much did they soak you?"

The new butler stared at him for a second or two with eyes that blazed anger and contempt and furious humiliation.

"I didn't come from any agency!" he snapped.

The chauffeur stared at him.

"Well, you know where you can *go*, don't you?" he demanded forcefully. "You can go plumb to blazes, you big stiff!"

With which polished observation, the throttle came open with a whiz and the car shot ahead!

Mr. Parker's fists clenched—and unclenched. A whistling sigh of powerful emotion escaped him, and he sat back in grim silence.

They were passing a high wall now—an almost endless wall, it seemed, of rough stone, with high trees behind. Somebody's big estate, doubtless; and Parker was rather glad that it was not Wyman's. That plain citizen wasn't the sort to go in for glitter and show and magnificence; his home was doubtless as comfortable and plain as—

The machine slowed somewhat—turned and whizzed through the massive, open iron gates—whirled on down the broad drive. Until, coming around another curve, the broad vista of the grounds was revealed ahead; the tremendous red and white house in the distance, the waters of the Sound still farther on; nearer at hand, lawns and flower-beds and trees—and Parker's breath left him.

A dozen vague, unimportant memories rushed to his brain and formed one amazing whole. This was indeed *the* steel Wyman's place, which had been building in fact and in the newspapers for five years.

And he, with his sublime ignorance, was to be its first butler!

CHAPTER V.

SOME GOSSIP AND A CRASH.

PRECISELY what happened that first evening, Parker knew only vaguely.

Wyman met him cordially—indeed, with remarkable cordiality. Wyman had looked him over again, in his ordinary raiment, and had favored Parker with a slow, odd smile of satisfaction. And for a reason that Parker could never define, the gap between them seemed in some queer fashion to lessen.

Whatever his wealth or his establishment, Wyman himself was still a plain, wholesome, hard-headed citizen who realized that a human being was a human being and neither much more nor much less.

From top to bottom, they went over the great place together—from the copper kitchen to the marble Turkish baths, from the billiard-room to the little summer-garden on the roof of the wing, through the drawing-rooms and the reception rooms—and eventually landed at Parker's own unexpectedly well-appointed apartment.

He served his first dinner that night, and served it in a haze. The puffy man of the luncheon was there, and his name seemed to be Van Ruyford, and furthermore he seemed to be *persona grata* with the ladies. As at luncheon, Wyman was not a prominent figure in the conversation.

But his daughter! Parker barely refrained from scowling at every glance he caught of her! In her semi-evening gown, she seemed to have taken on an added beauty that was no less than dumfounding; her smile fairly radiated; her voice held a bell-like perfection. But the new butler found himself hating every arrogant inch of her and everything connected with her.

In an exit between courses, sheer amazement forced him to pause and ponder on the strange dislike. Logically, he should have fallen head over ears in love with the girl, plunging into a romantic and appar-

ently hopeless passion which might, perhaps, have a glittering, happy ending. Even the dullest, most impersonal artistic perceptions should have awakened at the sight of her.

Instead of which Parker crazily almost wished that she had been a man, that he might have picked some sort of violent quarrel! It might be only instinctive antagonism; it might be the veiled sneer that seemed to lurk in her every expression; whatever it was, whatever their respective positions in the social scale, Parker wished most heartily that the magnificent, haughty, icy young person and he were under different roofs!

The other servants gave him careful attention that evening—and he gave them none at all save as regarded Mrs. Welch, the housekeeper, and Bell, the second man.

Mrs. Welch looked him over with a cold business eye, much as the butcher might estimate the weight of the carcass by glancing over the beef on the hoof. Finding him satisfactory she condescended almost to amiable equality; and the condescension met with a sorry reception. The new butler seemed hardly to care for conversation.

But there was Bell, and Bell was something of a comfort to Parker. Bell seemed to have been deprived of emotion, much as if it had been removed through a surgical operation. His countenance, though intelligent, was wooden in its expressionless.

To be sure, he had stared at Parker for a good half minute, with distinctly human interest, on their meeting. Then he relapsed into woodenness once more, and in so doing rather puzzled the new butler. However familiar Bell might be with the other servants, Bell seemed to be treating Parker with a curious quiet respect.

Perhaps all second men treated all butlers thus. Parker didn't know, but it was distinctly grateful not to be met with the imbecile, inquisitive smile that the rest of them seemed to reserve for him. More, even Bell appeared to understand that, to a certain extent, he would have to be shown how to do things, and so he concluded the first night's performance by indicating how and where the silver was to be locked up—and Parker finally escaped to the solitude of his room, weary and with mingling emotions.

Bell was rather on his conscience; he should have had the job. And Miss Wyman was on his nerves!

But that the weariness in his bones seemed to have become chronic the new butler's second day rambled its course with delighted smoothness.

Keeping away from his associates so far as it was mortally possible, Mr. Parker found on the second evening that he knew much about the Wyman household!

The gossip did not interest him in the slightest degree; he had not exchanged more than a dozen words with any one save Bell. Even the ogling eyes of Miss Wyman's extremely pretty French maid had not tempted him to a five-minute chat—and that despite a forlorn flash of humor that had risen in Parker's mind for an instant, at the sight of the little chauffeur glaring furiously at him over a half-consumed turkey leg.

And still, he seemed to have accumulated piecemeal a reasonably connected statement of the family and their doings, he reflected as he stretched out in his armchair and, with windows discreetly open, lighted his pipe.

Wyman was indeed *the* Wyman, and his wealth was of the untold variety. He owned homes in most of the spots where homes are desirable at different seasons. This humble place of one hundred rooms or so was his real home, however, and here the family expected to spend most of its time.

They were not, it appeared, "society" people. They had a reputation for entertaining elsewhere, but had had no gathering of note during their short occupancy of this place. Mr. Parker hoped sincerely that at least six weeks would elapse before their first invitation was mailed. Signs of a house party meant that, if nothing better offered, he would escape on the trucks of the first passing freight-train!

Van Ruyford was more or less of a fixture. He was wealthy and he possessed high social rating. The general impression was that Mrs. Wyman rather favored him as a son-in-law, that Mr. Wyman was not quite so favorably impressed, and that the sentiments of Miss Wyman were yet to be ascertained.

Mrs. Welch had informed Parker gratuitously that the marriage would take place, and—what in thunder did he care whether it took place or not? If it had taken place a month ago and the honeymoon included a trip around the world he would have had cause for satisfaction; but it hadn't.

And then there was some talk about

"Thayer" and "Mr. Thayer." It had some connection with Miss Wyman—Parker didn't know what. Bell had asked him monotonously whether he was interested in the matter; and at Parker's abrupt and whole-souled "No!" he had closed his lips oyster fashion.

None of this concerned Parker and his wretched personal affairs; he yawned and thought of other things. He could stand it for a little but he wished that the wretched trotting around wouldn't leave him so infernally tired at night!

It was during the afternoon of his third day that Mr. Parker found himself longing for fresh air and plenty of it.

The services of a butler did not seem to be required about the house just then. There was nobody indeed to require them. Wyman himself had gone to the city for the day. Mrs. Wyman's car had departed for regions unknown, and soothing stillness rested upon the big establishment.

Whether it was the usual and proper thing for butlers to stroll at will about their employers' estates, Parker did not know. Neither did he care greatly just then, for within him was a mad craving for air and openness—and Mr. Parker started upon his ramble unnoted and unhindered.

There was really more to the place than he had imagined.

A considerable walk took him down to the dock and for a time he looked over Wyman's beautiful new yacht; then the warm glare of the autumn sun began to hurt his eyes and drill into his perennially aching cranium and he turned with a grunt and took his way up the walks into the shadier grounds.

Really the place was a triumph of landscape gardening when one came to look it over carefully. There were narrow walks and broad walks, open paths and paths through bushes and hedges. Now, coming around a turn, one encountered a little summer-house; against a cluster of flower-beds popped into view, in their center a whispering little marble fountain and pool.

He studied them for a time without much appreciation; indeed, these days, he seemed to have lost the knack of appreciating anything at all, for some reason or other. He wandered on to an utterly secluded little grove—a new surprise with a hammock or two, and a forgotten magazine fluttering on the ground.

He sauntered on again, head down and hands clasped behind his back, up the shaded lane at the far eastern end of the place, and—

"Er—I say!" some one remarked softly.

Parker stopped with a jerk.

Whether he had been there all the time, or whether he had dropped soundlessly from the skies, a man was standing in the middle of the path just ahead.

He was a well-favored person of about Parker's own age—and for the matter of that of about Parker's own build. Clear-eyed, broad-shouldered, he bore the stamp of a man of some culture and more determination.

In a way, as he looked over Mr. Parker, the latter's black suit seemed to reassure him; but—

"Er—who are you?" he inquired, half-involuntarily.

"Parker, sir!" that person responded.

"The new butler?"

"The new butler!" Mr. Parker said acidly.

"Well—er—" The unknown stopped and flushed a little, and Parker deduced, with mild interest, that he was rather angry with himself! "Mr. Wyman is not at home?"

"Mr. Wyman is in New York."

"And—Mrs. Wyman?" The young man smiled doubtfully, and—yes rather sheepishly.

"She is not at home."

"Out in the motor?"

"Yes, sir!" Parker began to stare at the other—and the unknown came out bluntly with:

"Miss Wyman did not go with her, did she?"

"I—think Mrs. Wyman left alone, sir."

"That's good!" said the other heartily.

And there he caught himself and squared his shoulders, with a dignified little cough.

"Well—thank you, Parker!" he said.

The butler bowed.

"And—er—Parker! Just a moment!" One hand went down into the unknown's pocket, and reappeared with a two-dollar note—and Parker shut his teeth!

It was a tip, and he was going to take it, because tips were a legitimate part of his actual earnings these days!

"I suppose you're an expert at forgetting things?" the other suggested, as he proffered the gratuity.

"I work hard at it!" said the new butler bitterly.

"Practise makes perfect," smiled the unknown. "Forget me. That's all, Parker."

The butler was dismissed. The butler walked on, breathing hard for a little.

Then, with a weary shrug, he put aside the matter altogether. There had been no law to force him into his position; he'd taken it with his eyes open; and, now, no matter how money came, so long as he earned it legitimately, every hateful dollar was one more toward his fund!

He had a notion that he'd make a complete circuit of the grounds, and gain the rear of the house again by the far side. Head down once more, he trudged on through shrubbery and trees—until another unsuspected summer-house popped up among thick bushes, and he paused.

A rest in there would be grateful. He went up the short, winding path and settled himself on the shaded rustic bench. Soft little wisps of wind rustled the drying leaves all about him and brought a certain soothing relief to his perturbed spirit. Mr. Parker leaned his head against an upright column and closed his eyes.

Whether he actually slept a little, he did not know.

Certainly, however, he emerged suddenly from his half-dream, for rapid steps were coming from somewhere. In the distance, he heard the horn of the motor, as it puffed through the gate and into the road, headed, doubtless, for the city and Mr. Wyman.

But nearer at hand, some one was hurrying toward him, and—no, the steps were out there on the broader path, coming from the farther reaches of the grounds.

Instinctively, Parker huddled down behind the protecting bushes and stared. Whatever remarks might be addressed to a butler found lolling in a summer-house, he had no desire to learn. If—whoever this might be—hurried on without seeing him—

As he stared in their direction, the steps broke into a light run. And up the path, making for the mansion, Miss Thyra Wyman appeared! She had no mind for pausing at summer-houses; indeed, she had already passed the little path that led to his retreat; but—what the deuce had happened to her?

The sneering, icy arrogance was altogether gone! Gone also were the imperturbable calm, the uninterested, drooping eyes, the pale olive cheek! The eyes were sparkling now and the cheeks held a warm flush, and a little smile played about the perfect lips—and Miss Thyra was an animated human being!

And she was gone, and Parker caught his breath. Some one was coming after her, and he watched on with mild interest.

It was a woman, if one might judge from the lightness of the hurrying steps, and—ah, it was Thérèse, Miss Wyman's maid. And if Miss Wyman had been in a state of pleasant excitement, her personal attendant was not. The girl's face was white and her eyes large and distinctly frightened, and she muttered rapidly and angrily and glanced anxiously ahead.

After which, she, too, left the picture—and Parker yawned and stretched.

Well—it was all interesting, doubtless, and it had some significance. But it stimulated Mr. Parker's brain to about the same extent that a stray hop-toad might have stimulated it.

He appeared to have become a monomaniac on the notion of gathering his one hundred hard-earned dollars and taking them back to Chicago for exhibition; beyond that one proposition of proving that he could do *something* useful without making a mess of it, there were no material concerns on earth!

Incidentally, it might behoove him to return and prepare things for dinner; he indulged a last, terrific yawn and rose stiffly.

There were, he discovered, no guests for that evening, and he was grateful in a queer, dumb way: it made that much less work.

The family appeared promptly, and Parker worked on mechanically and absently, performing his duties to perfection

He had devised a fairly satisfactory way of serving Miss Wyman by now. What had been a sort of angry aversion to the girl at first, had grown into a positive detestation! Beautiful or otherwise, that supercilious curl of the lips with which she gave him a crisp word of command now and then set every nerve in Parker's body rasping. Now he did not see it—for he simply, invariably, refrained from looking at her!

It was a good scheme, too; it was the one thing that enabled him to keep on at his task, he reflected almost sullenly, as he appeared at the end of the meal with the coffee service. The incessant contempt with which she favored him would have

been bad enough for a trained servant to endure; for him—

He glanced at Wyman and his wife. The latter was listening to her husband, who was frowning wearily and saying something about "altogether too much for me to do single-handed."

And Miss Wyman was looking straight at Parker!

And more than that, unseen by either of the others, she was bestowing upon Mr. Parker a smile so glowingly friendly, so sweetly appealing, that the butler stopped short!

There was no doubt about it, either! The radiant smile continued, second after second, as Parker stood, rooted in his tracks!

And then sheer amazement, not to say horror, overcome the new butler. His lower jaw dropped suddenly, and—the tray left his hands to go crashing to the floor!

(To be continued.)

THOSE SEALED FIGURES.

BY FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

Showing the Boomerang Tendencies of a Certain Plan To Get Even with the Government.

PORTER looked up over his glasses as the sound of footsteps on the front porch reached him and as he laid aside *The Weekly Review*, a well-dressed stranger entered the store.

"This is Mr. Porter isn't it?" the man asked.

"I be," the storekeeper replied.

"Then I'm going to take up about ten minutes of your time," the caller went on. "You see, Mr. Porter—"

But Porter apparently was not seeing things as the other desired, for he interrupted curtly: "No, can't say as I do, an' let me tell ye 'fore ye start your long talk, thet I don't need nothin' of any sort er description. I don't know what yer sellin', but—"

The stranger's hearty laugh caused Porter to stop abruptly and the suspicious look in his eyes deepened as he inquired: "Wal, wot's so durned funny?"

The other controlled his mirth, and replied: "Why, the very fact of your taking me for a salesman or a drummer."

"Wal, ain't ye?" Porter demanded.

"Most assuredly not," was the man's emphatic assertion.

Then his voice lowered to one of confidence, as he added: "I'm in the employ of the government."

"Ye be?"

"Yes. My name is Spencer, and I'm a special agent for the Post-office Department. I came on from Washington to see you."

"What fer?" Porter queried bluntly.

"Well, I'll tell you," the other said.

He drew a chair beside the old storekeeper, and for an instant stared at the big stove which radiated a heat welcome in such cold weather. "You see, I'm getting estimates for next year's hauling of the mail from Wethersfield to this town of Cedarville," he continued, "which contract, as you know, includes the running of the post-office here."

"I dunno as thet interests me," Porter retorted bitterly. "Caleb Herritage beat me out last year, an' I s'pose he will ag'in."

"But isn't it worth a trial? I should think you'd estimate on it, anyway. It can do no harm, and you might quote a better figure than he has, and get it back again. You had it so long—"

"Thet's jest what makes me so bitter!" the old man burst out. "I hed thet job, an' the post-office here in my store, fer twenty-two years, an' I allus did my work well, with never no kick of any sort. Then along comes this feller Herritage an' opens his store, an' most the first thing he does is to git the post-office away from me."

"But he underbid you," Spencer put in.

"Wal, what if he did?" Porter exclaimed wrathfully. "Ain't the guv'ment a fair one? I treated 'em fair fer twenty-two years, an' they ought to hev dealt fair with me. Why didn't they tell me Herritage wanted it, an' hed bid so much fer it? I'd hev done it cheaper then him, jest to keep it."

"Well, it doesn't seem exactly right, but—"

"'Tain't right!" the storekeeper cried. "I should hev hed a chance. An' wot's the result?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Spencer said.

"Wal, I do!" Porter snapped. "It means thet I ain't doin' one half the bizness I used to do. People goes to Herritage's fer their mail, an' most of 'em buys their groceries from 'im, rather'n be bothered by makin' two stops—one at his store an' one at mine. But I don't blame 'em entirely—they do it to save themselves, same's you or I'd do if we was them. But I do blame the guv'ment. They took the livin' out of my mouth, an' after servin' 'em faithful fer all them years."

"It does seem rather hard," Spencer admitted thoughtfully. "And if I were the government, I'd gladly rectify the mistake it has made. But I can't."

"Then what'd ye come here fer?" the old man demanded.

"Why, to see if you'd care to estimate against this fellow Herritage for the work next year. I've been over to his store, and have his estimate ready to send to Washington."

As Spencer spoke, he drew from his pocket a sealed envelope, and tapped it significantly with his fingers as he added: "All signed and sealed you see."

Porter's eyes took on a far away look as they stared at the envelope Spencer held. Plainly, a new thought had taken root in his brain.

"And—and his figures is in there?" the old man gasped.

"Oh, yes. He just filled it out himself," the other replied carelessly.

"Look here!" Porter exclaimed, and as he spoke, he swallowed hard with nervousness. "If I knew what he hed bid, I could go under it, an' git the post-office back."

Spencer laughed lightly.

"Quite true," he agreed smilingly. "But as the envelope is sealed—"

"But couldn't we git it open without no one knowin' it?" the old storekeper broke in eagerly.

The other stared at him in amazement.

"Would that be right, Mr Porter?" he asked in a tone of rebuke.

"Hev I been treated right?" the old man demanded. "After twenty-two years of faithful service, couldn't they hev given me a chance to keep the office by tellin' me what Herritage was willin' to do the work fer, an' then let me do it cheaper then him?"

It does seem as if some arrangement like that could have been made," Spencer admitted thoughtfully. "But unfortunately the government doesn't do its work that way."

"Then they don't treat every one fair," Porter declared. "You don't know wot it meant for me to lose thet post-office. I hed got so used to sortin' letters that it was a part an' parcel of my life."

The old man's voice choked with emotion, and a look of pity spread over his caller's face.

"I'm sorry for you, Mr. Porter—awfully sorry," he said. "But my hands are tied, and the only thing I can do is to take your estimate, if you care to make one."

Porter faced the man, a sudden determination reflected on his countenance.

"Ye say you're sorry fer me?" he demanded.

"Yes, I truly am, but—"

"Then open that envelope, an' show it."

For an instant Spencer stared blankly from the envelope in his hand to the old man's face taken completely aback at the suggestion then he said slowly: "Why—I couldn't do that."

"Yes, ye could," the other contended. "I'll put a kettle on the stove, an' we'll steam it open. No one'd ever know it, an' I'll beat Herritage out. I'd get back the post-office an' the trade I've lost. I'd get—"

"Mr. Porter, you shouldn't speak so. You ought to realize that such a thing is out of the question, much as I'd like to do it for you."

"Look here, young man," the storekeeper said in a low tone as he instinctively glanced over his shoulder. "Do thet, an' I'll make it wuth yer while."

"Do you know what you're saying?" Spencer demanded in resentment of the proposition.

"Yes, I know wot I'm sayin', an' so do you. You say yer sorry fer me, but ye ain't willin' to show it. But if ye truly are, here's yer chance. I'll give ye two hundred dollars to steam thet envelope open an' let me see wot's inside it."

Spencer avoided the tense stare of the old man as he answered slowly, "I'd do anything in my power for you, Mr. Porter, because I really feel that you have not been justly treated. But in this case I can't—"

"Who'll ever know?" the storekeeper broke in. "No one but us two, an' I'm sure I'd never breathe it, an' I don't think you'd dare to."

"I certainly wouldn't," the other agreed.

"Then let's do it! I'll make it three hundred. The trade I'd get back is wuth thet to me, an'—"

"Mr. Porter," Spencer interrupted, "I feel tempted to take you at your word."

"Ye do!"

"In the first place it gives me an opportunity to right a wrong that has been done you, and in the second place—well, the three hundred looks good to me. We're not paid any too well, and I could use that money just at this time. If you'll give it to me now—"

"This very minute!" Porter cried.

He hurried to his desk at the end of the counter to return quickly with a roll of bills.

Counting this over again, he handed it to Spencer.

"I don't think I'm doing wrong," that individual remarked, as he pocketed the money.

"Indeed ye ain't," the other insisted, as he hurried to fill a pan with water, which he soon had simmering on the top of the big stove.

While waiting for it to boil, the conversation, which dragged at times, was principally upon post-office matters. At length as the steam arose in clouds, Spencer held the envelope in the vapor, and soon had the mucilage on the flap softened to a degree that permitted its being raised without tearing.

The old man's fingers shook with eagerness as he took the typewritten document the other handed him. After perusing it keenly for a moment, he exclaimed: "Sixteen hundred dollars! An' I allus got seventeen hundred fer it!"

"But you'll have to beat his figure," Spencer cautioned.

"An' I will! I'll make it fifteen! An' they's good profit in it at thet."

"Here's the blank," the other said, and taking the typewritten form that was tendered him, the two men went to the desk, where Porter filled in the spaces at Spencer's dictation. The document was then placed in an envelope and sealed, a similar operation following with Herritage's estimate but in this case a little mucilage was necessary.

Shortly after this had been done, the employee of the government took his departure.

"I'll go across to the *present* post-office," were his parting words. "The two documents will soon be on their way to Washington."

Porter watched the man disappear through the doorway of Herritage's store.

"I'll git it back," he exclaimed. "Thet sign there'll come over here again."

II.

A PECULIAR smile of self-satisfaction had settled upon Porter's face, and had become noticeable to his friends. But in reply to their inquiries regarding it, he only chuckled mysteriously, refusing to satisfy their curiosity. But at the end of three weeks the smile began to fade as he received no word from Washington that his had been the successful bid, and in its place an anxious look appeared.

A new fear had grown upon the old man—the thought had come to him that perhaps some third person had entered a bid, lower even than his. But he shook off this idea, as he realized that Herritage and himself were the only ones in the town who had the facilities for handling the post-office—theirs being the only stores in Cedarville.

So the satisfied smile returned and when at church the following Sunday he came face to face with Herritage, he grinned broadly as the two shook hands.

"How's bizness, Caleb?" Porter asked.

"Couldn't be better," was the reply. "Seems to be pickin' up more every day."

"Thet's the way with me," the other declared, the knowing smile still spreading over his countenance. "An' from wot I kin see ahead, it's a hull lot more liable to pick up a lot more than it is to drop off."

And all that day and the next, the old man went about in a sort of fever of delight, continually reasoning to himself what a pleasure and profit it would be once more to have the post-office housed in his store. His fancy even led him so far as momentarily to forget himself, as in conversation with one of his old friends, he said: "They's liable to be a surprise sprung in this here town 'fore long."

"Wot ye mean, Ezra?" the other inquired.

"Can't tell ye now," Porter replied evasively. "But it's comin', an' when it does, they's goin' to be some surprised folks 'round here."

The next day Porter had just crossed back to his own store, after his regular trip to Herritage's for his mail, and which as yet had not brought him the looked for letter from Washington. This expected letter he felt sure would contain the news that he was to be the next postmaster of Cedarville.

Suddenly he glanced down the road and saw a carriage approaching, containing a man whom he recognized at second glance.

Porter watched the vehicle excitedly as it drew up before the Herritage store.

"He's goin' in to tell 'im he's lost the post-office," the old man murmured to himself gleefully, for he had recognized the man in the carriage as a post-office inspector.

"Won't Caleb Herritage be disappointed," he chuckled. "I'll bet he was so durned cock sure of gettin' it ag'in, thet he never considered me as bein' in the race. But I guess I got one on him this time. Folks got to get up putty early to get ahead of Ezra Porter."

The moments slipped by without the reappearance of the inspector, and it was with difficulty that the old man restrained his impatience.

"What's he spendin' so much time there for?" he asked aloud. "Hedn't ought to take him long to tell Caleb thet I'm the new postmaster."

But at length his patience was rewarded, and he saw the one whom he was certain was the bearer of good tidings come out of the store across the road and step into his carriage. As he did so, Porter moved back from the window before which he had stood —he did not want to let the man whom he knew so well—he had been a regular caller upon him during all the years he had been postmaster—realize his eagerness in the matter.

"Where can Johnson be goin'?" Porter questioned aloud, as he noted that the inspector was driving past without stopping.

But it was too late to hail the man now even though he did rush out eagerly with the idea of doing so.

"Now what's the meanin' of this?" he added, as he looked after the fast-disappearing vehicle.

For some moments he stood there, watching down the road for the inspector's return. Then unconsciously he turned toward the store opposite, and as he did so, his eyes rested on its proprietor, who was also standing in the doorway.

As their eyes met, Porter could not fail to recognize the look of abject despair on the other's face. He smiled to himself as he realized there was sufficient reason for it.

Then he saw Herritage step from his store and advance toward him.

"Good mornin', Caleb," the old man said cheerily.

"Good mornin', Ezra," the other returned.

"Ye ain't lookin' well," Porter ventured.

"I got a good reason fer not bein' cheerful," Herritage asserted solemnly. "I lost the post-office."

"No—really!" the other faltered with well-feigned surprise.

"Yes, an' Ezra, we've been done, an' done good."

"We?" Porter shouted in amazement.

"Yes, we. Ye see—"

But he stopped abruptly as they both turned and saw the post-office inspector's carriage draw up before the store, and its occupant enter.

"Good morning, Mr. Porter," he said as he advanced toward the old man, his hand outstretched cordially. "I couldn't go by without stopping a minute, although that's all the time I have to spare to-day."

"Mornin', Mr. Johnson," the astonished storekeeper managed to stammer.

"I tell you, it doesn't seem natural to get into Cedarville without shaking your hand," and he did so most warmly. "After twenty-two years as a regular stop on my route, it got to be a habit I couldn't break very easily."

"But—but—" Porter managed to gasp, but before he could complete the sentence, Johnson went on.

"Mr. Herritage here is all broken up over the news I just brought him. You know, he's lost the post-office contract."

"Yes — I know," Porter exclaimed eagerly.

"Oh, you do, eh?" Johnson exclaimed.

"Yes, and—and I guess I know who'll be the next postmaster."

"So Mr. Herritage has told you. Well, I only hope Mr. Lawrence makes as good a one as his two predecessors."

"Mr.—Lawrence!" Porter gasped in bewilderment.

"Yes. But I must hurry to catch the next train out of Wethersfield. I'll stop in the next time I'm in town, which will be in a few days."

The two storekeepers watched speech-

lessly as Johnson hurried from the store, and then they faced each other blankly.

"Has—has Hiram Lawrence got it?" Porter queried.

"Yes, he has," the other replied bitterly. "We're both done out of it."

"But—but he ain't got no place to hev it."

"Johnson says he's goin' to fix up the front room of his house." Then he faced the other angrily. "Look here, Ezra, how much did you pay thet feller Spencer? You may as well tell me."

"Me? Why—I—" Porter faltered.

"Oh, I guess he stung you jest as he did me," Herritage remarked in a tone of disgust. "I paid him three hundred dollars to let me look at your estimate—"

"So did I to look at yours," the other declared.

"Wal, he come to me after he come to you, so the one he showed you was a fake one. But his game worked with both of us, an' we're both out our money."

"An' the post-office, an' three hundred dollars," Porter choked.

"Thet's what we're down for. An' to think of it—thet feller wasn't no inspector at all. He never sent in our estimates, an' the only person what bid on it at all was Lawrence, an' he got it."

"But—but we've been robbed!" the other contended. "We'll hev the law on 'im."

"No we won't," Herritage corrected sadly. "We don't dare, 'cause if we did, we'd be in just as bad as this feller Spencer. We just lose the money, an' say nothin' 'bout it. But we was easy marks—both of us."

"An' I thought sure I was goin' to get it," Porter murmured regretfully.

"An' I thought I *hed* it," Herritage added, as he stepped toward the door.

IN TREASON'S TRACK.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "When Liberty Was Born," "The Spy of Valley Forge," "From Flag to Flag," etc.

A Story of Revolution Days Which Brings in the Figure of an Enemy for Whom All Cherish Only the Kindliest Feelings.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE story is told by Captain Philip Wayne, attached to Benedict Arnold's staff near Cold Spring on the Hudson. Dissatisfied with slowness of promotion, he vents his ill temper on Edith Bliss, governess in the Arnold household, is reproved for his ill manners by a mysterious stranger who suddenly appears while they are picknicking on the Neutral Ground, and has his sword neatly whisked out of his grasp by this same individual. Later Mistress Bliss finds a paper behind the Arnold hat-rack which seems to breathe of conspiracy against the Cause. She passes it on to Wayne, who in turn shows it to Arnold. The latter bids him never speak of the thing, but the captain is on the lookout for clues to the identity of the traitor, and one night thinks he has one when he sees a cloaked figure steal out in a boat, to be followed a little later by a similar form in another skiff. Wayne takes a third boat in pursuit, but can keep track only of the second figure, which he follows across the Hudson to a point just below West Point. Among the bushes on shore, Wayne sees his prey meet a figure that is not cloaked, then the moon breaks from behind a cloud, a twig snaps under the captain's foot, the cloaked figure turns toward him and he sees it is Edith Bliss. And the recognition of the man with her causes Wayne to spring toward him with a snarl.

CHAPTER VIII.

I MEET MINE ENEMY.

FOR the man who stood talking alone to Edith Bliss in the moonlit glade was the stranger who had disarmed and shamed me a week before—the man I had vowed to punish at risk of my own life.

And now my long-nursed hatred for him was redoubled by a wild surge of some emotion I instinctively knew for jealousy.

Yet, that same onrush of jealousy also brought me sanity. I was unarmed. I could not further lower myself in Edith's eyes by a hand-to-hand rough-and-tumble fight in her presence.

I must bear myself as much a polished man of the world as was my unknown enemy.

Were I to play the brute before his eyes, I should still further emphasize the difference between his deadly courtesy and my own boorishness. The thought checked me.

I halted in my savage forward rush ere either of them had guessed my murderous intent. I halted, I say, then moved forward with erect shoulders and dignified step, casting off my light cloak and doffing my hat.

Approaching the stranger, I bowed to him in stiff, formal greeting. With a faint start of wonder, he returned my salute (far more gracefully than I could have bowed had I practised before a pier-glass for weeks).

Ere he could speak, I turned to Edith, who shrank back from me, her great eyes dilated with a strange horror.

"Mistress Bliss," quoth I, monstrous polite, "I ask forgiveness for so sudden an interruption of your pleasant chat. But may I entreat you to withdraw? I have pressing, urgent business with this—gentleman, business that brooks no instant of delay."

Now, even in such moment of stress, I rather prided myself on that little speech of mine. It seemed to fulfil every requirement both of need and courtesy.

Instead of blindly attacking the fellow, and subjecting a delicate girl to the spectacle of a brutal hand-to-hand combat, I had most suavely besought her to move away, leaving the stranger and myself to settle our stern account untrammeled by witnesses, unvexed by feminine shrieks of fear.

Yet the effect of my formal words was quite astounding. To my horror, the girl burst into a sudden passion of weeping. With an impulsive little cry, she ran forward and caught me by the arm with both her white hands.

"Oh!" she moaned. "'Tis as I feared, then! And I hoped—yes, and *prayed*—that I might be wrong. That you, bravest of our post officers, should sink to this! Oh, the *shame* of it! The *cruel* shame!"

"'Should *sink* to this!'" I echoed, dumfounded. "I see no matter of 'shame.' I have sought for days the opportunity to meet this man. He wears a sword; I do not. Yet I am prepared to waive that advantage. I fail to see what shame I incur by meeting, face to face—"

She did not understand. She did not even hear. She was wailing again in piteous appeal:

"The shame of it! And I so looked up to you and honored you and sought your friendship! Forego this vile thing you mean to do! For *my* sake. For your country's sake. For the holy sake of *liberty*. Can you recall Washington's noble face, and then do the unspeakable thing you came here to do?"

Now, little by little, through the murk of surprise, I thought I began to see light. It was her mention of Washington that gave me what seemed a clue.

I recalled that his excellency had but recently issued an edict forbidding his officers to fight duels, and reminding them that their lives were too precious to their country to be thrown away in idle personal quarrels.

Doubtless, then, Edith knew I meant to fight the stranger, and was seeking to turn me from my purpose. Yet I wondered that she, who was usually so gay and self-controlled, should now be weeping hysterically, and beseeching me in the name of liberty to desist from my purpose.

She had shown far less emotion, a week agone, when she had beheld the stranger and myself actually crossing swords.

I could not understand her agony of entreaty, her panic-terror. Had she and the stranger met frequently, perchance, during these past seven days?

And had she in that time learned to care so dearly for him that the thought of his suffering possible hurt at my hands was unbearable to her?

This seemed the one solution. All at once I felt it *was* the solution. Her tears, her heartbroken entreaties, were for him! At the thought a white-hot pain rent my heart, and my brain reeled.

In that moment of blinding, agonizing mental light, I knew I loved Edith Bliss.

I loved her—yes, as I had never dreamed man could love. And she—she loved the stranger!

It may be my logic was poor, that I jumped over-hastily at conclusions. But show me the ardent, despairing lover who can argue with clear correctness, and I will show you the eighth wonder of the world.

I looked down into her tear-stained, terror-stricken little face, so white and hopeless as the pallid moonlight fell upon it. And, as I looked, a mighty wave of pity engulfed me.

She loved him. She was pleading with me for his life. And my own hopeless adoration led me to the first real sacrifice I had ever made.

For her sake, I would spare this lover of hers. I would forego my cherished revenge.

She must have seen the softening in my face, for she cried, with a tinge of hope in her sweet, trembling voice:

"You will not do it? You will give up this wicked plan? Oh, I knew you would. I was sure I had not so utterly misjudged you. I understand it all. You think you have been ill-used. You have brooded over your misfortune and your delayed hopes until this terrible thing you were about to do seemed almost right to you. I thank Heaven I followed you to-night and arrived in time to save you from deathless ignominy.

"Now you will have no dealing with this man? You will come back with me? Back to the duty you have always performed so splendidly. Back to the brother officers who love and trust you, whose love and respect you would forever have forfeited. No one shall know the truth from me. We will both forget it. It shall be as if the temptation had never come to you!"

Faith! The girl was talking like any parson. Had I come hither meditating some low crime, instead of for natural vengeance upon mine enemy, she could not have been more eloquent, more wildly grateful at having won me over.

Through all my misery I could almost have smiled at her idea that a fair duel would have forfeited whatever kindly feeling my rough military comrades might have had for me.

Nowadays the duel is falling into disrepute, and rightly so; but in the days whereof I speak (full thirty years ago), it was deemed no part of a brave man's duty to refrain from single combat in defense of his honor.

"You will give up this temptation?" she said again as I hesitated.

"Yes," I made answer. "For your sake. Not for that of my country, for I do not admit that my country has the right to demand such a thing of me. But if it will add to your own peace of mind, I give you my sacred promise not to carry out my intent."

She drew a long, shivering sigh of relief, and made as though to speak. Then, attracted by the sound of a footstep crossing the glade, she paused, glanced keenly in the direction of the sound, then drew back with a sharp intake of breath.

I turned to see what it was that had so surprised her. Crossing the glade toward us came a cloaked man. He was still more than fifty yards away.

Yet, from his limp, I knew him. It was Benedict Arnold. We three, standing in the shadow of the woodland's edge, were still invisible to the advancing newcomer.

I glanced from him to where Edith Bliss had stood a moment before. She had vanished. Doubtless, thought I, she, too, recognized Arnold, and did not wish to explain to her employer her presence there at such an hour of night.

So it was that, during the moment or so before the general reached us, the stranger and I stood alone together.

"Surely," he said in a low voice, "it was *you* whom I was to meet here to-night? I cannot have mistaken the hour and the place. You were sent here to meet me by—"

Arnold caught sight of our forms and stood still. The stranger, noting the general's pause, broke off his sentence and asked me with some slight apprehension:

"This is one of your men?"

"No," I made reply. "It is General Benedict Arnold."

"Ah!" he exclaimed with satisfaction. "All is well, then. I fancied, being detained, he had sent you in his place. I have not met him before. Pray introduce me."

Wondering, I followed, as he stepped briskly forward toward the general. Why should Arnold appoint this lonely midnight meeting with any man? It was all beyond me.

Yet I made shift to range myself alongside the stranger. We halted as we stood in front of Arnold, and I said:

"General, permit me to present to you Mr.—Mr.—"

"Mr. John Anderson," supplemented the stranger, bowing.

The name was scarce past his lips when, with a tiger spring, I was at his throat and had borne the man to earth.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE VIGIL.

"AND, general," I cried, exultant, pinioning the writhing man to the ground by

main force, "permit me to present to you, for hanging, the fellow with whom the unknown traitor at West Point is corresponding. We have the clue to the foul mystery at last, right here under my hands. Shall I save the hangman the trouble of strangling him, or would you question him first?"

I was athrill with savage joy. For Edith's sake I had been willing to spare her lover as long as that lover was merely my personal enemy.

But now that I knew him for the "Mr. John Anderson" to whom the mysterious "Gustavus" had written to barter our liberty, all the love in the world could not have held me back from his throat.

"General," I cried again, while Arnold still stood watching our struggling forms with sheer numbness of amazement, "this man spoke but now of coming here to-night to meet you. He lied, of course, to hide the fact that he was to meet the 'Gustavus.' I will gag and bind him, and then you and I will wait in the shadows to welcome Gustavus on his arrival. 'Twill be rare sport, and the treason will die unhatched. We—"

I got no further. Arnold, with a savage cry, had seized my shoulders and was tugging me away from my victim.

Strong man as the general was, he could not have budged me one inch but for the fact that he was my commander.

"You young fool!" Arnold shouted. "Let him up! Let him up, I say! You well-nigh killed him. What means this ruffianly behavior?"

I got to my feet and stared agape at him.

"General," I panted, "you don't understand. This is John Anderson, the spy whom—"

"The *spy?*" laughed Arnold heartily, his flash of rage giving way to noisy mirth. "Man, this is John Anderson, one of my most faithful agents—a man who even now is on a mission of life and death import for me! And you tried to kill him. Have you *no* wits?"

Sheepishly, still angry, wholly baffled and confused, I looked on dumbly while the general helped the discomfited Anderson to rise, and brushed from his clothes the forest mold and leaves.

Anderson, rearranging his twisted neckcloth, looked from one to the other of us in careless indifference. Even then I admired the splendid coolness of the man.

"General Arnold," I said in a last effort, "I showed you last week a letter from some unknown man in our army offering to sell Clinton the plans of West Point. The letter was addressed to one John Anderson. I find this man here, at midnight, awaiting some one. And—"

"And it is *I* he was awaiting," rapped out Arnold. "We meet here by appointment, because the very secrecy of his mission forbids his being seen at headquarters. He is an officer of note, and is supposed to be even now with Gates's army. If it were known he is in this neighborhood, everything would be lost. Your crazy over-zeal came nigh to ruining all."

"But he is *Anderson*—John Anderson. He—"

"Lad," said Arnold impatiently, "there are three million people in the thirteen Colonies, and out of that number, I doubt not, no less than a hundred are named John Anderson. Did it never occur to you that a spy and an honest man might both chance to bear the same very common name? Why, 'John Anderson' is well-nigh as oft heard as 'John Smith.' If you should meet a John Smith, would you fall on your knees before him in veneration under the impression he might be the Captain John Smith who settled Virginia in 1609? Nonsense! Have five years of campaigning taught you nothing, that you must fly at a man's throat like—"

"But," I broke in all at once, scanning the stranger more closely in the moonlight, "look! I had not noted before. He is in the uniform of a British major. He—"

"To be sure he is," sighed Arnold, with the air of one teaching a lesson to a very simple child. "To be sure, he is in British uniform, at my orders. He goes to New York for me at dawn. Would you have him walk into the British barracks there dressed in his own uniform of an American captain?"

A spy. But one of our own.

I began to see. The stranger was going to New York—into the very jaws of the British lion—on secret service work for our cause, even as gallant Nathan Hale had gone.

To insure secrecy, Arnold had planned to meet him in this very desolate place for final instructions, lest some traitor at headquarters—"Gustavus," perhaps—might betray his identity to the British.

Anderson was going to risk his life among the enemy, at Arnold's orders and in behalf

of liberty. And I, idiot that I was, had sought to destroy the whole scheme. I could have groaned aloud for sheer chagrin at my own rash senselessness.

General Arnold was ever a keen reader of men. He read my face now like an open book.

"There, there, lad!" he said kindly. "Take it not so hard. You meant it all for the best."

"Failure's path is strewn with the bones of those who 'meant it all for the best,'" I muttered in angry self-contempt. "Captain Anderson, I ask your pardon for my uncouth, childish behavior."

Anderson held out his hand with a charming smile. But for that smile, I doubt if I could have brought myself to shake hands with him.

For what I had just learned in no way altered the fact that he was the man Edith Bliss loved, nor that he had rebuked and then disarmed me when we had met a week since on the "neutral ground."

Yes, I realized he was a hero, a braver man than I (for a spy ever takes far more terrible risks than does the soldier who fights in open field); yet I could not banish my ill-feeling toward him.

However, we shook hands with outward courtesy, Arnold looking on with a smile. Then, with a start of displeased recollection, the general inquired:

"By the way, Phil, how do *you* chance to be here? I thought you asleep in bed at headquarters. What odd chance led you to this glade to-night?"

"I saw a skiff put out from the Robinson boat-house an hour or more ago," said I; "a cloaked figure was in it. I—"

"The mysterious 'cloaked figure' was mine," he retorted. "And so you followed me, eh? Like any Mohican? And, losing sight of me on this side of the river, blundered upon Anderson. I see."

I was on the point of saying that Edith Bliss had followed him across the river even more closely than had I. But, without giving me time to speak, he went on more abruptly:

"Of course you understand the absolute need of secrecy. You will not speak of this meeting. And, now that you are here, I may as well make use of you. You see that rocky knoll up yonder, overlooking the river? Stand there, on guard, till Anderson and I come to you. It commands a view of the river, both north and south. The moon is so bright now, you will be able to see any boat that draws near shore, or any one coming toward this glade by land. Anderson and I have much to say to each other, and he must be off in another hour. To your post, lad!"

I saluted and tramped off through the undergrowth, leaving the two together. I glanced back once. They were crossing the glade side by side, headed westward.

I worried at sight of this. For, a little inland, were the houses of several Tories.

What if some sleepless Tory householder should chance to be roaming abroad and should overhear them?

The night was dead still. To my slightly nervous mind it seemed peopled with fantastic moving shadows. Once or twice I mistook bush, boulder, or shrub for a lurking foe.

Also, when I looked backward toward Arnold and Anderson, it seemed for a moment as if some half-formed shadow were stealing noiselessly along the glade in their wake. I looked more closely, but could not see the fantastic, silent shape again.

Ascribing the thing to a trick of moonlight and cloud, I hastened onward toward the knoll.

I was at first half-minded to hurry back and make sure I had not been mistaken about the flitting shadow. But I had already made a fool of myself quite often enough for one night, and I was not anxious to risk further rebuke from Arnold.

I toiled up the steep little rocky slope of the knoll, and gained the summit. Then, sitting on the highest, dew-drenched pinnacle of mossy stone, I began my vigil.

Below me, in front, lay the wide, moon-silvered ribbon of river. Behind and to each side were the black woods and paler meadowland.

To southward, a few miles, I could make out the dim bulk and spars of the British sloop of war Vulture, as she lay at anchor in midstream. And again I fell to wondering why a British warship should be taking these seemingly aimless excursions up the Hudson.

A single vessel could hope to make no headway against our forts; and our outposts reported no sister ships behind her.

No other craft was visible on so much of the river as I could see. My heart smote me at thought of the long, lonely, homeward row that Edith Bliss must even now be having.

I strained my eyes for sight of her bobbing skiff. But the moonlight's play on the shifting waters dazzled me, and I could not make out the boat.

I was in love. I knew it now. Not with capricious Dorothy Cary, who had played fast and loose with me for months, and had at last set me an impossible ordeal.

I knew now that my infatuation for Mistress Cary had been bred of those two inveterate matchmakers, Vanity and Propinquity, and of nothing else.

I loved Edith Bliss with all the force of my whole nature. And she not only loved another man, but loved him with a devotion that had made her plead with frantic weeping that I would spare his life.

And mentally I added one more link to my endless chain of ill-luck.

A flash of red light from a point of land far down on the opposite bank of the river brought me back to reality. A second or two later I heard a low, rumbling roar.

I was on my feet in an instant, tense, staring.

Again, the next minute, came that flash, and again the far boom. By this time my knowledge of Hudson geography had enabled me to locate the disturbance.

It came from Teller's Point (they call it Croton Point in this nineteenth century of ours), on the east shore of the river. And, as any soldier would have known at once, the flash and report were from a cannon.

I saw new lights spring up here and there aboard the Vulture. The crew were awake and stirring. Lanterns, carried evidently by running men, moved fast about the deck. I could see a shadowy sail hoisted.

A third cannon-shot, then a fourth. I could now hear the distant creak of a windlass. The Vulture was lifting anchor.

I guessed correctly the meaning of the excitement on board. Some ardent patriots, seeing the Vulture lying there, had dragged a cannon into position on the water-edge at Teller's Point, and were blazing away at the anchored war-sloop.

Some of the shots, too, must have come uncomfortably close to their mark, for the Vulture was preparing to get out of range with all possible speed.

Sails set and anchor up, the British vessel swung slowly down stream as a fifth shot flashed out from the darkness of the eastern shore. A sixth was fired soon after.

The war-sloop, wafted by the light September breeze, crawled southward, and presently was lost to sight behind the nearest headland.

So intent I had been in watching the amateur bombardment (a bit of seemingly futile patriotism, by the way, which indirectly saved our nation from destruction), that I did not hear the quick footsteps behind me until those steps were close at my heels.

Then, belatedly aware of my duty as guard, I turned with a jump to confront the intruder upon my vigil.

"Halt!" I commanded, even as I wheeled about. "Halt! Who goes?"

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN FROM NOWHERE.

EVEN as I voiced the challenge, I recognized the newcomer. It was Arnold. He had toiled up the steep incline and stood beside me. Anderson was just below him.

"I heard cannon-shots," said the general uneasily. "What does it mean? Who at West Point can be firing, without orders, at this time of night?"

"It is not at West Point, sir," I answered, "but at Teller's Point, miles below."

"At Teller's Point? Why?"

"Some soldiers or farmers trained one of the cannon there upon the Vulture, and drove her from her moorings."

"*What?*"

He fairly screamed the word. He shook like a man in a palsy, and scanned the moonlit river everywhere for a glimpse of the British vessel."

"She sailed southward, out of sight," I told him, wondering at his unwonted violence.

While Benedict Arnold was an ideal soldier, he was no stiff-necked martinet, and I could not understand why the mere fact of a handful of patriots opening unauthorized bombardment on a hostile ship should so excite him.

My surprise was still greater when, as I told of the war-sloop's disappearance, he burst into the most horrible rage I had ever witnessed.

The man seemed possessed by a demon. He cursed, shrieked, raved, shook his fist at the smiling skies, and denounced everything between heaven and earth.

I stood aghast. Not even when he was

arraigned by Congress on false charges, at Philadelphia—not when Ethan Allen took from him the glory of the Ticonderoga campaign—not when Gates stole from him the reward for the victory at Saratoga—had I seen him half so moved.

"The fates themselves war against me," he railed at last, as his revilings grew more coherent. "Man and destiny have ever conspired to thwart my dearest hopes. But I will beat them yet! I will conquer in spite of everything! Like Samson, I will tear down the whole structure they have reared, and crush them all beneath it."

Now, this seemed to me utterly babyish language for a grown man to use, just because a few harmless cannot-shots had been fired without his orders. I realized that he must be under terrific stress of nervous emotion if so trivial an incident could cause him such fury.

Then, remembering what the mysterious treachery at West Point must mean to him, and how his loyal spirit must writhe under the knowledge that he had a traitor in his garrison, I straightway began to find excuses for his present lack of self-control.

When a man carries the fate of a nation in his hands, it is but natural that his nerves should sometimes show the wear and tear of over-responsibility.

Presently the general grew calmer. He glanced sideways at me, as if ashamed of his outburst.

"Wait here!" he ordered.

Then he limped down the slope, spoke a few hurried, whispered words to Anderson, and together they disappeared in the gloom.

For more than half an hour I remained at my lonely post. I inferred that the noise of the cannon had disturbed them in the midst of their talk, and that, having come to learn the cause, they had returned to finish the conference.

At last they came back to me. As they drew near my rock, Arnold called to me to climb down to them. It was then that I noticed with some astonishment Anderson no longer wore his uniform of a British major.

He was dressed in a plain riding-suit, and his white silk stockings were hidden under high boots.

I had no time to do more than glance at the man, and to wonder where and how he had secured such complete change of apparel at that hour of night, when Arnold addressed me.

"Lad," said he, speaking in the pleasant, familiar fashion that was so great a part of his charm, "I've work for you. I had planned that Anderson should dress as an English officer and be provided with papers that would let him board the Vulture without suspicion,—and be carried thus to New York. Those fools over on Teller's Point, with their noisy popgun, have scared off the Vulture and upset all my arrangements."

Now I understood why he had been so angry, and I found far more excuse for his gust of rage.

"Therefore," went on the general, "I have had to recast my scheme. Anderson has put on civilian dress. He will cross the river and ride down to New York, along the east bank, taking his chances of getting past the British sentinel line at Harlem. I shall want your help. I have just written him a pass that will let him through our army in case our outposts should try to stop him. I want you to go along as far as Ferguson's Farms. After that, the way is clear, and he can travel alone."

I saluted with no good grace. I scarce relished the idea of having for several hours the companionship of this successful rival of mine.

"Get into your boat," went on Arnold. "Row across the river as if you were pulling in a race. Go to headquarters. Saddle a couple of good horses, and bring them down to the road above the boat-house. Anderson and I will be waiting there for you. Don't awaken a trooper to do the saddling for you. Do it yourself. I want no one to know. And get the horse away without disturbing any one. Much depends on secrecy. More than you can realize. Now, go!"

I made my way to the shore; they following more slowly, and still talking earnestly in low tones. My boat was where I had left it tied. But Edith's, which had lain close beside it, was gone.

I pushed off and bent to my oars with all the strength I had, sending the light craft spinning over the still water. I recalled with grim amusement my stealthy, slow progress across, an hour or so earlier, when I had been dogging Edith's boat and she Arnold's.

What a mare's nest the "mystery" had proved itself! By the light of later events, I could so readily piece together the whole fabric.

Edith (probably approaching the boat-

house in order to cross the Hudson and keep her tryst with Anderson) had seen Arnold putting off from shore. Mistaking him, perhaps, for me, and with her mind full of the treason plot, she had followed. Then I, seeing her, and being also full of the man-hunt craze, had given chase. How absurd it was!

I passed an empty, floating skiff. I hardly glanced at it. It was not capsized. The water was too calm for any one to have been upset. I supposed the boat had been left unfastened and had drifted away.

In much less time than I had come to the west bank I made the long return trip to the boat-house, then ran at top speed to headquarters.

Moving noiselessly, I managed to saddle and lead out two of the fastest horses in the officers' stable without awakening any one.

Giving the countersign for the night, I led them past the wondering sentry at the gate, and so on down the half-mile road leading to the boat-house.

There I found Arnold and Anderson, who had just landed and were coming toward me.

Anderson vaulted to the saddle of one of the two horses with the grace of a dancing master, adjusted his stirrups, and turned his mount's head southward. I followed his example.

Arnold reached up and grasped my hand in good-by. I noted that his own was clammy and cold. Then he turned to Anderson.

The latter, to my surprise, evidently failed to notice the general's outstretched hand, but saluted and set off at a canter. I urged my own steed to a gallop and caught up with him.

"General Arnold," I remarked, "offered to shake hands with you."

"Did he?" queried Anderson dryly.

I did not know what reply to make, and for a space we rode on without speaking. I had no wish to follow up the conversation. It was ordeal enough to be forced to ride at all with this man who had bested me in manners and in swordsmanship, and who had won the heart of the girl I loved.

In the saddle, with the night breeze in one's face, the moon above and a good horse beneath, it is hard to remain glum. Sad at heart though I was, I yet caught myself indulging unconsciously in an old habit of mine when on long, lonely rides. Namely, of humming a song under my breath.

I did not realize what I was singing, nor, indeed, that I was singing at all. Yet, to the air of "Yankee Doodle," I found myself at the last verse of a song that had caused some merriment at headquarters that season.

It was called "The Cow Chase." Written by a clever young English officer, it satirized "Mad Anthony". Wayne's famous raids on the British cattle. The final stanza ran:

> "And now I close my epic strain.
> I tremble as I show it,
> Lest that same warrior-drover, Wayne,
> Should ever catch the poet."

John Anderson's amused laugh broke in upon my muttered singing.

"So that doggerel has traveled as far as West Point, eh?" my companion queried.

"'Tis not doggerel," I contradicted. "'Tis a vastly amusing song, even though a Briton did write it."

"So?" he asked. "An Englishman was the author? That is of interest."

"A young British major on service under Clinton," I answered, momentarily thawed out of my reserve by the very common failing—a desire to give information. "He was the author. John André is his name. The cleverest, most reckless Englishman in all the Colonies, so I am told. 'Mad Anthony' laughed as hard at the song as any of the rest of us."

"Major John André?" repeated Anderson. "The name seems, somehow, familiar. You know him, perhaps?"

"I have never seen him," said I. "And I am not likely to, unless on field of battle. I am sorry. For they say he is a man of rare wit and good looks. And a gentleman to boot."

"Pah!" laughed Anderson. "I had heard otherwise. A great, loutish fellow, I am told, with a stable-boy's manners."

"You are wrong," I corrected him with some heat. "My information comes first-hand. From General Dale, of Washington's own staff."

"Dale? You mean the Ralph Dale who was once a spy?"

"Yes, and before that an actor. He left the stage to join the army. His wit and his powers of disguise made him of use to Washington as a spy. He entered Philadelphia on secret service while the British were in possession. It was during the Valley Forge winter. At Philadelphia he fell in love with the Hon. Miriam Dacre—the same who is now his wife. He—"

"I have met her," chimed in Anderson. "A glorious girl. And she married Dale, did she?"

"The next spring. But that is not part of my story about André. Dale escaped from Philadelphia by Mistress Dacre's aid. Later he heard false news that the British were to hang her for helping him get free. Back he rushed to Philadelphia to offer his life for hers. To this Major John André he went with his proposition. From him he learned Mistress Dacre was in no peril."

"And André had the Yankee spy neatly trapped?"

"Quite so. Yet, André did not look at it in that way. He deemed that a man who would risk life for love was too good to be hanged as a spy. So he set him free. Dale told me the tale himself. Said André: 'If I do wrong in letting an enemy escape like this, may I myself hang as a spy!' So gallant an Englishman would be well worth meeting."

Anderson yawned behind his hand. It was plain my narrative did not greatly interest him. Yet he roused himself to polite attention.

"I, too, am a spy," said he a little sadly, "though a month ago I would have challenged the man who dared say I should become one. So I should have a kindly feeling for this André of yours. Perhaps I may meet him in New York."

"I envy you the prospect," I replied. "But if you mingle with the officers there, you are certain to run across him. I am told he is ever the center of all that is gayest and brightest. The 'life of the whole garrison,' they call him."

"Ah? A buffoon? A sort of Merry Andrew? A garrison jester? It is a type for which I care little."

"You wrong him," I declared. "If he is the life of the place, it is because of his magnetism, his great heart, and his wondrous manner. And that same heart of his, if report do not lie, carries a wound of its own. He was betrothed, in England, I hear, to a Mistress Honoria Sneyd. Her parents forbade the match. And André came hither to the war that he might win a fame which would soften their hearts. 'Tis said he ever wears her miniature in a locket about his neck."

I paused. In the moonlight I could see that Anderson's face had suddenly changed. There was a look of pain in his handsome eyes.

I knew the subject I had hit upon was distasteful to him. And I could well guess why.

Was he not also riding to danger—perhaps to a spy's shameful death—and leaving behind a girl who loved him.

Little as I liked the man, I was angry at my own lack of tact.

But, even as I checked my speech, the sad look was gone from his face. He turned toward me with the most winning smile I have ever seen, and, to banish my memory of his melancholy, launched forth into a flood of gay talk.

His cleverness, his magnetic manner, his fund of information and brilliant way of expressing himself—all held me spellbound. For more than an hour we rode thus, chatting like brothers; while I felt myself more and more drawn toward my wholly delightful companion.

Seldom has time passed so rapidly. His stories of men and of events, his quick wit, his infectious laugh, were a revelation to me. I sat entranced, like one at a play, doing little more than to answer when he questioned, content to listen and to enjoy.

Dawn had broken when we came to Ferguson's Farms, where we must part. We halted our horses. And our hands met in a hearty farewell grip of friendship.

"Godspeed!" he cried as he galloped away to the southward.

I looked after him until he vanished around a bend in the road. Then I turned north, and started on my lonely return ride toward headquarters.

And, as I rode, I came slowly out of the almost mesmeric state into which Anderson's talk had thrown me. I gradually recalled that this fascinating stranger with whom I had just parted on such warmly friendly terms was one and the same man as the fellow whose punishment I had vowed, and who had won Edith Bliss's love.

I had begun our ride hating him. I had ended that ride in genuine sorrow that we must part. I could not account for my own utterly illogical change of ideas.

But this much I knew: even by recalling my former humiliation at Anderson's hands and the fact that Edith loved him, I could not work myself back into my former bitter dislike for him.

I could, and did, however, manage to feel a very wholesome contempt for my own fickleness of nature, and a real wonder that I, who was usually so slow to form friend-

ships, should have been so quickly won over by anybody.

The road was a winding one. Ahead of me, as I jogged along, I heard the *thud-thud-thud* of galloping hoofs. Some one was coming toward me from the north—perhaps from headquarters—in mad haste.

I was enough of a horseman to realize that the steed whose flying hoof-beats grew momentarily closer to me was being ridden with unmerciful speed.

I checked my own horse and drew to one side of the road. Around the curve in front of me swept the furiously running horse.

At sight of the rider I cried aloud in amazement.

CHAPTER XI.

I RIDE ON DOUBLE QUEST.

THE rider was Edith Bliss.

Bareheaded, clad in the white house-gown she had worn the preceding evening, she was urging forward one of our cavalry chargers. She had thrown one stirrup over the pommel, converting the back covering into a rude side-saddle.

With gold hair flying loose, her big pansy eyes glowing from a dead white face, she came around the curve. In the belt of her gown—oddly incongruous sight—a pistol was stuck.

Her horse, leaning to one side to overcome the unbalancing effects of rounding a corner at such a pace, struck one of his fore feet against a big bit of round stone. The stone turned under his hoof, throwing the brute out of his stride.

He stumbled, plunged forward, and was saved from rolling heels over head only by the skill and strength of his rider.

How the girl kept her seat in the unaccustomed army-saddle I do not yet understand. But somehow she did it; and saved herself and her mount from a breakneck fall.

As it was, the horse, floundering to his feet, pulled up dead lame. The stumble had wrenched some leg sinew, and he could scarce move faster than a walk.

Edith, seeing his plight, drew him back and slipped to the ground. She looked about her in a hopeless despair that went straight to my heart.

It was at that moment she first caught sight of me, as I spurred forward to her assistance.

"Captain Wayne!" she cried on the instant. "Turn! Follow Mr. Anderson, and bring him back! Bring him *back!* Make him come."

Again I understood. Her lover had departed on this desperate life or death mission without having chance for one word of farewell with her. She could not let him go into peril without a good-by, without a kiss, a prayer for his safety.

She had learned of his departure probably from Arnold himself; had sprung on a horse and had followed.

Even though my heart gave a twinge of pain that I of all men should be chosen to bring the two together, I turned my horse as she spoke the first words. Striking spur to his side, I galloped him back over the southward road.

If love had come to me too late, it had at least brought its holy lesson of sympathy. By rapid riding I might easily overhaul Anderson.

From my knowledge of lovers, I knew how more than willing he would be to delay his journey for an hour in order to say good-by to his sweetheart.

"I'll bring him back to you!" I shouted over my shoulder. "Wait there for me."

She called something to me in an insistent, frantic tone. I could not catch its real import.

And as I could be of greater service to her by speed than by halting to hear some reiteration of her command, I did not check my gallop.

The sun was rising. The sun of a day ever to be remembered in American history. I rode at top speed, looking neither to right nor left. At that pace I should catch up with Anderson in fifteen minutes at most.

I tried to be glad that so handsome and attractive a man was to be summoned back to the side of the girl to whom he was betrothed. I tried to be glad that I should be the means of changing that white, drawn look of Edith's to one of joy.

But I failed miserably in both mental efforts.

I fell to conjuring to mind that awful, set expression in her childlike eyes; to wondering why she should have set out on a ride with a pistol stuck in her belt.

How she must love him to go alone through that neutral ground in search of him! The neutral ground that was often infested by the worst class of blackguards from both armies.

I had passed the spot where I had parted from Anderson. I was nearing the heights to the north of Tarrytown.

A few rods farther, and I saw a group of four men standing in the center of the white road.

All four were on foot. At one side grazed a horse which I recognized first. It was the regimental charger that Anderson had ridden. Then I saw Anderson himself.

Bareheaded, coatless, in stocking feet, he stood in mid-road, surrounded by three roughly dressed fellows whom at a glance I mistook for footpads.

I fancied he had been stopped and robbed by a trio of these gentry, who were often to be met with along the neutral ground. Unarmed though I was, I rushed to his rescue.

At sound of my approach all four turned. And I recognized the foremost of the three captors as Isaac Van Wart, a militiaman who had once served as my orderly.

Then I noted that his two companions were also in rough militia uniform.

"Van Wart!" I cried, reining in my horse. "What does this mean? How dare you halt an officer of our army?"

"Officer of our army?" retorted Van Wart. "This man's a spy. A dirty British spy."

"Wayne," broke in Anderson, "cannot you convince these honest fellows of my identity and make them let me ride on? You know how important is my mission."

"Of course I can," I answered, noting with wonder how deadly pale his smiling face had grown. "Let him pass, boys. I'll vouch for him."

"Can't do it, cap'n," answered Van Wart. "I'm sorry, but this looks like an ugly business. And we're responsible for him. If we let a spy pass on to New York, we're liable to get—"

"A spy!" I retorted wrathfully. "You blockhead, this is John Anderson, an officer in our own army. He is riding on special service for General Arnold."

"That's what he tells you," replied Van Wart, unmoved. "But it's a lie, all the same. How he bamboozled you into believing it I don't know."

"I showed them my passport from General Arnold," put in Anderson. "But—"

"But you tried to bribe us to let you go on," snapped a second militiaman; "and no honest officer would do that. In the first place, no officer in our down-at-heel army would be rich enough to have the handful of gold guineas you held out to us."

"That's so," said the third. "The bribe alone would prove it. If he was an officer, all he'd need to do would be to show us the general's pass, and he could have gone on his way. It's my belief that pass is forged."

"It is not," I replied. "I saw the general give it to him."

I could see they did not believe me. Van Wart stepped up to my horse's side and told his story.

"It's this way, cap'n," he began. "Me and Paulding and Williams here was sitting at the side of the road over a little game of cards. Along canters this Anderson. He stops and asks us the way. We ask where he's going. He takes us for a British outpost, I guess. For he answers: 'To New York.' And then I says: 'What party do you belong to?' And he answers: 'To the Lower Party, of course; just as you lads do.' Then Paulding grabs his horse's rein and—"

"And," added Paulding, "he goes white and mutters something about making a mistake, and he pulls out this big gold watch and a lot of gold pieces and offers them to us to set him free. We hauled him off his horse and searched him. Van Wart found a sheaf of papers stuck away inside one of his boots."

"Papers?" I cried. "What was in them?"

"That's telling!" returned Van Wart, wagging his head wisely. "I took just one peek at them, but it told me enough. They don't leave my pocket again till I turn them over to Colonel Jameson down at the fort yonder. This fellow's a spy. And he's a dangerous one. We're lugging him off to Jameson on the double quick."

"You're lugging yourself into a peck of trouble!" I roared in exasperation. "General Arnold will have you all three by the heels in the guard-house for this. You're making a blunder that will cost the cause much."

"By the looks of those papers of his," answered Van Wart, "if we let him go, we'd be making a blunder that would cost the cause a heap more."

"Anderson," said I, "I'm more sorry than I can tell you that this miserable error has occurred. There seems nothing left for us to do but to thrash this trio of idiots into submission and set you on your road."

Van Wart stepped back to the wayside thicket as I spoke, and reappeared with a long rifle. This he calmly leveled at Anderson's breast.

"Cap'n Wayne," he drawled, "I've some respect and liking for you, but you're not going to stand between me and dooty. If you make one move to 'thrash this trio of idiots,' or if you make one move to set this spy free, why, I'll pump a load of lead into his heart. My rifle bullets don't ever go astray. And they move even quicker than you do."

I paused, irresolute. The three men were determined. No threats nor arguments of mine could move them from the belief that they had caught a dangerous British spy.

I knew Van Wart to be a man of his word. He had said he would shoot Anderson if I raised a finger to rescue him. And I was certain he would do it.

It was Anderson himself who solved the problem.

"I seem fated to delays," he said pleasantly. "Wayne, may I suggest a compromise that my very worthy jailers can scarce fail to accept? I will scribble a note to General Arnold, telling him of my arrest. If you will carry the note to him with all speed, he will, of course, send instant orders for my release. I shall be delayed only a few hours at most. It is better than being shot by the rifle of my long-haired, unshaven friend yonder."

"That's fair," assented Van Wart, quite unresentful of the frank description of himself. "Send General Arnold a note, if you like, by Cap'n Wayne. If you're all right, the general will set you free quick enough. In the meantime we'll take you to the fort and see what Colonel Jameson has to say about it."

Anderson had drawn tablets and pencil from his pocket, and was writing rapidly. Paulding openly looked over the prisoner's shoulder; then grunted disgustedly.

"H-m! He's writing in cipher!"

Anderson folded the note and handed it to me.

"Ride with all the speed your horse can make," he begged with strange earnestness. "Every minute of delay may mean worse disaster than you can comprehend. *Ride,* man! Ride like the wind! Let nothing detain you."

His intent eagerness infected me. Wheeling my horse, I thundered back along the road by which I had come.

Perhaps it would have been better for my country if a ball from Van Wart's rifle had stretched me dead as I went.

(To be continued.)

THE WONDER FISH.

BY FRANK CONDON.

A Piscatorial Prodigy That Was on the Point of Pouring Fortune into the Lap of a Long-Suffering Family, When—But Read What Happened.

ELIZABETH WARHOP sat at the head of the table with little Reginald on her right hand and little Rose on her left. Looking directly into the eyes of her husband, Daniel Warhop, who was dallying over the last spoonful of stewed tripe, she said distinctly:

"You will certainly regret having thrown up your job."

Daniel leisurely finished the tripe before replying. Then he said placatingly:

"You know very well, Elizabeth, that we have never yet starved and none of the children has wanted for shoes. This new development is the chance of a lifetime. I have worked for that wholesale grocery twelve years and I am tired of the job. I am now going to plunge into this new business with all the enthusiasm of a boy and I wish you wouldn't throw cold water on it. Think of our future if I make a success!"

"All I have to say," answered Elizabeth, "is that a bird in the hand is worth two in the shrubbery."

"Yes, Elizabeth, but this isn't a bird; this is a fish." Daniel Warhop laughed softly at his little jest and while he is snickering, it might be illuminating to review

his affairs and see what caused the temporary uneasiness on the part of his wife.

The Warhops lived in Port Chester, New Jersey, which is exactly one hour out of New York City. They occupied a two-story white house, on Linsey Street, trimmed with red, and behind the house was a barn in which Daniel kept the lawn-mower. The neighbors had nothing but kind words for the Warhops and the Warhops deserved nothing but kind words, for if there ever was a model family, it consisted of Daniel, Elizabeth, Reginald and Rose.

For years Daniel had traveled into New York to his desk in the shipping department of the wholesale grocery, but owing to the high cost of living and the comparative meagerness of his salary, he had saved nothing. He might have continued making out way-bills until he died if he had not met a man one evening as he was about to take the ferry.

The man asked him the way to Metuchen, New Jersey, and Daniel obligingly gave the information, after which he entered into conversation with the stranger.

"My name is Corcoran—James B. Corcoran," he said to Daniel. "Did you ever hear of the Gill and Fin Experimentation Sodality?"

"I never did," Daniel replied. "It sounds interesting."

"It *is* interesting. I'm the president and I'm going over to Metuchen, New Jersey, to look at a weak-fish that is reported to have three eyes. Personally, I don't believe the story, but our organization is relentless in its pursuit of piscatorial novelties and while this yarn is probably a hoax, we couldn't afford to let it pass uninvestigated."

Sitting beside Daniel in the six forty-one Cannon Ball, Mr. Corcoran told of the Gill and Fin Experimentation Sodality, its accomplishments in the past and its prospects. Daniel listened entranced.

"We have offices in the Westchester Tower on Broad Street," continued the president "and you'd be surprised to see our mail every morning. We get hundreds of letters from all parts of the world. Some of them tell of fish caught in peculiar ways; others enclose photographs of freak fish, and still others inform us of the strange objects found inside fish. The object of the Gill and Fin Sodality is to spread enlightenment over the face of an ignorant civilization. We are constantly sending out circulars, not only to recognized fishermen, but to persons who wouldn't know a mackerel from a mackintosh. Are you interested in fish?"

"Intensely," said Daniel.

"I may interest you in an experiment we have been making. For more than three hundred years scientists have been endeavoring to breed a fish or to train a fish that will live out of water. It is the firm contention and belief in the Gill and Fin Sodality that such a fish will eventually be produced, and at the present time, the interest in this momentous effort is at its height. The reason for this is that we have offered a combination prize to the individual or individuals who succeed. The prize consists of a gold loving-cup, valued at five thousand dollars and a money reward of forty thousand dollars."

"That's a lot of money for a fish," murmured Daniel thoughtfully.

"It is a mere trifle—the merest of trifles to the philanthropists whose means and generosity have made the Gill and Fin Sodality possible. My own salary is thirty thousand dollars a year and I have declined to accept an increase of fifty thousand simply because I love the work."

"What kind of a fish does it have to be?" Daniel inquired.

"Any kind of a fish at all. Science has so far failed in its every effort. Some fish will live for ten minutes after they are removed from their native element. Others, like the tiger eel, will knock around for three or four hours. But all of them die eventually and what the Gill and Fin people seek is a fish that will go on living after it is taken out of the water until it dies naturally of old age.

"I will admit that the reward is large, but so is the accomplishment. Thousands of enthusiasts are now at work on this task, from Maine to California, and we are doing our best to help them. The credit will finally come to the Gill and Fin Sodality and it is part of the stipulation that if such a fish is evolved, it shall become the property of the Gill and Fin Sodality immediately after we pay the prize money and bestow the loving cup."

"Is everybody eligible?" Daniel asked.

"Certainly," said President Corcoran.

They talked for half an hour more, Daniel's interest increasing each moment, and when the president of the Gill and Fin Ex-

perimentation Sodality left the train at Metuchen, New Jersey, Daniel had made arrangements to meet him the following day at lunch.

When Daniel reached his home that evening, he was full of a new resolve. He had made up his mind to go out and get the forty thousand and the loving cup.

"Not that I'm a walking encyclopedia about fish," he mused. "But Corcoran says anybody has a chance. I'll read up and then I'll start in."

He said nothing to Elizabeth. It was needless to discuss the proposition until later, and he knew that Elizabeth would not be in sympathy with the enterprise until she understood it thoroughly.

Several nights in succession, Elizabeth stared at Daniel curiously and wondered at his unwonted silence. The loving husband and father no longer discussed the day's affairs at the evening meal and Elizabeth thought seriously of buying medicine. But Daniel was not ill. He was thinking.

Each day he lunched with President Corcoran of the Gill and Fin Sodality, gathered fresh information about fish of all sorts, became familiar with the terms of the contest and after a long argument with the enthusiastic official, he determined to give up his grocery position and devote himself steadily to fish.

"I'll show you how much in earnest I am about you," Corcoran said to Daniel. "I like your methods and I think you're the sort of man who will never give up once he has started. If any man can succeed in getting a fish to live on air instead of water, you're the man; I could tell it the minute you began to take an interest in the question. If you're willing to give up this sordid business you are now pursuing, I will advance you five hundred dollars and when that is spent, if you have not won the prize, I will see that your expenses are promptly met. You will not suffer financially."

"That settles it," Daniel replied proudly. "I quit to-morrow. I hated to give up the weekly pay envelope, but if you'll do as you say, I'm for going after this prize immediately."

Daniel went home that evening in a cloud of joy. He burst in upon Elizabeth and told her the news. She gazed at him in silence for a long time and then she turned to her bread-board and went on with her work.

Daniel was inclined to be offended, but he reasoned that women can't understand the ways of men when it comes to making money and that they are particularly uninterested in matters of scientific investigation.

Daniel received from President Corcoran the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars and forthwith he began experimenting. He hurried into Fulton Market and obtained nine fish—a perch, a cat-fish, a shad, a pickerel, a bass, a trout, a white-fish, a blue-fish and a salmon. The fish dealer was inclined to wonder, but he finally rounded up the strange assortment and dumped the mess into a covered milk-can, which Daniel had brought into the city, filled with water. Then the scientific explorer went home to Port Chester and tackled the job in earnest.

It was a serious business.

He had purchased six volumes dealing with the habits of fish, and he read them with religious care; the sum of his knowledge, after he had studied diligently, as that some fish prefer salt water and some fresh water and why this is so, nobody knows. Not one word was there about keeping a fish alive out of water—the subject was not even mentioned and, therefore, Daniel Warhop had no way of telling which species of fish was most likely to go on living in the clear and pleasant atmosphere of Port Chester.

He selected the perch for initial observation. Beside his barn he had constructed an aquarium, using a discarded hog trough for the lower works and into this he tossed his nine subjects. He also placed worms, bread and cheese in the tank so that the fish might not pass away before he had time to experiment upon them.

Mrs. Warhop and the two children viewed the proceedings without enthusiasm, but in the end Daniel's absorption in the experiment became infectious and it was not long before Elizabeth, Reginald and Rose were helping him to the best of their ability. The entire family sometimes worked far into the night, and when its various members finally went to bed, it was to dream wild dreams of success, of monster fish behind the bars in the Bronx Zoo and, of prizes of forty thousand dollars and gold loving cups.

"I don't think the trout is doing well at all," Daniel said to Elizabeth on the second day.

"I have always thought trout wouldn't live anywhere but in brooks," his wife re-

turned. "Trout are aristocratic fish and when you take a blooded trout and stick him into a reorganized hog trough, with a lot of miscellaneous fish he has never met before, you are directly wounding his feelings. That trout will never stand it."

This statement was proved on the third day when the trout turned over and gave up the ghost. Daniel removed the dead fish with a sigh.

"Well" he said resignedly, "if the poor stiff couldn't live in water, it's a cinch he wouldn't live in the open air; I'm glad he's out of it because I might have wasted valuable time with him."

Daniel dug a trench in the lawn beside the aquarium and filled it with mud and water. He was working on the theory that if a fish were placed in a mixture of mud and water, thus putting him on half-rations, so to speak, it might be possible to gradually drain off the water without attracting the attention of the fish, and in this way the victim of the experiment might manage to exist upon less and less water.

The perch was captured after a desperate hand to hand fight and forced into the trench. On the following morning the trench was almost dry; the perch was wobbling about feebly and was obviously getting no enjoyment whatever out of his stay with the Warhops. He passed on to the next world before Daniel could do anything about it.

"Perch haven't strong constitutions, anyhow," Daniel assured Elizabeth. "We will now try the shad."

"I hate to see these fish dying off," Elizabeth mourned. "We might kill them with a board and have fish cakes, but I don't believe it would be healthy to eat a fish that just naturally dies."

"I am not attempting to supply the table with food." Daniel said somewhat petulantly. "This is an experiment, Elizabeth, and if you want fish to eat, take two dollars and go and buy them."

The shad lived for eight hours after being removed from the big tank, and then it died with one eye full of mud and the other turned upon Daniel in what seemed to be ineffable reproach.

"You have now lost one week's wages," said Elizabeth, after the shad had departed into the barrel back of the barn, "and I wouldn't speak of your experimental effort as a colossal triumph. When all the fish die, as they probably will, I presume this Corcoran will give you some more. I don't feel as cheerful about this thing as I did; the grocery business isn't so bad after all, especially on pay day."

"You have no determination," rejoined Daniel, "and I have. There is something wrong with my system just now, but nothing ever was accomplished in a day."

He decided that the trench method was a failure and he selected other means. He took to holding up the different fish by their tails, with their heads out of the water. The salmon seemed to regard this procedure with indifference, but the pickerel and bass protested bitterly.

Daniel became so expert in this that he could tell to the fraction of a minute exactly how long any one of the fish would continue alive, and when he had reached the extreme time limit he dropped the exhausted subject back into the tank.

But he made little progress. The work was slow, tiring, and discouraging. On Monday, the bass could hang by its tail for eleven minutes without needing water, and on Thursday after strenuous and severe training, the same fish could last only fourteen minutes. The bluefish was good for eighteen minutes, but not in one instance, even after two weeks' work, could any one of the fish live a half hour without being plunged back into the tank.

If Daniel had been a less determined man, he would have felt like giving up, but whenever this thought came into his mind, he drew a mental picture of forty thousand dollars and a three-story house in the Bronx.

It was Elizabeth who made the sponge suggestion, and for a time Daniel cheered up. But the sponge gave no permanent results.

This experiment consisted in soaking a large sponge that had been used by the former occupants of the family to clean wagons. The soaked sponge was then tied about the luckless head of the fish, and the fish was expected to live or die. Eventually each one died and one bitter morning Daniel awakened to the stern fact that he was fishless.

The whitefish had cashed in its last chip the night before. Corcoran, president of the Gill and Fin Sodality, had handed Daniel another two hundred and fifty dollars, but there was little cheer in that fact.

"How are you getting on?" Corcoran asked.

"Not very well," Daniel replied sadly. "I have so far lost nine healthy fish. Not one of them learned to live half an hour."

"Did you ever try with a German carp?" Corcoran continued.

"No," said Daniel. "I missed that one."

"You try it," suggested the president. "After many years of observation, I am convinced that any one working for the Gill and Fin prize has a better chance with the German carp than with any other fish."

Daniel went home with a dozen carp and put them in the tank. To him, as he splashed that night in his bath tub, came one of those rare flashes of thought that mark the man of genius and distinguish him from the common rabble.

Daniel was looking up at the shower arrangement over his tub, with its circlet of perforated pipe and its rubber sheet. Would it not be feasible to use that shower in his fish-and-air experiment? The thought gathered and took on detailed form.

Why not place the fish in a large wire sieve and fix it under the shower? Then, why not turn on the shower to its fullest and gradually reduce the downpour of water? As the water decreased, the fish would certainly become more and more accustomed to the air, and finally, perhaps, the shower could be turned off completely.

That very night he would have tried the experiment, but Elizabeth could find no suitable sieve.

"If this won't turn the trick," said Daniel enthusiastically, "nothing will. I consider that idea a masterpiece."

"You said that about the trench and sponges," his wife returned without heat. "The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that you ought to be back in the grocery business."

In the morning Daniel fed the German carp, one after another. He selected a large, thick carp from the bunch and enthroned it in the sieve. Then he turned on the shower-pipe and waited for results.

He discovered by noon that the carp would live indefinitely under a quarter pressure, but when he finally turned the handle and brought the shower down to a feeble trickle, the carp closed its eyes in final sleep. Six carp did this. The seventh proved a fish of better capacity.

Hour after hour Daniel labored with the shower and sieve, his excitement increasing as he worked. He felt that he was trembling upon the brink of success. Elizabeth stood in the door of the bathroom and watched him with a troubled look upon her cheerful countenance. It had occurred to Elizabeth once or twice that, perhaps, Daniel might have lost a few bolts from his mental machinery.

The days and nights went by. Daniel worked steadily. He fed the carp with tender solicitude and reduced the stream from the shower until it came down in a faint mist, and, finally, after weeks of reduction, he one day turned off the shower.

The carp rolled over lazily and looked about him without excitement. Half an hour passed; then an hour. The carp yawned and Daniel fed him on grated crackers. The deed had been done. Daniel Warhop had trained a German carp to live out of water and had won the Gill and Fin Sodality prize.

The investigator went to bed and slept for forty-eight hours, during which the carp was attended to by Elizabeth. Not only that, but when Daniel awakened, he discovered that Elizabeth had taken a tremendous fancy to the new member of the household and had named him Aloysius, after a man she had known at school.

"Aloysius is a funny name for a fish," Daniel said. "You don't know but what its name ought to be Marie."

"You don't either," Elizabeth retorted, "and I like Aloysius."

"All right," Daniel said. "I don't care much about what you call him. All I can think of is that we've succeeded. Think of spending forty thousand dollars! Think of the gold loving cup!"

"After we look at the cup and show our friends," interrupted his wife, "we can sell the cup or melt it up. We ought to get four thousand out of it."

Little Reginald and Rose couldn't be dragged away from their new playmate. They fed it until their mother slapped them, and on its side Aloysius became very much attached to the children. It wiggled around the floor after them; in time it began to use its fins for propulsive purposes, and inside of a week it could travel about as fast as Daniel could walk.

Reginald and Rose tied a pink ribbon through one of Aloysius's gills and led it about the lawn and the neighbors leaned over the fence and wondered at it. At night the carp was kept in a bird cage which Daniel had found in the barn.

Two very strange things happened. Aloysius developed an insatiable appetite for Bermuda onions and grated cheese, soaked in beer. It would lie for hours nibbling at these and would manifest unmistakable signs of annoyance if in any way interrupted.

Water became the one fear of the transformed fish's life. The mere presence of a water pitcher on the table would cause Aloysius to flop into the farthest corner of the room and lie there shrinkingly.

Of course the fish met with accidents under its new surroundings. It fell down a flight of stairs one morning and broke a small fragment off its starboard fin, and Elizabeth, coming suddenly out of the kitchen, caught the unsuspecting Aloysius between the door and the jamb and almost finished it. Aloysius was laid up for a week after this unfortunate occurrence and thereafter the Warhops were more careful.

Daniel had made a disquieting discovery. He had searched in vain for President Corcoran, of the Gill and Fin Sodality. He had even gone to the Westchester Tower in Broad Street and he had found no Gill and Fin Sodality in the building. The superintendent informed Daniel that he was a new employee, and that the Sodality had probably moved elsewhere.

Day after day, the only man who had ever trained a fish to live out of water searched for Corcoran. He inserted advertisements in the newspapers and reporters came to interview him. The man who had started him on the high road to fame and fortune, and who had advanced him five hundred dollars, seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth, and the Gill and Fin Sodality was equally hard to find.

One night Elizabeth met Daniel at the front gate, after he had returned from New York. In her hand was the evening edition of the Port Chester *Tribune*. Elizabeth's face was set and stern.

"Look at this," she said to Daniel, placing her finger on an item.

Daniel read. His face turned white and he would have staggered had he not been leaning against the gate. The *Tribune* item announced that James B. Corcoran, a wealthy inmate of a Long Island sanitorium for the mildly demented, had been found, after a search of many weeks, in a Seattle fish-market.

"Do you realize what that means?" Elizabeth asked coldly.

Daniel nodded.

"It means," continued his wife, "that you've been working for a lunatic, and that you are now out of a job."

"But we've got Aloysius," Daniel said, brightening suddenly.

"Yes, we've got Aloysius," she continued sarcastically. "And when we get down to starvation, we can fry him and eat him. What good is he?"

"He's the only fish in the history of the world that can live in the air," Daniel retorted. "I can exhibit him. I can go to stags and dinners; I can take him around to county fairs and charity bazaars and show him off in moving picture joints. I tell you, Elizabeth, we'll make a living out of that fish yet. The forty thousand dollars are gone. I'm sorry, but who knows what may happen. I'm going into New York to-morrow and make arrangements."

The next day Elizabeth said to Daniel:

"It's getting so that you're not to be trusted in New York alone. I'm going along with you."

"Very well," Daniel replied. "But I can be trusted."

"We'll take the children with us," his wife continued. "They'll be company for Aloysius on the way in."

It would be too much to suggest that a fish of Aloysius's experience could tell much about the plans of those about him. He was lying peacefully in his bird-cage, with an inquiring eye upon the family group at the table, and if there is anything in the theory of intelligence in dumb animals, he probably had some inkling of what was going on.

Aloysius had become extremely fond of his new home. The idea of traveling was repulsive to him, and when Elizabeth and Daniel started for the station with Reginald carrying the bird-cage, Aloysius promptly flopped out to the walk and secreted himself under the front porch. A half hour was wasted in capturing the frightened fish, and when the little party made a second start. Daniel was carrying Aloysius in a tin dinner-pail.

The Warhop home faded into the distance. Aloysius was being carried away from the scenes that had come to mean so much to him. Strangers he detested, and all he asked was his bird-cage, the freedom of the Warhop house, and lawn, and a regular supply of grated cheese and Bermuda onions. On the train Daniel entrusted the

precious dinner pail with its captive to little Reginald while he bought the tickets, and it was this single mischance that Daniel will regret to his dying day. A fortune slipped through his fingers through that simple bit of carelessness.

The train had stopped on the drawbridge over the Chester River, and little Reginald was leaning out of the car window. Aloysius rustled in the tin can, and Reginald took the cover off to see what his pet was doing. The salt air from the river rushed into the car, and in a flash Aloysius realized that a crisis had arrived.

He gave a mighty flop and his silver scales flashed as his body sped through the air. Daniel leaped after him, but the frenzied fish was half way down the aisle of the day-coach before Daniel was on his feet. In another instant, the hope of the Warhops had reached the platform, and, as Daniel rushed out breathlessly, he saw the tail of Aloysius disappearing beyond the lower step.

With bated breath Daniel stood and listened. A faint noise came up between the ties of the bridge. Aloysius had dropped straight into the river.

"Gone!" whispered Daniel. Elizabeth, Reginald and Rose were standing in the coach door with blanched faces.

"He's jumped into the river," Daniel muttered. "The fool has committed suicide."

"Don't say that word, Daniel," said Elizabeth tearfully. "Not suicide. I'm sure Aloysius wouldn't do that. It's only accidental drowning."

An Exhibit That Walked Away.*

BY GEORGE C. JENKS,

Author of "A Slippery Battle in Oil," "The Border Rider of Broken S," etc.

The Remarkable Disappearance of a Valuable Relic, and the Far-from-Merry Chase Its Recovery Led Those Who Went in Pursuit.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ORTON PARKER, the magnate of Millburytown, has presented to the museum there the sixty-five foot long skeleton of a prehistoric monster, commonly known as the dinosaur. It is in charge of the curator, Professor Philetus Noyes, and his assistant Raymond Mills, who one morning discovers that the thing has been spirited away in the night. Alice, Orton Parker's daughter, claims to have seen from her window a long scene-truck moving through the streets at an early hour that morning. Mills finds that this belongs to a circus known as the Marvin Imperial Amalgamated Shows, which he and the professor follow to Rawlins. While the wrathful Marvin tries to fend off Professor Noyes, Raymond Mills seizes the opportunity to clamber up inside the canvas covering on the flat-car that the circus people have so jealously guarded, so that at last he is in the actual presence of the thing.

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER CLUE.

ONE swift look Raymond Mills flashed toward the great framework which extended the whole length of the car and far over at each end. Then, from his stiffened lips, slowly parting in astonishment and chagrin, issued the exclamation:

"What fools we've been!"

"I agree with you, Mr. Mills," echoed a doleful voice, as Professor Noyes, the picture of disgust and humiliation, stepped into view.

The monster they had pursued so many hundreds of miles was not the skeleton of a dinosaur at all, nor anything like it!

"Have you examined it, professor?" asked Raymond sadly.

"Yes. I was doing so when I heard you climbing in. The reason you didn't see me at first was that I was on the other side of the elephant."

"The elephant?"

"Yes; that's what this thing is. It looks to me, as well as I can make out for the bandages, like a small sacred white elephant from Siam."

"But what's it hanging in this big frame for? Is it hurt?"

"Dead," replied the professor rather sententiously.

There was a sudden interruption.

"Here, you fellows," broke in the coarse voice of Joseph Marvin, as he and "Doc" Sloane ducked in under the canvas together, "I've caught you with the goods, have I? Sloane, call Yaka."

"Wait a moment," interposed Raymond. "Let us explain, won't you?"

"You can't explain," shouted Marvin.

But they did. Something in Raymond's tone carried conviction, and when he and the professor both produced letters and other documentary evidence to prove that they actually were officials of the Parker Museum at Millburytown, and not Cooper & Jones emissaries, the circus-man consented to listen to what they had to say, and in a few minutes comprehended why they had been so anxious to see what he had on the scene-truck.

"Well, gentlemen," he said at last, "you must admit it looked suspicious, and I can't understand now how anybody could have lifted that sixty-five-foot skeleton out of your building without being caught. They would have to take it to pieces, and it wasn't reasonable to suppose that I'd put it together again the same night and be hauling it about the country. Now, was it?" he added, with an argumentative raising of his heavy black eyebrows.

"It wasn't more unreasonable than to find you taking all this trouble with that dead elephant," was Raymond's rejoinder, as he pointed to the huge framework of wood and iron in which the creature hung.

"He wasn't dead when I got him, and I was trying to save his life," explained Marvin. "He'll be a good attraction even stuffed, but he would have been worth a lot more if I could have kept him alive. He's the only specimen of this particular kind in the country.

"I got him cheap because he'd been hurt in a railroad wreck. I bought him direct from the importer, and I'm keeping him dark till I'm ready to exhibit him. But that Cooper & Jones show is always dogging me, and, with a bucket of white paint, they'd fake up a sacred Siamese elephant of their own as sure as ever they got a chance to size up mine."

Marvin showed how he had the special apparatus made to support the elephant, so as to give the fractured bones an opportunity to knit, and Raymond noted how nearly the frame under the canvas bore the outline of the stolen dinosaur. That the mistake of himself and Professor Noyes had been a natural one could not be very well denied.

As the manager, the professor, and Raymond left the flat cars together on the most friendly terms, walking toward the station, talking about the extraordinary disappearance of the dinosaur, Marvin suddenly stopped and slapped the professor violently on the back.

"Say, come over to the hotel with me," he cried, "and I'll give you a knock-down to the very man you want."

"Who is he?" asked Raymond.

"Guy Cambridge, and he's an Englishman who has a cattle-ranch up in the Big Horn country. He's a square fellow, and he's dead stuck on fossils. I've known him for years. I saw him this morning, and he was quite excited because he had heard that some men had dug up the bones of a dinosaur somewhere near the Hole-in-the-Wall."

"That's up in the Bad Lands, isn't it?" inquired Raymond.

"Sure. It's two hundred miles due north from Rawlins, and about the same distance from everywhere else, right among the Big Horn mountains."

"I don't exactly see how the finding of a dinosaur up there is going to help us," said Raymond. "We are looking for our own."

"You will understand all about it when you talk to Guy," was Marvin's rather enigmatic reply.

"I shall be pleased to hear what this Mr. Cambridge has to say," observed Professor Noyes solemnly.

A short walk brought them to the Custer Hotel, where they found Guy Cambridge smoking a cigar in the office, and, as Raymond quickly noted, reading an account of the loss of the dinosaur from the Parker Museum in a Millburytown paper. The flaring head-lines told the young man this at a glance.

Mr. Cambridge was a tall, well-built man of thirty-five or thereabouts, with a ruddy British complexion, browned by constant exposure to the variable and often extreme Wyoming weather. He wore the ordinary dress of a ranch-owner, including a cartridge-belt partly concealed by his long-tailed black coat.

He was very cordial with Professor Noyes and Raymond, and perfectly willing to tell them all he knew about the bones of the big animal said to have been found at the Hole-in-the-Wall.

Marvin, having performed the ceremony of introduction, said he had lots to attend to at the circus, and, after wishing the professor and Raymond good luck in the recovery of the dinosaur, took his departure.

"Now, about this dinosaur," said Cambridge. "A few days ago I met a man named Donahue, who used to ride herd for me on my cattle-ranch, but who left me about six months ago. I don't know what he's been doing since, but I heard lately that he's in with a hard crowd. Maybe he is, but, as I'm not a sheriff's deputy or a policeman, it's none of my business.

"Well, we gave each other 'Howdy,' and in the course of our talk he told me about the remains of a dinosaur which he said some men he knew had found embedded in the side of a hill. They had dug it out, he told me, and had the bones ready to ship."

"Wasn't it strange a man like this Donahue would know a dinosaur by name?" asked Raymond.

"Not at all," laughed Cambridge. "Several of them have been unearthed in different parts of Wyoming in the last few years, and the big price paid for them by museums has got everybody on the lookout for more. 'Dinosaur' is a common word in this section."

"Do you believe Donahue's story?" put in Professor Noyes quietly.

"I have something in my room that he gave me as proof of it," answered Cambridge with a smile. "If you'll come up, I'll show it to you."

Willingly the professor went with the jovial Cambridge to his bedroom, where he took from a saddle-bag a piece of bone about eighteen inches long and four wide, which he laid on the table.

"Part of his tail," he explained briefly.

Professor Noyes pounced upon it, seeing at one look that it was indeed one of the joints of the twenty-foot tail which every properly constituted dinosaur carried about with him a few million years ago.

"This is authentic, beyond question," murmured the professor. "But it doesn't look as if it had been found lately."

"Why?" asked Cambridge.

"Well, for one thing, it has the appearance of having been carefully cleaned and prepared for mounting by processes which would be hardly possible in such a wild country as I know the Bad Lands to be," answered the professor musingly. "Then, again, these fossilized bones undergo certain chemical changes after being exposed to the air for a few weeks. Bones that are just dug from the rock and sand do not look as this one does—at least, if they do, it is a new discovery of science."

Raymond Mills was listening intently to these words of the professor, uttered carefully and monotonously, and indicating that he was slowly revolving in his mind various questions that rather puzzled him.

Guy Cambridge also seemed to be giving to the professor's learned observations the closest attention.

"It is very interesting, professor," he said. "Donahue gave me that bone, and declared it was one of those they had dug out. He said the form of the monster was clearly defined in the hillside where the rock had been split away through a landslide."

"Dinosaurs are frequently found practically perfect as to form in just that way," interposed the professor, still bending over the bone.

Then, with a sudden and eager movement, he stepped swiftly to the window; and, taking a magnifying-glass from his pocket, examined the bone with feverish minuteness.

"What is it, professor?" cried Raymond, catching the excitement of his learned colleague.

"It's—it's one of our bones!" almost shrieked the professor. "I mean, it belongs to our Parker Museum dinosaur. I am sure of it."

"How do you know?" demanded Cambridge.

"By this small number, 'seventeen,' in ink, that I put on myself in articuulating the skeleton," was the professor's positive answer, as he pointed to some hardly perceptible black scratches at one end of the fossilized fragment.

"Just what I expected to hear," was Guy Cambridge's comment. "Donahue and his pals have stolen your dinosaur and taken it up to the Hole-in-the-Wall to sell as a new discovery. I reckon we'll have to ride over and get that skeleton. Don't you think so?"

Then, as he looked doubtfully at Pro-

fessor Noyes, he added: "At least, Mr. Mills and I can go, and—"

"I can ride, if that's what you mean," interrupted the professor quietly. "I'll go, too."

CHAPTER VIII.

A SHOCK FOR RAYMOND MILLS.

"THIS saddle is unusually hard," remarked Professor Noyes on the afternoon of the fourth day of their journey from Rawlins through the Bad Lands. "Don't you think we'd better camp for the night?"

"Very soon," was Cambridge's quick, terse response.

"I thought I saw a man in a slouch-hat peeping over that ridge yonder," said the professor a few moments later.

"And there's some one in the cañon ahead of us, just where it swings to the left," added Raymond Mills.

Three rough-looking men, each carrying a rifle ready for action, suddenly stepped into the middle of the narrow pass, while two others appeared on the edge of the rocks above them, one on either side.

"Sit still," was Guy Cambridge's low-toned but sharp order to his companions. "Let your horses keep on."

There seemed nothing else to be done, for if they had tried to retreat the rifle bullets could have stopped them. As for showing fight, that would have been useless with three revolvers against five Winchesters, especially when the possessors of the latter had the drop on them.

So Cambridge, Raymond, and the professor kept on. They had not gone far, however, before they were stopped savagely.

"Halt!"

It was one of the three men in the cañon in front of them who gave the order.

As Cambridge and his two fellow travelers reined up in hasty obedience, the former called out in an indignant tone:

"Say, what's the matter with you, Boston? Don't you know me?"

"Sure we know you, Guy," came the reply. "But who's them strangers with yer?"

"Friends of mine."

"Knowed 'em long?"

"Middling," was Cambridge's evasive answer.

"Well, let 'em put their hands up till we can see what they look like. You, too, Guy."

The rifles of the two men on the rocks above were pointed steadily at Raymond and the professor as they rode slowly forward with Cambridge, all three with their hands in the air.

When they were within a few yards of the rather overbearing gentleman whom Cambridge had addressed as Boston, he looked suspiciously at Raymond and demanded:

"Now, what's the game?"

Raymond returned the defiant stare as he answered, in steady, perhaps aggressive, tones:

"I'm Raymond Mills, and this is Professor Noyes. He is curator of the Parker Museum, in Millburytown, Pennsylvania, and I'm his assistant. Mr. Cambridge understands you have the bones of a large dinosaur. We have come to look at them. That's all."

"How do you know it's us that's got the critter?"

"Oh, quit your fooling, Boston," broke in Cambridge impatiently. "Donahue told me that you and Frenchy and some more of the boys had found the thing. Where *is* Donahue?"

"Donahue!" roared Boston, without changing his attitude or removing his eyes from Raymond's face, while the forefinger of his right hand rested idly against the trigger of his repeating rifle.

Donahue—a hulking, stoop-shouldered giant of six feet two—came forth from behind a huge boulder, armed, like the others, with a Winchester rifle. He nodded sourly to Cambridge.

Raymond Mills knew that the six men in sight were outlaws, and that at the slightest signal from Boston, their leader, they would shoot down him and the professor without mercy. Guy Cambridge had told him they were on the edge of the notorious Hole-in-the-Wall, a natural fortress, where desperadoes could and did flout the law, and where each man hidden there was bound by oath to defend every other to the death.

There was decidedly an element of personal danger in this expedition—a large element, too. But neither Raymond Mills nor Professor Noyes considered that of any importance when weighed against the hope of getting back the stolen dinosaur.

"How about this, Donahue?" growled Boston.

"I told Cambridge about the dinosaur we got," replied Donahue sulkily. "I don't

know nothin' particular about these other two sports."

"They've told you who they are, Boston," interposed Cambridge. "Are you going to show us what you have or not? We've ridden a long way to see it."

"Git off'n yer hosses," commanded Boston.

They obeyed; but the professor, once on the ground, had hardly time to stretch his stiffened limbs, when some one behind clapped a handkerchief over his eyes and knotted it tightly at the back of his head. Then a hand grasped his shoulder, and he was shoved forward, stumbling and scuffling, over the sharp stones that strewed the floor of the cañon.

It seemed to the professor like a very long walk, but actually it did not last more than fifteen minutes. At the end of that time he found himself scrambling up a steep incline on his hands and knees, urged on by repeated proddings with what he learned afterward was the muzzle of a Winchester.

There was so much loose sand and so many boulders of various sizes rattling down upon him, and so many stones gave way under his feet, that his progress was slow, as well as painful. It was also, he felt, excessively undignified; but he had been parting with his dignity bit by bit ever since he had left Millburytown, and had become used to it.

He was on the point of stopping for breath, regardless of the merciless jabbing of the rifle-barrel, when he felt that he had reached the top of the eminence, and walked forward on the level with a sensation of holy relief.

But he was soon brought back to earth again.

Just when he felt that he was getting into his stride, as it were, he suddenly stepped off into space. Then he sat down —hard, ere he began to slide swiftly down a hillside as steep as that up which he had climbed just before, occasionally shooting off as he came to a perpendicular place, and landing again with a terrific bump a few yards farther down.

Dignity? He hadn't a shred of it left when at last he reached bottom and tore the handkerchief from his eyes.

He found himself in a good-sized hollow, entirely surrounded by mountains rising straight as a city sky-scraper everywhere except in one narrow place. At this place the rocks inclined at an angle down which a person might possibly descend without breaking his neck.

"That's where I must have come down," exclaimed the professor aloud.

"You're right, professor; and I came with you," some one responded.

It was Raymond Mills, who had been behind him without his knowing it, and who had overheard the remark.

"How is it you and I are alone down here?" went on Mills. "What's become of Cambridge, and where's the dinosaur?"

"I wish I knew where the dinosaur was," returned the professor dolefully. "I don't so much care about this Mr. Cambridge."

"I do, because it is through him I hoped to recover the thing."

"You don't think Mr. Cambridge has inveigled us to this wild region for some purpose of his own, and that the whole story of the dinosaur being here is false, do you?" asked the professor, a new note of alarm in his tones.

The same idea had struck Raymond as he remembered that they really knew nothing about Guy Cambridge except what Marvin had told them—and Marvin was not the man to inspire overweening confidence. On the other hand, Cambridge seemed such an open, straightforward kind of man that it was hard to believe evil of him. Besides, what possible reason could he have for leading them into a trap?

The answer to this last question came sooner than they had anticipated.

"Raymond!"

A hollow voice had called his name, and it was not the voice of Professor Noyes.

Raymond had been looking straight into the professor's face, and his lips had never moved.

"Did you hear that, professor?"

"Yes. Somebody called you."

"Did you recognize the voice?"

The professor did not answer for a moment, and a fleeting shadow of superstitious terror passed over his countenance.

"I thought I did," he said finally. "But, of course, I was mistaken. It must have been some of the men who belong to the place. You gave them your name, you know."

Raymond did not ask the professor whose voice he thought it sounded like, and the latter did not tell him; but one name was in the minds of both.

The explanation just given him by the professor did not satisfy Raymond. He

had noticed an up-and-down opening in the face of the rocky wall close by—a mere fissure, just about wide enough for a man to enter. Perhaps the voice had come from that. It seemed possible, at all events.

"Wait here a minute, professor," he said hastily, and plunged into the crevice.

It was an uncanny place, pitch-dark at first, but showing a faint gleam of light in the distance as he went in farther and farther. The walls were rough, with jagged projections here and there, in nearly every instance there being a depression immediately opposite, indicating that the split was the result of some old natural convulsion which had cut the mountain downward in a crooked line, very much like a flash of forked lightning.

Raymond came into collision with these protuberances from time to time, but never shifted his eyes from the distant reflection of light which became stronger as he approached.

Suddenly he encountered an abrupt turn, and as he squeezed past the corner he found himself at the bottom of a deep shaft, that might have been scooped out of the solid mountain. It was not more than twenty feet in diameter, with the top so far away that the daylight lost much of its power before he reached to where he stood gazing upward at the irregular patch of blue sky which the shape of the pit permitted him to see.

The general aspect of the shaft Raymond Mills observed in the first instant after he had made his way from the gloomy corridor by which he had come. In the next he shrank close against the wall.

At his very feet was a gulf some eight feet wide, unfathomable and black, which stretched the whole width of the shaft, and cut him off completely from any part of it except the two-foot-wide ledge on which he stood, crouching against the wall.

"Well, this is a queer arrangement," he muttered. "I've heard a great deal about the underground passages and secret outlets of the Hole-in-the-Wall, and how bad men get in and defy the police. Now I begin to understand how they do it. I suppose there is some way of getting across this deep ditch—reminds me of the Styx—if only I knew the trick of it, and—"

He stopped and an expression of horror gathered upon his face as he bent forward to look at some object on the ground, on the other side of the gulf.

What Raymond saw was the form of a man, in the neat attire of a well-to-do city resident, altogether different from the rough dress affected by the denizens of this part of Wyoming.

It was lying in the deep shadows of the wall on the left, so that Raymond had not observed it at first, but now as he gazed with a strange feeling that the impossible was about to happen the prostrate figure twitched convulsively and turned half over. As the back of the head overhung the black abyss, with its unseen, rushing waters, the face was upturned to the light struggling down from the mouth of the pit, far above.

It was the face of Orton Parker, the millionaire steel magnate of Millburytown!

CHAPTER IX.

WANTED—A MILLION.

"MR. PARKER!" called Raymond, hardly knowing what he did.

To his great joy, Orton Parker slowly raised his head, and then, with obvious effort, staggered to his feet.

"Mind! Be careful! You almost fell into that ditch!"

Raymond fairly screamed this warning, for the millionaire had lurched to the very brink of the black chasm.

"Not a bit of it!" he snapped. "I know what I am doing. Why should I be such a fool as to tumble in there?"

The harsh tones were those in which the head of the Parker Steel Manufacturing Company was accustomed to snub his subordinates when they irritated him. In his dazed condition, he probably imagined he was blundering about his big works in Millburytown.

In a few seconds he had pulled himself together, with the evident determination, characteristic of his dogged courage, not to be surprised at his predicament, queer as it was, and inquired:

"Raymond, what do you suppose these fellows mean to do?"

"I don't know. How is it you are here, Mr. Parker? Perhaps, if you'll tell me that, I may be able to suggest something. It is all so—so unexpected, you see."

"I came to look after that dinosaur. Nothing else would have brought me to such a God-forgotten corner of the world as this," grunted the magnate.

"But what made you think it was here?"

"I got an anonymous letter in Millburytown the day after you left, telling me I should hear something about it if I went to Rawlins and registered at the Custer Hotel. Well, like a dod-gasted fool, I did go to Rawlins. At the hotel I met two hard-looking customers who told me the dinosaur was up in the Big Horn Mountains, and that, if I wanted to see it, I could ride over with them. They were frank in saying it would cost me some money to get it back, but I expected that, of course."

"And they brought you here?"

"Yes, on horseback, nearly a week's ride. Then we found some more men, and they showed me the bones of a large animal which looked like our dinosaur. After some bargaining, I consented to pay ten thousand dollars when the bones were received and put together in Millburytown, giving them my word of honor not to tell the police or attempt to punish them in any way."

"How long have you been here?"

"Two days, but we did not come to an understanding until to-day—just an hour or so ago, or, perhaps, less time than that. I don't know. My mind is all muddled about it."

"You believe they have our dinosaur?"

"Haven't a doubt of it, and if things had ended there, I should have been satisfied. But I had no sooner agreed to their terms than the real reason I was induced to come to this place came out. Some of the rascals grabbed me behind and held a handkerchief soaked with chloroform over my mouth and nose. That's the last I remember until I found myself in this big chimney, shouting your name. Then I heard you answer, and I got up."

The fact that he had not noticed the interval between his calling to Raymond and getting a response the young man attributed to the chloroform.

"You knew I was here?" asked Raymond.

"Yes, you told the landlord of the Custer Hotel, in Rawlins, that you and the professor were coming here with a man named Cambridge."

"So I did. I thought it as well to leave some word behind us if we didn't come back."

"Sensible thing to do. I don't believe I thought about the possibility of your being within hearing when I called to you, however. You'd been in my thoughts a great deal in connection with the dinosaur, and no doubt it was unconscious cerebration that made me shout 'Raymond!' when I was getting back to my senses."

"It was lucky you did it, whatever the reason. It is better for the three of us to be together than for you to have to fight it out by yourself. It is clear they mean to hold you for ransom—"

"They'll never get a cent," blurted out the millionaire fiercely.

"I hope not. But it is more important to get you out of this than for you to save a few thousand dollars, and — what's that paper sticking in your waistcoat?"

"My waistcoat? The insolent scoundrels!" growled Orton Parker, as he pulled out a scrap of letter-paper which had been thrust between two buttons. Then, lighting a match, he found on the paper, in a rough lead-pencil scrawl, these words, which he read aloud:

> We got you were nobody can't find you, and yore two men raymun and Noise. We want a milion dolars to let you go. We can sell the dinysore to somebody els it ant no good you sqweelin you got to come acros with the doc.
>
> your frend,
>
> HOLE-IN-THE-WALL.

"Well," ejaculated the millionaire. "That beats anything I ever heard for cold-drawn impudence. These fellows must forget they are in the United States, where the law is pretty severe on blackmailers. A million dollars! Pooh!"

He might have said more, but just then two men came out of the shadows, took him by the arms, and, without a word, disappeared with him. How they managed it Raymond could not see, for it had been gradually growing darker, but, knowing how honeycombed with subterranean passages the Hole-in-the-Wall was said to be, it was not hard to imagine.

Mills had little time to speculate, however, for a rope, with a slip-knot, suddenly dropped over his head, and settling around his elbows, was drawn tight, as a gruff voice bade him "Come on!"

He was dragged along the narrow ledge without even seeing his captor, but only for a dozen feet or so. Then, as he went through an arch in the rock, he found himself in the actual camp of the "Boston gang," as this particular group of Western crooks was called.

It was a small valley, with more or less precipitous mountains almost entirely surrounding it. A fire, with a pot of boiling coffee over it, with tin cups, a box of crackers, some onions, canned beef, and other constituents of a wilderness meal, on convenient boulders, indicated that supper was in progress.

Raymond Mills hastily counted four men, including Boston, Donahue, and another whom he had heard spoken to as "Frenchy." They all bore a general resemblance to each other in dress and demeanor, all carried revolvers, and all had the hang-dog aspect of men who live hunted lives.

Guy Cambridge was nowhere to be seen, and Raymond wondered.

"Get his gun, Dunton," was Boston's brief order, as the man who had brought Mills in stood holding the lariat, waiting for instructions.

The revolver which Raymond carried in his outside coat-pocket was taken from him, and Boston, pointing to a boulder near the fire, told him to sit down, and then removed the lariat from his arms and body.

"Get the old man, Dunt," was Boston's next command, and Dunton disappeared, coming back almost at once, leading Professor Noyes by the elbow with one hand, while in the other he carried the learned man's six-shooter.

Simultaneously two other men came into view, on the opposite side of the ravine, from behind the horses, shoving along Orton Parker, boiling over with indignation at being handled in this unceremonious way by men such as he paid a dollar and a quarter to a day at his Millburytown plant.

"Give 'em some coffee and chuck," directed Boston, "while I talk to my old college chum, Orton Parker."

"Yes, I'd give you 'old college chum' if I had you in Pennsylvania," snorted Mr. Parker.

Dunton poured some of the hot coffee into tin cups and handed one to each of the three prisoners, while Frenchy gave them a plentiful supply of chipped beef and crackers on tin plates.

Mr. Parker scowled in disgust at this provender, for he had lived on it for two days, and was becoming very tired of the fare. But the professor and Raymond, to whom the hot coffee smelled appetizing, since they had had nothing to eat or drink since morning, fell to with an appetite, and were glad to get it. Parker didn't hold out long. In a minute or two he took a sip of his coffee, and finding it good, even without milk, since it was well sweetened, drank it with satisfaction, in spite of his anger. Then he tackled the beef and crackers, and at last decided to make as hearty a meal as the circumstances would allow.

"Now, Mr. Parker," began Boston, "we'll come straight to the point. You understand that a million dollars will get you out of this here fix, and take you home, don't you?"

"Bosh!" snapped the magnate.

"You got my letter, didn't you?"

"Yes, and it was the stupidest communnication I ever received."

"Stupid, eh? Oh, I don't know. There's eight of us to whack up on that million, and a bit of change like that ain't nothing to you. I've heard you are worth more than a hundred millions. Now, what we're goin' to do is this: We'll send them two sports o' your'n, Raymond and the purfessor, to get the money. You'll give them checks on their banks what they can cash, and a paper in your writin' an' signed with your John Hancock, what'll admit them to your safe-deposit vaults. Savvy? You have nigh a million in them vaults in gold and national bank notes, I've found out."

"You have?" yelled Parker, nearly beside himself with rage as he looked into the grinning face of the rascal who held him in his power. "How do you know so much about my business?"

"I was in Millburytown an' looked into things my own self," was Boston's cool reply. Then he continued: "You'll stay here till the money is brought back by some of my men. If there's anythin' as even smells like a 'double cross' on the part of your people, the minute I git a tip to that effect, a bullet goes through your nut. I hope you savvy that, too."

Orton Parker had been busy with his meal during the last part of Boston's explanation, drinking his coffee and munching his beef and crackers as if the making of a good repast were of more importance to him just then than anything on earth.

But Raymond Mills saw the steel-blue eyes twinkling as they did only while the magnate was thinking deeply, and he knew that the astute steel-man was regarding from every point of view the audacious demand made upon him. It was his wits against those of these unscrupulous, but untutored,

men of the Bad Lands, and Raymond was inclined to wager on the success of the trained intellect, polished by long attrition with the world.

Desperate as the "Boston Gang" might be, their experience was limited to their own mountains and desert wastes. After all, education will tell, even in a pitched battle in the wilderness.

Professor Noyes, busy with his supper, was content to leave the conduct of affairs entirely to the others.

He was a philosopher, and it was his habit to accept the inevitable as became a man of his dispassionate temperament. Moreover, he had never been brought before into direct contact with thoroughly lawless men, and he could not believe that his present adventure would result seriously, in spite of the extraordinary series of incidents which had brought him into the fastnesses of the remote Hole-in-the-Wall.

Boston, Frenchy, Dunton, Donahue, and the other three men sat around, smoking cigarettes or pipes, watching the prisoners closely from beneath their lowering brows. Each one had "killed his man" often enough to feel no compunction about an extra murder or so, as Raymond Mills and Orton Parker very well knew. Perhaps the professor knew it, too; but if he did, no one could say it disturbed him outwardly.

"Well, Mr. Parker," said Boston at last, throwing away the end of his cigarette and beginning to roll another with one hand, in plainsman style. "What do you say?"

"I'll write the order for the money."

He said it, coolly and calmly, with a slight smile playing about his firm mouth, in marked contrast with his violent ebullitions of rage only a few minutes before.

Boston tried not to betray his astonishment at the easy victory, but his yellowish-gray eyes, glinting in the red fire-light, seemed as if they would pierce the millionaire's very soul, as he almost purred, so gentle were his tones:

"Then do it now."

"I will," said Orton Parker, taking a fountain-pen and a check-book from his pockets.

CHAPTER X.

A DROP FOR A TRAIL.

ORTON PARKER wrote four checks on four different banks in Millburytown, for $75,000 each, payable to Philetus Noyes, which he handed to Boston, who examined them closely by the firelight.

"That makes $300,000," said the gang leader. "Where's the other $700,000?"

"In my safe-deposit vault in the First National Bank of Millburytown," answered Parker, who was writing something on the back of one of his visiting-cards. "Here's an order to the president of the bank to permit Professor Philetus Noyes to take what he wants from my vault."

"Will the president let him do it?" inquired Boston suspiciously.

"Certainly. He knows Professor Noyes very well. This will not be the first time he's had access to the vault. My signature is all the president will require."

Professor Noyes listened to all this with his usual soberness while Raymond, mystified as to Orton Parker's ultimate purpose, wanted to ask what it all meant.

"I'll pass these checks an' the card to the purfessor to-morrow mornin', when him an' this here Raymond starts for Rawlins," remarked Boston, "I'll send one of my men with 'em clear to Millburytown. He'll put me wise if there's any monkey business, an' if there is, you know what'll happen to Mr. Parker. I'm mighty sudden with my gun when I gets a hunch to shoot."

"Where's these gents goin' to sleep?" asked Donahue, as he put his hand on Raymond's shoulder with a familiarity which the young man resented by jerking his head aside.

"I'll fix that later. Let 'em sit around the fire a while," replied Boston, with a satisfied grin. "Mr. Parker is behavin' like a gent, an' I 'preciates it. Therefore, I aims to treat 'em all accordin'."

Donahue, still hanging about behind Raymond, notwithstanding his rebuff, deliberately thrust two fingers inside the collar of the young man's flannel outing shirt and then stepped in front of him.

Raymond felt something scratching the back of his neck, and at the same moment became cognizant of a significant wink directed at him by Donahue, who immediately afterward walked away and lighted a cigarette with an elaborate air of unconcern.

For the next hour, during which Orton Parker smoked a very large, black cigar, after giving Raymond a milder one, the latter looked furtively at Donahue from time to time, but the big ex-cattleman never glanced in his direction.

Only that Raymond, putting his hand to his neck, felt that a folded paper had been pushed down inside the back of the collar, he might have thought the decidedly forbidding-looking Donahue had not left anything there. As it was he was all eagerness to get to some place where he could examine the paper.

The opportunity came in due time, when Boston, stretching himself, ordered his men to take the prisoners to their quarters for the night.

Orton Parker was led blindfolded to the queer shaft where Raymond had seen him recovering from the chloroform—for, although he had been allowed the comparative freedom of the camp while the pretended negotiations for the dinosaur had been going on, the rascals felt it necessary to watch him closely now. He was a valuable asset to them.

Raymond and the professor were taken, by a narrow ravine with a concealed outlet, to the small hollow into which they had both slid so unceremoniously down the stony incline on their first arrival in camp.

It was a beautiful summer starlit night, and, with blankets which were part of their own riding equipment, drawn about them, they would sleep comfortably enough on the ground, their faces to the sky.

They were to start for Rawlins just before sunrise, and Boston had advised them to go to sleep at once and get all the rest they could. But Raymond was not ready for sleep just yet. No sooner had Dunton and Frenchy retired, after showing them into their spacious, open-air bedchamber, than Raymond, telling the professor to come with him, squeezed into the narrow crack in the wall, and, lighting a match, read the message that was on the paper.

He did not recognize the writing—which was that of an educated penman, altogether different from Boston's awkward scribble—and he looked for the signature before reading the other part of the note. The letter read:

> I have the dinosaur and am taking it by wagon to Rawlins under a deal with the Boston gang. I overheard scheme of Boston and his men to hold Orton Parker for million. The intention is to get the million and then hold Parker for more money. We will beat that.
>
> Parker must let himself down into that underground river which runs through pit where they keep him prisoner, at the extreme left end of the chasm. He will drop to ledge of rock ten feet below. He need not be afraid. The ledge is there, the full width of the river. He will find a tunnel which extends four miles south and comes out beyond the rocks which bound Hole-in-the-Wall, and also off the trail in general use. When he gets there, he will find you, Professor and Donahue, with extra horse for him. *You can trust Donahue.* I will meet you in Rawlins.—GUY CAMBRIDGE.

"'You can trust Donahue,' eh?" murmured Raymond, repeating the short sentence which had surprised him as much as anything in the letter—and the whole missive was astonishing. "I hope we can trust him, for we'll have to take the chance. Come on, professor."

As soon as Raymond could worm his way through the narrow passage, as he had done once before, he took his station on the dangerous eighteen-inch path overhanging the dark gulf and whispered:

"Mr. Parker!"

"Well? What is it? Something from Cambridge?" was Orton Parker's unexpected response, from the darkness on the other side of the abyss.

"Yes. How did you know?" asked Raymon, astonished.

"Cambridge told me two days ago. He whispered in my ear as he brushed past me. He seemed friendly. But what does his message say?"

Raymond read it over, and Orton Parker gave vent to a dubious grunt.

"Suppose this Cambridge isn't honest?" he objected. "If there is no ledge ten feet down, I should keep on till I found myself in the water a mile or two below, and that would be the end of it."

"Why should Mr. Cambridge tell a falsehood?" put in the professor. "He hasn't anything against you personally, has he?"

"Never saw him in my life until he spoke to me the day before yesterday."

"Even if he is in collusion with these blackmailers, he cannot want to kill you," continued the professor. "Alive you may be worth a great deal of money to them, but dead you would be of no value."

"Hum!" grunted Parker. "Anyhow, I am going to try it, and at once."

He knelt on the edge of the chasm at the left of the pit and tried to see what was below with a lighted match which he held as far down toward the subterranean waters as possible. But it was useless.

A peculiar misty spray rising from the

depths made the darkness absolutely opaque. There might be a platform of rock ten feet below, and there might not. He would have to trust to Cambridge's word.

"Pity you can't see," said Raymond. "But I believe Cambridge. All you have to do is to let yourself down to full length, gripping the edge of the rock, and then let go."

"Yes, let go! That's all very well," grumbled the millionaire. "But how would *you* like to do it?"

Raymond Mills made no reply. He knew that he would do it without hesitation if it were the alternative of being detained a prisoner in the Hole-in-the-Wall indefinitely—perhaps to be murdered in the end. But it would answer no good purpose to say so, and he remained silent.

There was a scuffling sound, and he knew Orton Parker was cautiously crawling over the brink of the awful abyss.

"I have one leg over," announced Parker. "There is nothing but a smooth surface, with no rough places or crevices for my toes. I can't ease myself down in the least. It will be a sheer drop. I hope my fingers will be strong enough to bear my weight for an instant, so that I can have the benefit of my full length before I am compelled to let go."

"Yes, you'll only have a little over four feet to fall," said Raymond encouragingly. "I wish I were on that side. I might help you."

"Thanks for your good wishes," growled Parker. "But a long ladder would be a darned sight more useful."

With a world of puffing and scraping at the smooth rocks, Orton Parker at last contrived to hang at full length, above, as he hoped, the platform of granite which would be the first stage on his way to freedom.

It was at this critical juncture that a hoarse voice from the deep gloom at the other side of the shaft called out:

"Mr. Parker!"

"Well, what do you want?" demanded the millionaire, in as natural accents as he could command in his awkward and unusual situation, with his arms feeling as if they would be dragged from their sockets.

"This here is Donahue. I only wanted to find out whether you was there."

"Of course I'm here. Where else could I be?" retorted Parker.

Then his fingers gave way, and down he went!

"It's all right, Donahue," said Raymond, as he heard a bump, indicating that the millionaire had landed on something solid. "I read what you gave me."

"Good! You savvyed what it all meant, I reckon. That old sport has found the tunnel, I guess. So long!" and Donahue departed as unostentatiously as he had come.

"Hallo, Raymond!" came faintly from below.

"Yes, Mr. Parker!"

"The ledge is here, and so is the tunnel. I've got a light. Look down."

Raymond cautiously peered over into the gulf from the narrow shelf of rock which was all the support he had, and made out, through the mist already referred to, a tiny point of flame moving about, which he knew to be a match in Orton Parker's hand.

"You will probably be at the meeting place long before us," said Raymond, "and you'll have to wait. But we'll come as quickly as we can."

"I don't know about that. From the look of this hole, I shall have a rough time getting along the tunnel, I'm thinking. However, here goes for a start."

There was a pause, and then Orton Parker spoke again, in a much softer tone:

"Raymond!"

"Yes."

"If—if—I should never get out of this alive, I wish you'd tell Mrs. Parker and—and—my daughter, Alice, about it, in the easiest way possible—to prevent their being shocked too much. Lots of people think I'm a rough kind of man—in my temper, I mean—but *they* don't mind it, and I'm afraid they'll feel bad. So smooth it over somehow. You understand?"

"Yes," answered Mills.

"My business affairs are in order, so there'll be no trouble about them. But this other matter is something that you may be able to take care of, and I wish you would."

"I'll do it if it is necessary, but I don't think it is, Mr. Parker," said Raymond, rather brokenly. "You'll get through all right."

Orton Parker shook off his foreboding thoughts determinedly, like the fighter that he was.

"I'm going to try," he answered back cheerily, "just to fool that Boston and his company of unwashed blackguards. Good-by, Raymond! Take care of yourself, professor! Good-by!"

With this, he lighted another match and plunged into the tunnel.

"There's plenty of sand in the old man," was Raymond Mills's quiet remark, as he and the professor stood gazing down into the unfathomable blackness.

CHAPTER XI.

TRICK AGAINST TRICK.

FOR more than a quarter of an hour Raymond and the professor remained on their narrow shelf of stone, listening for some hail from Orton Parker. But none came.

The only sound that reached them was the continued low roar of the unseen torrent far below, with an occasional sullen crack, as if, in the strange changes ever going on in the heart of nature, some great rock had been cleft anew, and was uttering a querulous complaint at the indignity. All else was silence—profound, awe-inspiring.

"He's gone ahead, professor," whispered Raymond. "Let's go to bed."

"I should like to have gone with him," said the professor. "The tunnel must run near the base of the mountain in some places, and no one knows what one might find there in the way of mesozoic relics. I hope Mr. Parker will make some observations as he goes along."

"Perhaps he will but I doubt it," replied Raymond. "I should say he will be too much interested in finding his way to the open air to spend more time in that hole than he can help."

"Yes, I suppose so," assented the professor regretfully. "But he has a great opportunity for paleontological research—one that doesn't come to many of us."

"Let's get some sleep, professor," was all Raymond replied to this.

They edged their way back to the open ravine, and, wrapping themselves in their blankets, with stones for pillows, slept soundly, like old campaigners. They had had a hard, wearisome day.

It seemed to Mills as if he had scarcely closed his eyes when he was shaken roughly by the shoulder, and the harsh accents of Dunton, telling him to get up, sounded in his ear.

"An' yer'd better be quick about it, too," added Frenchy, who had just stirred up the professor with a very ungentle kick. "It'll be sunup in another hour, an' it's time you was hittin' the trail for Rawlins already."

"What about our ablutions?" asked the professor sleepily, as he brought out his tooth-brush and a cake of soap in a metal box. "We must wash before we can do anything."

"*Sacre!* Come on!" growled Frenchy, dragging the professor by the arm.

"Aw! What's the matter with you, French?" demanded Dunton. "Give him time to get up."

Frenchy scowled at Dunton without replying. Evidently there was bad blood between the men.

Professor Noyes put away his tooth-brush and soap and, with Raymond, was led into the main camp, where Boston and several of his men, including Donahue, sprawled around the fire, just as they had been the night before. Boston looked curiously at Raymond and the professor as they came into view.

"You two sports will go to this here Millburytown, and git the money," he said, without preface. "You'll bring it to me at Rawlins, where I'll have Mr. Parker. When I have the mazuma in my clothes you git the man."

He gave the checks and card he had received from Orton Parker to the professor, who, as he put them in his pocketbook, inquired:

"Can't we wash before we start?"

"Sure! There's a creek over there. Show 'em where it is, Donahue."

Raymond and the professor were glad of the permission and, with Donahue, went to where a narrow stream—a mere brook—gurgled over the rocks about a hundred yards away.

"I'm goin' with you to Rawlins," announced Donahue cautiously when they were out of earshot of the others. "Cambridge fixed it with Boston. I have an extra horse staked out about a mile down the trail. The old man will come out of that tunnel in a dry arroyo four miles to the southwest of this p'int an' his horse will be ready for him."

"Thanks," said Raymond heartily.

"*You* needn't thank me," snarled Donahue. "I ain't doin' this for you, nor the old man neither. I'm doin' it for Cambridge. He done somethin' good for me oncet wot I'll never forgit, an' I'm jest tryin' to pay back my debt. That's all ther is to it."

What Guy Cambridge had done for Donahue was to cut a rope with which that gentleman was about to be hanged for horse stealing, but Donahue did not go into particulars to Raymond and the professor. Perhaps he thought it was none of their business.

"I'll have to go with you an' him right through to Millburytown, to square myself with Boston," he continued. "Boston's got to think I don't know nothin' about this here old Parker gittin' away. Savvy? If Boston suspicioned me of havin' a hand in the play he'd plug me where I live if he had to foller me 'roun' the world."

Donahue sauntered back to the other men around the fire, and looked into the pot of coffee boiling for breakfast. Raymond and the professor finished their refreshing toilet at the stream, and came back for a mug of coffee apiece.

"Dunton, go and see if the old man is all right this mornin'," ordered Boston.

"Who do yer mean?"

"Who should I mean?" snapped Boston. "Old Parker, of course. Take him some coffee an' chuck. He's worth a million plunks to us, an' we got to keep him in good condition, same as you would a val'able hoss. Haw, haw, haw!"

Boston guffawed at his own pleasantry, and Dunton grinned in sympathy.

Raymond Mills felt a chill run through him. Dunton would discover that Orton Parker had disappeared, and that would ruin everything. Raymond did not know whether Boston was aware of the existence of the tunnel or not, or whether it was the secret only of Guy Cambridge and the grateful Donahue.

If Boston did know of the tunnel, he would of course go to the other end of it and catch Parker as he came out. If he had never heard of it, he would suppose his prisoner had stumbled into the subterranean river in the dark, and was drowned. In the latter case he would probably think it useless to send to Millburytown for the money, and would be likely to avenge himself for his disappointment in some way on Raymond and the professor.

Something must be done to keep Dunton away from the shaft, Raymond looked at Donahue, whose shaking hands, as he poured out the coffee for Parker, told of his uncontrollable agitation.

"Gimme that coffee for the old guy," said Dunton, stepping up to Donahue.

Before Donahue could respond, Frenchy interposed between them, saying that Boston had given him (Frenchy) the order to take the coffee to the prisoner.

"Git out of my way, Frenchy!" shouted Dunton menacingly.

"Ah-h! Wot have you got to say about it? You are a peeg!" retorted the peppery Frenchy.

It was at this critical moment that Raymond Mills saw a possibility of preventing either of these two men—both enemies of himself and his friends—going to the shaft with the coffee. They must be kept away, somehow.

With a meaning glance at Donahue—which, for a wonder, that rather dull-witted individual comprehended — Raymond took the mug from him slyly and, just as Dunton put out his hand to push Frenchy aside, spilled the whole mugful of nearly boiling coffee over Frenchy's neck, arms, and hands.

The result was what he had anticipated. With a howl of pain and rage, Frenchy flew at the throat of Dunton, and the two were at once writhing on the ground in a savage embrace, biting, gouging, punching, and kicking, each with no other thought in mind than to disable the other. Such a fight meant the desire for murder, whether it was to end so or not.

All the men, with the exception of Donahue, Raymond, and the professor, gathered, whooping, about the combatants, enjoying the brutal duel as they could no other entertainment, and as oblivious as the fighters themselves to everything else around them.

"Take the coffee to the shaft yourself, Donahue," hastily whispered Raymond. "I'll tell Boston you are attending to it."

"All right. Don't let any one else come," was Donahue's response.

He quickly filled another tin mug and seized a plateful of crackers and chipped beef. Then he contrived to stumble against Boston, so that the latter would see what he was doing, and hastened away.

"Donahue has more sense than I gave him credit for," muttered Raymond to Professor Noyes—who had no idea of what he meant.

The battle was soon over, for Dunton was bigger and stronger than Frenchy, and compelled him to beg for mercy to save himself from being throttled to death.

The fighters arose to their feet and

straightened their ruffled plumage as well as they could, while the spectators, discussing with each other the "fine points" of the contest were disappointed that it had not lasted longer. Diversion was always welcome in a Hole-in-the-Wall camp, and, as in the present instance, it was usually too short.

"Hallo, Don! How's Old Spondulicks by this time?" asked Boston, as Donahue returned empty-handed.

"Fine as a longhorn in the Big Muddy," was the reply. "He's takin' his breakfast like a man as had jest done a hundred-mile hike over the mountains in a blizzard. He don't need nothin' more now, he says."

Boston appeared to be quite satisfied.

"He's clean strain, ain't he? Are the horses ready?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, you an' them two gents'd betted h'ist yerselves into the saddle an' pull yer freight. There ain't nothin' else to wait for, I reckon. You know what you has to do."

"Go to Millburytown and come back to Rawlins mighty quick with the money. Ain't that all?"

"That's c'rect. You've got it down to a hair," chuckled Boston. "When you've gone I'll go an' see Old Doughbags an' tell him you're on yer way."

"Will you?" was Raymond Mills's mental comment. "That means we've got to hustle when we do get out of this."

Donahue led the three horses they were to use away from the others, and the professor climbed rather laboriously into his saddle while Raymond sidled up to Donahue and whispered:

"Stay back a little and keep him talking while the professor and I ride on. Hold him away from that shaft as long as you can. You can come after us on the dead gallop. We know the trail for the first mile or two, anyhow."

"I savvy," answered Donahue.

Raymond mounted, and, with a nod of farewell to Boston, rode down the trail, intending to branch off as soon as he was out of sight in accordance with private directions received from Donahue.

"Go ahead," said Boston to the latter.

"I'm goin'. But, look here—"

As Raymond rode away, he saw that Donahue had engaged Boston in what seemed to be an interesting colloquy.

"How much of a start shall we have before he finds out Mr. Parker isn't there?" muttered Raymond, as he touched his horse with a spur.

(To be continued.)

BY DUMB SHOW.

BY JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE.

A Strange Trick of Chance in Connection with a Love Affair That Had a Rough Row to Hoe.

"THERE *is* no argument!" blustered the red-faced old gentleman. "Out you go—out of this house this moment, young man; and I shall instruct the maids that no inmate of the place will be at home to you in the future, should you have the temerity to call."

"Papa, you can't be so unreasonable," cried Hazel. "You are not yourself. You don't understand Harry—he has the goodwill and respect of every one but you. Oh, I don't know what to do!"

Young Mr. Ruggles assumed a becoming dignity.

"Your father is quite right, Hazel, when he says there is no argument," he remarked. "After such consummate rudeness on his part, I would not stoop to discuss the matter. I shall write to you, Hazel."

"And I forbid her, as my daughter, to receive any letter from you," cried the old man.

"Oh, we can't let it go like this!" wailed the girl. "It's all because you don't understand, papa. Please ask people about Harry. He is *not* a 'cheap sport'—as you call him—and any one will tell you that his record at the medical college is a splen-

did one. You might just go there and ask about him."

"See here," fumed the father, "I think so little of this young whippersnapper, and I think so much of my own reputation, that I wouldn't go to any blamed medical college, nor any other college, to ask about him—I wouldn't care to have them know I knew anything about him."

"Good-by, Hazel," said the young man angrily, and turned on his heel and left the house.

"Now, you go to your room and cry all you want to," said the satisfied tyrant. "You're altogether too young to judge in these matters. You don't know a man from a sissy. That Ruggles is a flashy, cigarette-smoking, paper sport, and I won't have him around ringing my door-bell. Even the servants will gossip about it."

"He isn't flashy, and he *doesn't* smoke cigarettes—he told me so!" declared the tearful girl.

"Well, if he doesn't, he ought to," sniffed her father; "he's the type."

Time passed, and Hazel saw little of the banished lover. There were occasional "accidental-on-purpose" meetings at soda-fountain trysting-places and in the remote reaches of the park, but either through fear or dignity, the young man came no more to the interdicted house.

"I saw that young stripling, Ruggles, on the street to-day," said the unrelenting parent at dinner one evening, "and he was flashier than ever. Walking with a *cane;* and he *was* smoking!"

"Not a cigarette—I know he wasn't!" declared the girl stoutly.

"It happened to be a cigar," allowed the father reluctantly, "but it was all the worse. He looked like a cheap drummer."

The mother, long-suffering, shook her head pointedly; and then the conversation languished.

On a fine, crisp day in the autumn, the old man was strolling leisurely along the avenue by the river, at peace with himself for the time being.

Suddenly, in the near distance, from out of the crowd of saunterers, appeared a vision past understanding. It was a man, to all appearances; but its apparel defied all conventions and ideas of propriety.

There was the hideous combination of a top hat and short sack coat, and the coat was of a shockingly audible plaid. The trousers did not match the coat, but asserted themselves violently with broad, conspicuous stripes of white and black. And on the feet were gaiters of white cloth, like those affected by black-faced comedians.

In the lapel of the awful coat flaunted a yellow chrysanthemum of enormous proportions, and the creature carried a bunch of the same flowers under one arm. The other hand held an enormous walking-stick with a club head.

The elderly promenader gazed at the startling apparition for an instant, and then stopped to gasp:

"Gracious Heavens! Ruggles! He's crazy as a loon."

The young man in the extraordinary clothes came on with eyes soberly fixed upon the ground until he almost collided with the horrified old gentleman. He stopped suddenly and, with no change of countenance, solemnly proffered him one of the yellow blossoms.

"What do you mean by this, sir?" exploded the old man. "Isn't your very appearance sufficient insult to any one that sees it?"

Mr. Ruggles said never a word, but continued to hold out the flower, mutely appealing for its acceptance.

"Say! Are you drunk or crazy?" blurted the elderly party.

The young man met his glance, but gave no sign of having heard his question.

"For two cents I'd call a cop and have you arrested!" roared the angry man. "You have no right to go about insulting respectable citizens like this."

The resplendent youth continued to regard him dully, likewise to extend the scorned blossoms more insistently.

"Can't you hear what I say?" howled the irate gentleman.

The youth did not so much as blink an eyelid.

At that juncture a good-looking young man stepped up to the pair and said in a low voice to the older man:

"Better be careful, sir. He's sometimes violent when he gets like this."

"Bless my soul! Who are you?" cried the now startled man.

"Well, I'm supposed to be this poor fellow's keeper," replied the stranger; "but I don't dare tackle him when he's like this."

The old man turned pale.

"You don't mean to tell me that this poor wretch is in some institution!"

The stranger nodded solemnly.

"My, my, but this is awful!" and the old man's manner was now thoroughly changed.

The object of his solicitude took a step nearer and thrust the flower into his face, tickling his nose.

"Come!" said Hazel's father. "I must try to help you. I used to know this poor fellow."

He hailed a passing taxicab, and signed to the stranger to get the lunatic into it.

"We must get him away from the gaze of the crowd," he said in a low voice. "This publicity is awful."

They took each an arm of the gaily-decked youth, who made no resistance as they led him toward the cab.

Another stranger came up then and said quietly: "I guess I'd better go along with you."

"Who's this—another keeper?" inquired the old man.

The first one nodded. Then they gently urged the victim into the cab and took seats beside and opposite him.

"Where shall we go?" asked the old gentleman.

The first stranger was about to reply, but suddenly the dumb creature found his tongue. He pointed at the clock of a near-by church and said pleasantly: "Pardon me, gentlemen, but the time is up. I suppose I can talk now?"

The two young fellows laughed heartily, and some of their amusement was unmistakably directed at the old gentleman.

"W-what's all this?" demanded the latter, scenting a new development in the mystery.

"An explanation is due you, sir," said the first stranger. "Mr. Ruggles apparently interfered with your afternoon walk while carrying out the instructions of the Sealed Book Fraternity, into which he is being initiated to-day. I was detailed to watch him to see that he carried out our orders of absolute silence to the letter. He was instructed to dress in this outlandish costume and offer a chrysanthemum to every person who manifested any curiosity over his appearance. In my own part, I could not give the game away until the time of his ordeal was up. I hope you will overlook any apparent offense in the case."

The old man was very angry at first, but the name of the fraternity seemed to attract his notice.

"The Sealed Book," he murmured with a puzzled frown. "I thought that was a society of advanced scholars?"

"It is," said the stranger. "Why not? Mr. Ruggles is the highest honor man of his class."

The old man bit his lip vexedly.

"I suppose you are both medical men?" he said to the two strangers, with idle curiosity.

"I'm not—I'm a newspaper man," said the last-comer. "I'm merely a friend of Ruggles."

"Great Scott! You won't go and put this in your paper for a joke, will you?" cried the old man, alarmed.

"Why, I don't know," drawled the reporter. "I thought it might make a good story. 'Well known financier butts into fraternity initiation as good Samaritan'—something like that."

The old man grew red again.

"This is outrageous!" he cried. "Confound you, Ruggles, you are my evil genius! You are always bringing me trouble. Will you deliberately allow these fellows to make me ridiculous before the public?"

"Most of the trouble between us has been for me, sir," replied the young man. "But I'm not vindictive. I think I might induce my friend to leave this out of his paper—not as a favor to you, sir, however. I would do it for Hazel's sake—that is, if she asked me. I'll go home with you and see what she says about it if you wish."

The old man gulped down the wrath which surged within him.

"Come along then," he snapped.

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 Glen.

THE BIG OBSTACLE.*

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Odds Against the Banner," "His Handicap Mate," "The Isle of Mysteries," etc.

The Thing a Man Did When He Didn't Care What Happened to Him and Why He Had Cause to Regret It Later.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

COWPER ROUSEY, after four years' absence in Australia, returns to his native land, penniless and shabby. His Uncle Philip, a stock broker, refuses to do anything for him because Cowper had declined to go into business and preferred to follow the career of an artist, of which he has now made a failure. Cowper's own friends also turn him the cold shoulder, but the worst blow of all is when he chances to see the girl he loves, Margaret Adair, whirl by him in bridal array to a church, which his deadly rival, Oscar Harmsworth, also enters in the garb of a bridegroom. After that Cowper cares not what happens to him so is in the mood to take up with the plan of a red-haired stranger who offers him five thousand dollars to marry a girl and leave her at once after the ceremony. Assuring himself that the girl will do her share of the bargain willingly, he consents.

With the five thousand dollars in his pocket, he afterwards puts up at a well-known hotel, where he encounters no less a person than Margaret Adair, who tells him that she is not married at all, but was only bridesmaid at a wedding where Oscar Harmsworth was best man. Rousey is so stunned by this news that at first he scarcely realizes that a detective has laid his hand on his shoulder and announced that he is under arrest for the theft of ten thousand dollars from Philip Rousey's safe. The presence of the five thousand dollars in his pocket and his disinclination to tell just how he got it, makes the case look black for him, so he is held in $20,000 bail, which Margaret Adair finally procures through the agency of Oscar Harmsworth. She then announces to all the court that she believes fully in his innocence and is going to marry him, whereat poor Rousey looks so downcast that all cannot fail to remark upon it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ONLY WAY.

AFTER the bail had been signed and the customary oaths administered, Cowper Rousey left the court-room, a free man for the time being.

Margaret Adair and Harmsworth accompanied him to the street. The girl's face still wore a flush of mortification. She felt keenly hurt and humiliated by the manner in which Cowper Rousey had received her announcement that she was willing to become his wife.

She began to feel that she had acted very rashly. She had taken it for granted that Cowper was still deeply in love with her and ardently desirous of marrying her—otherwise, of course, she would not have dreamed of making such a bold declaration.

She had actually proposed to him (for that, she told herself sternly, was what her action had amounted to), and he had received her proposal with a cold, stony silence that seemed to constitute a repulse.

It would have been bad enough if this had happened in private; but the thought that her humiliation had been witnessed by others distressed her so much that she found it difficult to keep back her tears.

Even when he had left the court-house and was walking by her side, on the street, Cowper made no reference to the subject. He marched along in solid silence.

"It is very plain that he does not want me," said the girl to herself. "I have been a perfect little fool—throwing myself at his feet without being asked. How can he be so brutal? Even though he doesn't love me any more, his sense of chivalry ought to have made him *pretend* to be joyful at hearing that I was willing to marry him, and thus have saved me this cruel humiliation."

Oscar Harmsworth, walking silently at her left hand, seemed to read what was passing in her mind, for he gave her arm a sympathetic little squeeze, and the girl saw him frown at Cowper as though he was thoroughly disgusted with that miserable young man.

At length Harmsworth broke the painful silence.

"Well, I guess I'll be going," he said. "I've got to hurry back to the office, so I'll leave you two together. I guess I'm in the way here, anyway. I realize that two is company and three is a crowd."

He smiled so sadly at Margaret as he said these words that the girl felt genuinely sorry for him. He was certainly taking his defeat gamely, she thought. She believed, then, that he was one of the noblest and most unselfish men she had ever known.

Before taking his departure, Harmsworth stepped over to Cowper's side and whispered in his ear.

"You blithering idiot," he said. "You don't deserve the good fortune that has come to you. Don't you see that you are sorely wounding her feelings by your moody silence? It is brutal. Why don't you tell her how happy she has made you by promising to be your wife?"

Although, apparently, these remarks were intended solely for Cowper's ears, Harmsworth spoke in such a surprisingly loud whisper that Margaret overheard every word he said.

The color in her cheeks deepened; her eyes became humid. This was certainly the climax of her humiliation.

The man whose offer of love she had rejected was rebuking the man whom she had offered to marry—rebuking him because of the coldness with which he had received her offer. It was galling. Her heart was filled with bitterness and indignation. She almost hated Cowper Rousey at that moment.

Seemingly unaware of the fact that his words had been overheard by her, Harmsworth doffed his hat and hurried away. Margaret and Cowper were alone together.

The girl did not wait for her companion to speak. Her pride told her that she must set herself right in Rousey's eyes without delay. She was resolved to extricate herself from this painful position as gracefully as possible.

"I suppose you thought I did a terribly bold thing in that court-room," she began bravely, "I realize that I must have appeared fearfully forward. Why, I actually proposed to you and — it isn't even leap-year."

She laughed nervously.

"But of course you must have understood that I did not mean what I said," she went on hurriedly, not giving him a chance to make any reply. "You must have realized that I only said what I did with the object of showing your uncle and that magistrate and all the rest of the world that I believed in your innocence. I hope you didn't really take my—my proposal seriously. Did you, Cowper?"

"Yes, I did," Cowper answered earnestly. "I thought you meant what you said, Margaret—honestly, I did. Then you are not really willing to marry me, eh?"

She glanced at his face eagerly. If she had read bitter disappointment there, she might have relented and forgiven him for the humiliation he had caused her.

But although his features seemed to reflect a variety of conflicting emotions she saw that an expression of *relief* predominated.

She did not know, of course, that the only reason he had for feeling relieved by her words was that they spared him the painful task of telling her that it was impossible for him to marry her notwithstanding the fact that he loved her dearly. She believed that he did not love her and that this was the reason why he was glad to hear that he would not be called upon to marry her.

Her heart became steeled against him. She turned on him mercilessly.

"Willing to marry you?" she exclaimed with a laugh. "I should say not. I gave you your answer to that question four years ago, Cowper Rousey."

"But you—you spoke as if you were willing to forget that old quarrel when we met at the Clarendon to-day," he stammered. "I—I was beginning to hope that you loved me after all, Margaret. Do you mean to say that you don't?"

His tone was eager enough now. The expression of his face was one of keen disappointment and anguish. Although he could not marry her because of the obstacle he had placed in his own way, Cowper couldn't help being selfish enough to want her to love him, and her words came as a shock.

"Of course I don't love you," she answered, meeting his gaze steadily.

"But you squeezed my hand and called me 'dear boy' when we were in the police station," he argued. "You certainly acted then as you loved me, Margaret."

The girl blushed.

"That—that was merely to give you confidence. I wanted to cheer you up," she retorted.

"But, if you don't love me, why have

you gone to so much trouble on my account?" he demanded incredulously.

"Oh, that was for the sake of old times," she answered, avoiding his eager glance. "While I do not love you in the—in the way I suppose you mean, I shall always have a sisterly regard for you, Cowper. We have known each other since childhood and I couldn't let you languish in a prison cell while it was in my power to help you. I went to your rescue as a sister goes to the rescue of a brother."

"I see," he sighed. "And you really mean to tell me that when you said in court that you were willing to marry me you merely did so in order to show my uncle and the others that you were confident of my innocence?"

"Of course. There was no other reason. You ought to have understood that I didn't really mean what I said," she answered.

Cowper was silent for a little while.

"Well, I suppose I ought to be glad that it is so," he said, at length, speaking more to himself than to her. "It is better for both of us, of course. And yet I cannot truthfully say that I am glad. I can't help being dog-in-the-manger enough to want you to love me in spite of—in spite of everything."

Margaret gazed at him in blank astonishment. His words were as Greek to her. She was almost ready to believe that Cowper Rousey was not quite right in his head.

His conduct was certainly most extraordinary. When he had learned from her lips that she loved him and was willing to marry him, he had appeared abjectly miserable. Now that she had told him that she did not love him, he seemed to be equally miserable. What was the matter with the foolish fellow, anyway? What could he mean by such strange behavior?

Either Cowper must be insane, she decided, or else he was amusing himself at her expense by trying to make her confess a love which he did not return.

If the latter was the case, she told herself angrily, she would teach him a lesson. His next words gave her an opportunity to carry out this resolve.

"There is one thing that I must know, Margaret," said he huskily. "Have I a rival? Is there anybody else?"

For a second she hesitated. Then her eyes flashed mischievously and she answered with great emphasis: "Yes, Cowper, there *is* somebody else."

"Is it that cad, Harmsworth?" he demanded sternly.

She turned upon him indignantly.

"Cowper Rousey, you forget yourself!" she cried. "How dare you speak of one of my friends in that manner? Mr. Harmsworth is not a cad. He is one of the truest gentlemen who has ever honored me with his friendship. Only to-day I learned his real worth."

"He *is* a cad," Cowper repeated stubbornly. "I see that he has bewitched you at last, with his handsome face and courtly airs; but he is a cad nevertheless. He is not to be trusted."

"For shame!" cried Margaret hotly. "If you knew what Mr. Harmsworth said about you to-day you would realize how despicable you are making yourself, Cowper Rousey. *He* is not the kind of man to cast slurs, even upon an enemy. He told me to-day that he felt you were innocent. Yes—of all the men I appealed to to come to your assistance he was the only one who would not believe that you stole your uncle's money. And this is how you repay his magnanimity. For shame, sir. I thought you were more of a gentleman."

Cowper was astonished at her words.

"So Harmsworth told you that he believed in my innocence, did he?" he said thoughtfully. "I will candidly admit that surprises me greatly, Margaret. I had supposed that he would take advantage of this opportunity to blacken my character in your eyes. It is really very strange."

"You see how you have wronged him," declared the girl reproachfully. "He not only declared his faith in you, but he also showed what a noble heart he has by coming to your rescue. It is to him that you owe your present liberty."

"To *him*," gasped Cowper, aghast.

"Yes. It was Mr. Harmsworth who furnished the bondsman who procured your parole," Margaret went on. "Of all the men I appealed to to help you, Oscar Harmsworth was the only one who would do you that favor."

"Good Heavens!" gasped Cowper. "Do you mean to say, Margaret, that you went to *him* and asked him to help *me?*"

The girl nodded.

"Oh, why did you do it?" groaned Cowper. "You don't know how you have humiliated me, Margaret. I would rather have stayed in prison for the rest of my life than accept a favor at that fellow's hands."

"That is because you are mean and narrow-minded," retorted the girl hotly. "What has he ever done to you that you should feel that way toward him? I cannot understand you."

"I despise him," said Cowper savagely. "I formed an instinctive dislike for him the first time I ever saw him, and he has given me no reason to change my opinion since. He is popular with women—that kind of a fellow generally is—but, there are very few men who know him who don't feel towards him as I do. I mistrust him. He has been caught cheating at cards, for one thing, and a man who will cheat at cards is a villain at heart.

"I know that I must appear in a pretty unfavorable light, talking in this manner to you about a successful rival; but I can't help that, Margaret. There isn't anybody I can think of whom I wouldn't rather see you marry than that fellow. It maddens me to think that it is he who has stolen you from me."

"He hasn't stolen me from you," retorted the girl spitefully. "You flatter yourself too highly, Mr. Cowper Rousey. He couldn't have stolen me from *you,* because I was never yours. I once had a real liking for you, it is true; but I did not love you. And, now, I don't even like you. I—I hate you."

"I am sorry to hear that," Rousey answered sadly. "If you hate me now, I tremble to think what your feeling towards me will be if—if you ever learn the real ghastly truth about me."

"What?" gasped Margaret, regarding him with horror. "You don't mean, Cowper—you *can't* mean, that it is really true, after all, that you stole—"

"No, not that," he interrupted her quickly. "For Heaven's sake, girl, don't finish that sentence. I have fallen pretty low; but I am not a thief. I swear to you that your confidence in me in that respect is not misplaced."

"Then, what do you mean by those strange words?" Margaret demanded fearfully. "What have you done? Oh, Cowper, dear Cowper, tell me what you have done? I don't understand you at all. You are acting so very queerly—so unlike your old, light-hearted self. Won't you take me into your confidence, Cowper, and tell me what it all means?"

"Not now," he answered hoarsely. "I daren't tell you now, Margaret. Perhaps I will tell you later. Yes, I *will* tell you later."

"When?" asked the girl eagerly.

"On the day that you are married to Harmsworth," he answered with a grim laugh. "When that happens I guess I shall feel equal to confessing everything to you."

They parted soon afterwards. Margaret went back to her home, and Rousey continued to walk the streets deep in thought.

"She loves him," he kept repeating moodily to himself. "She is going to marry that cad, after all, and I am powerless to prevent it.

"What a cruel freak of fate it was that guided my footsteps to that church yesterday," he groaned. "If I had not seen her enter it, or if I had known that she was only a bridesmaid and not the bride, I wouldn't have accepted that confounded red-haired fellow's queer offer for a million dollars. Then I should have been free to woo and win her away from that cad, Harmsworth, but now—what can I do? Tied for life as I am to a bride whom I am never to see again, I can't marry Margaret myself, and consequently I can't prevent her from marrying anybody else. Was ever a fellow in such a desperate situation?"

Suddenly an idea occurred to him. The thought made his heart beat faster with hope.

Divorce! Of course—how foolish of him not to have thought of that before. The divorce court would offer him an easy way out of his difficulty. If he could obtain an absolute divorce against his mysterious bride he would be free to win Margaret Adair from Harmsworth and marry her himself.

Surely, he argued, there couldn't be anything morally wrong in dissolving a marriage made under such freakish conditions.

Inasmuch as his mysterious wife was resolved never to see or hear from him again, it could make no great difference to her if he obtained his freedom.

His spirits rose and his steps became light as this plan took shape in his mind. He resolved to consult a good lawyer at once.

His joy received a temporary check when he suddenly recollected that he had no money. The bulky roll of bills which he had earned by his rash plunge into matrimony had not been returned to him by the police.

The money was supposed to be part of the cash stolen from his uncle's safe and, therefore, the police were holding it as evidence until his case was disposed of.

Cowper realized that it takes a lot of money to hire a good lawyer and that divorce suits are generally expensive. He was nonplused for a time; but once more fortune seemed to favor him.

He suddenly recollected that there was a lawyer in town for whom, long ago, he had done a slight favor. Perhaps this man still felt grateful enough towards him to be willing to take his case on credit.

Cowper remembered the address. He hurried to the lawyer's office.

This attorney's name was Oliver Beacon and he was prominent in his profession. He received Rousey pleasantly. He had not forgotten the favor which the latter had done him years before and he was quite willing to repay it by giving his legal services to Cowper without exacting a retaining fee.

"So you want a divorce?" he said, after the young man had been ushered into his private office.

"Yes, I do."

"What kind of divorce—absolute or limited?"

"Oh, absolute—just as absolute as you can make it," replied Cowper eagerly.

The lawyer smiled.

"Dear me! Are things as bad as that?" he chuckled. "What has the lady done to make you so bitter? Has she proved unfaithful?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Well, has she been guilty of cruel or inhuman conduct towards you? Has she thrown kitchen utensils at you, or beaten you with a rolling-pin, or anything of that sort?"

"No," answered Cowper thoughtfully. "I can't truthfully accuse her of anything like that."

"Well what *has* she done?" demanded the lawyer impatiently. "We must have some cause of action, you know. We can't go into court and ask for a divorce unless we have some sort of accusation to work on. Of what do you wish to accuse your wife, Mr. Rousey?"

Cowper scratched his head thoughtfully.

"That's a hard question to answer," he said. "I really don't know what to accuse her of. Can't a fellow get a divorce just for desertion?"

"Well, that all depends upon the circumstances," answered the lawyer. "Has your wife deserted you?"

"She certainly has. I haven't seen or heard from her since the wedding ceremony."

"Do you mean to say that she ran away from you at the very altar?" exclaimed Mr. Beacon in surprise.

"Well, she didn't exactly run away from me," replied Cowper. "To put the case more accurately, I was carried away from her. It was with her consent, though, that this was done. She married me on the distinct understanding that I was never to see her again after the ceremony. Surely that must constitute desertion."

He looked at the lawyer anxiously.

"I'm not so sure of that," replied the latter thoughtfully. "It seems to me that if you entered into such a queer marriage with full understanding of the conditions, you cannot logically charge her with deserting you now. Perhaps you'd better tell me your story in detail, though, and then I shall be able to advise you better."

After some hesitation Cowper finally decided to take the lawyer into his confidence. He told, in as few words as possible, of the strange offer the mysterious man with the red hair had made to him and how he had accepted it and taken unto himself a wife of whom he was now most anxious to be rid.

After Cowper had finished the lawyer shook his head.

"Young man," he said; "I am very sorry to have to disappoint you; but I am afraid I cannot do anything for you. No court would grant you a divorce on those grounds."

"Why not?" demanded Cowper hoarsely. "I am never to see my bride again. It is her wish that we should never meet. Surely that fact ought to entitle me to my freedom."

"Not at all," was the discouraging reply. "I really cannot see the matter in that light. According to the law, only the *injured* party can sue for a divorce, and you certainly cannot claim to be the injured party. Yours was a most extraordinary marriage, it is true; but you thoroughly understood what the terms were when you entered into it and therefore you cannot claim that you were tricked or defrauded in any way.

"No—you certainly are not the injured party. Your bride has in no manner vio-

lated the terms of the contract. You agreed to the condition that you were never again to see each other after the ceremony—consequently you cannot reasonably accuse her of deserting you. I am afraid that you must give up all hope of obtaining this divorce, unless—"

"Unless what?" cried Cowper with frenzied eagerness.

"Unless you can persuade your bride to consent to this step," replied the lawyer. "With the lady's consent it is possible for you to gain your freedom. Without her consent, it is out of the question. Under the peculiar circumstances that exist I think I could have the marriage annulled, provided that this arrangement was satisfactory to both parties. Do you understand me, Mr. Rousey? To *both* parties. You cannot get your freedom unless you obtain the lady's consent."

"But how can I obtain her consent when I haven't the remotest idea where she is?" groaned Cowper despairingly.

"Find her," advised the lawyer. "Search for her. Do your best to locate her. It is your only chance."

"It's a mighty slim chance," sighed the disconsolate young man. "You know I was blindfolded all the way to and from that house, and I haven't the faintest idea where to look for her. I guess it would be easier to find the north pole than to locate my mysterious bride.

"However, if, as you say, it is my only hope, I've got to do it. I'm going to find that girl and persuade her to release me if I have to tramp all over the earth looking for her."

CHAPTER XIII.

HIS DYING WISH.

OLIVER BEACON, counselor-at-law, was a very energetic little man. "Hustle" was his watchword, and "Don't let the grass grow under your feet" his favorite maxim.

When Cowper Rousey announced his determination to find his mysterious bride and beseech her to consent to an annulment of their strange marriage, Mr. Beacon nodded his head approvingly.

"That's the way to talk," he commented. "That's the proper spirit. But why are you sitting here wasting precious moments, my dear young man? Why don't you start right out and look for her? The sooner you begin a task, you know, the quicker it is finished. Don't lose any time. Start the search at once."

"It's very easy for you to sit here and talk that way," retorted Cowper moodily; "but how the deuce am I going to start? I haven't the slightest idea how to look for her. If I knew where I was married, I might be able to get some valuable clues by consulting the records of the place, for it is probable that the clergyman regularly recorded the marriage in accordance with the law, but I don't know where that wedding was held.

"I don't even know in which State it was. It may have been in any one of the three adjacent States; and I don't know whether it was in a city, town, village, or hamlet. Therefore it is out of the question to think of consulting the records. I really don't know which way to turn."

"Pooh!" scoffed the lawyer. "What a helpless fellow you are! There are several ways of conducting a search for a missing person. In the first place, you must advertise."

"Advertise?" repeated Cowper blankly. "Advertise for what?"

"Advertise for your missing bride, of course. Insert personals in as many newspapers as possible urging her to communicate with you on a matter of very grave importance."

"But how can I advertise when I don't even know her name?" protested Cowper. "It isn't very likely that she goes under the name of Mrs. Cowper Rousey. She's probably resumed her maiden name, and I haven't the slightest idea what that might be. The red-haired man told me that she used an assumed name at the wedding.

"And I can't mention my own name in the personal either," Cowper went on emphatically: "If I did so a certain person would be likely to see it and would learn of this fool marriage I have contracted. I know that she would never forgive me if she knew that I had sold myself to an unknown woman for five thousand dollars."

"Ha! Then, there is another lady in the case?" exclaimed the lawyer, with a smile.

"Of course there is," admitted Cowper. "That is why I am so anxious to secure my freedom. I am in love with a certain young lady and this confounded obstacle prevents me from marrying her. She knows nothing about this rash step I've taken and I am determined that she shall not know.

No excuses on my part could clear me, in her eyes, if she ever learned what I have done."

"Well, that's easily fixed," said the lawyer. "We will draw up an advertisement which will suit our purpose without using any names at all."

He leaned over his desk and wrote rapidly on a pad of paper, which he then handed to Cowper.

"*Will the young lady who last night contracted a weird marriage with a young man whom she had never before seen communicate with the latter on a matter of the greatest importance. Address 'Blindfolded,' care of this newspaper,*" the lawyer had written.

"I guess that ought to answer the purpose. Don't you think so?" he inquired.

Cowper shook his head.

"To be candid with you, Mr. Beacon, I don't think it would do any good. If my mysterious bride is determined that I shall never see or hear from her again, she isn't likely to answer this personal even if she sees it."

"There's a whole lot to that argument, of course," answered the lawyer, "but I am figuring on the possibility that the lady may have changed her mind since yesterday and may now be as anxious to hear from you as you are to get into communication with her.

"It is difficult to imagine why she has taken this extraordinary step; but, whatever the reason, she may have repented of it by this time and may be anxious to locate you in order to beg you to consent to an annulment.

"You know the old and true saying, 'Marry in haste, repent at leisure.' It applies just as much to the lady in the case as it does to the man. There is just a chance that your bride is already heartily tired of her bargain and anxious for her release."

"Oh, how I wish that such were the case!" exclaimed Cowper ardently. "What a happy fellow I'd be then!"

"It is at least worth trying," said the lawyer. "You see, if she did want to find you, the chances are that she wouldn't know where to look for you, and this advertisement would show her the way. I don't promise you that it will accomplish the desired result; but it may do so, and you can't afford to overlook any possibilities."

"I guess you're right," assented Cowper.

"Then I've got another idea," the lawyer continued. "You must find the clergyman who performed the marriage service. If you can locate him, he may be able to give you some information which will enable you to find the girl."

"But how am I going to find him?" argued Cowper. "I foolishly neglected to ask him his name. All I know is that he is a very old gentleman and quite infirm. I haven't the slightest idea where he lives. I suppose it is somewhere near the strange house in which I was married last night. It is only reasonable to assume that they procured a clergyman from the vicinity. But I haven't the slightest idea where that house is."

"Haven't you a single clue by which we might endeavor to find it?" inquired the lawyer.

"No. They took good care that I should not get any inkling of the route we followed. I know that our path lay through rough country and that the house is a considerable distance from here, because the automobile went fast and we traveled for several hours; but whether we traveled north, south, east, or west I am quite unable to tell you. As I have said, I was blindfolded during both trips."

"It's too bad," said the lawyer. "I would like to find that minister. I think it would help a whole lot. I guess it wouldn't do any good to advertise for *him*. It would be impossible to frame an adverment that would attract his notice without mentioning any names. And besides, clergymen don't generally peruse the personal columns of the newspapers—especially elderly clergymen. I'm afraid you're going to have a very hard job locating him—but stay. I have an idea."

"What is it?" demanded Cowper eagerly.

"It isn't very likely that it will work; but there's just a chance," said Mr. Beacon, "I don't believe in overlooking any possibilities. This is at least well worth trying.

"I was reading in my newspaper this morning that there is to be a big convention of clergymen of all denominations at Kingston to-morrow, to discuss the divorce situation in this country. According to the newspaper, ministers are coming from all parts to attend the conference. There is just a possibility that this particular clergyman will be there.

"It is only a slim chance, of course; but I think it would be a good idea for you to

attend that convention and look the crowd well over.

"You may be fortunate enough to find your man there, and, even if he isn't there you may be able to find some clergyman who knows him and who will recognize him from the description you give and be able to tell you his name and address."

"That sounds to me like a pretty good suggestion," declared Cowper. "The enthusiastic manner in which the reverend gentleman spoke last night on the subject of matrimony indicated that he had the matter greatly at heart, and therefore it is likely that he'd be greatly interested in this Kingston divorce conference. I really think there's a fair chance of finding him there."

"Very good," said Mr. Beacon. "Start for Kingston first thing to-morrow morning and good luck to you."

"I'd like to go," rejoined Cowper ruefully "but I'm afraid I can't. I haven't any money. For the same reason I don't see how I'm going to insert those advertisements in the papers either. I haven't a red cent."

"I don't mind lending you a few dollars," said Mr. Beacon. "You look honest and I am willing to take a chance on you. Here's a twenty-dollar bill. That ought to be enough to cover the cost of the advertisements and your fare to Kingston."

"This is really very kind of you," exclaimed Cowper gratefully.

"Don't mention it. I'm a pretty good judge of faces, my boy, and I know that you'll pay me back when you can afford to do so. Besides, I don't mind admitting that your case interests me very much. My curiosity is fully aroused. I want to find out what your extraordinary marriage means. I am most anxious to learn why that queer fellow with the red hair was willing to pay you five thousand dollars to wed a girl whom you are never to see again. If only to gratify my curiosity I am willing to finance your search for your mysterious bride. Take this money and start right out to do as I have suggested."

Cowper took the twenty-dollar bill and proceeded to the newspaper offices to arrange for the insertion of the personal in the next day's issue.

Having done this, and as it was no use starting for Kingston until the following morning, he went to the Clarendon Hotel Fortunately he had paid for a week's room hire there in advance, so that, although he was now without funds he was at least not without a home.

As he entered the hotel and passed the room-clerk's desk the latter hailed him by name.

"Mr. Rousey," he said, "that man sitting over there wants to see you. He has been waiting for you the past half hour."

Cowper glanced at the man seated in a big leather chair at the other end of the lobby and recognized him as Philip Rousey's bookkeeper.

Cowper had not forgotten the churlish manner in which the fellow had treated him when he had visited his uncle's office the preceding day. He regarded the bookkeeper with a frown, wondering what his errand could be.

Catching Cowper's eye the man rushed towards him.

"Mr. Rousey," he said excitedly, "you must come with me at once. Your uncle wants to see you."

"Oh, he does, does he?" retorted Cowper fiercely. "Well, I don't want to see him. You can go back to him and tell him that in view of the way he has acted I never want to see him again. He has an awful nerve to send me such a message under the circumstances."

"But you don't understand," protested the bookkeeper. "Your uncle's condition is very serious. He is dying and he wants to see you before he—before he goes."

"Dying!" cried Cowper in horrified surprise. "My Uncle Philip dying. That can't be true. Why, he was in court trying his hardest to send me to prison only a couple of hours ago and he certainly appeared to be all right then."

"He met with an accident just after leaving the court-room," the man explained. "He was knocked down by a trolley-car and terribly injured. The doctors say that he can't live more than a couple of hours. He is conscious, and he is asking for you all the time. Oh, won't you please hurry to him."

Although he could not imagine what object this fellow could possibly have in endeavoring to deceive him, Cowper was incredulous.

"You are sure you are telling me the truth?" he demanded sternly.

"I swear it, Mr. Rousey."

"How did you know that you could find me here? How did you know that I was stopping at the Clarendon?" Cowper asked suspiciously.

"I learned it through Miss Adair. She suggested that I might find you at this hotel. She said that you had told her you were registered here. I hurried here as fast as I could, and when I heard that you were not in I decided to wait in the hope that you might return."

"Margaret Adair?" gasped Cowper. "Does she know of this accident to my uncle?"

"Yes. She is with him now. Oh, won't you please come with me, Mr. Rousey? I'm afraid if we don't hurry we shall be too late."

"Yes. I'll go with you," said Cowper. "Where is he, now?"

"In the hospital. They hurried him there in an ambulance. It isn't far from here. Come, let's get into a cab quick. We haven't a minute to lose."

When Cowper Rousey reached the hospital he found that the bookkeeper had by no means exaggerated the seriousness of his uncle's condition.

The nurse pointed to the bandage-swathed figure stretched upon the cot and whispered in Cowper's ear that the end was very near.

The unfortunate man occupied a private room. In this room, in addition to the nurse and surgeon, Cowper found Margaret Adair and Oscar Harmsworth.

He might have wondered exceedingly why the latter was there if he had not been so much shocked by the terrible spectacle which his unfortunate relative presented that he had no thought just then for anything else.

As he approached his uncle's bedside, Philip Rousey opened his eyes and gazed at him eagerly.

"Ah, my boy," he said faintly, "I am glad that you have come in time; I wanted to have a talk with you before I go."

"Uncle Philip—I am very sorry for this," said Cowper brokenly. "Believe me, I am."

"I do believe you, my boy," went on the stricken man. "I appreciate your sympathy. It is good of you not to rejoice at what has happened to me. Only a few hours ago I swore to do my utmost to send you to prison—and now look at me. You have indeed been terribly avenged."

"Don't talk that way, uncle—please don't," pleaded Cowper. "I assure you that I did not desire that kind of vengeance. My heart is filled with horror and regret—nothing else."

"Now that my end is near and I am about to face the great judge, I greatly regret my harshness to you," Philip Rousey continued. "It is terrible to think that I was determined to send you, my own flesh and blood, my dear brother's boy, to prison. Even if you stole that money I ought to have forgiven you. It was my duty to have shown mercy as I myself hope for mercy."

"I did not steal that money, uncle," declared the young man earnestly. "I want you to believe that. You must believe it."

"I do believe it," replied Philip Rousey. "I don't think that you would lie to a dying man. If you say that you are innocent I believe you, and I ask your forgiveness."

"You have it," was the earnest reply.

"I am anxious to make amends for the wrong I have done you," the uncle went on, speaking very quickly, as though in fear that his life would be snuffed out before he could finish what he had to say. "I think I know a way. Is that young man from the lawyer's office here?"

Harmsworth stepped to the side of the dying man.

"Here I am, Mr. Rousey," he said.

"Good. Bring pen and paper quickly! I want to dictate to you my last will and testament."

Harmsworth produced a fountain-pen and some note-paper and told the dying man that he was ready.

"I leave everything that I possess to my nephew, Cowper Rousey, on condition that he marries my ward, Margaret Adair," Philip Rousey dictated. "You can draw that up in the proper legal phraseology, of course; but that is the substance of my will."

"And in case the said Cowper Rousey does not marry the said Margaret Adair—what then?" inquired Harmsworth with an ill-concealed note of eagerness in his voice.

"In that case," replied the dying man, "in that case I leave—but what's the use of considering such a contingency?" He spoke with a flash of his old-time irritability. "Of course they will marry. They love each other. They have always been destined for each other. It is absurd to suggest that they will not marry.

"As a matter of fact," he went on with a wan smile, "I intend to see them married before I go. It was always my dearest wish to see them man and wife, before—before I quarreled with Cowper.

"I understand that a clergyman has been

sent for to be with me in my last moments. He ought to be here pretty soon. That same clergyman shall make them man and wife, here, at my bedside. It is my dying wish."

"Here is the minister now," said the nurse gently, as a black-garbed stranger softly entered the room.

"Good!" exclaimed Philip Rousey joyfully, making a desperate effort to sit up in his bed. "I am glad that he is in time. We will proceed with the marriage service at once. The nurse and the doctor can act as witnesses both to the marriage and to my will."

Harmsworth had drawn up the latter document and he now handed the pen to the dying man and requested him to summon enough energy to write his name or mark upon the paper.

Philip Rousey, with a great effort, managed to sign his name, and the nurse and surgeon appended their signatures.

"Now for the wedding!" gasped the former eagerly. "Hurry up, please, while there is time."

"Stop!" cried Cowper hoarsely, beads of perspiration standing on his brow and his face as white as chalk. "I am sorry, uncle, but I cannot marry Margaret, just now, I really cannot."

"And as for me," said Margaret, with a haughty glance in the direction of the wretched young man, "I am sorry to disappoint you, dear guardian, but I do not wish to marry Cowper. I will not be his wife. The man I am going to marry stands there."

She pointed a trembling finger at Oscar Harmsworth.

The latter gave a cry of joyous surprise which came simultaneously with Cowper's groan of despair.

Old Philip Rousey looked from one to the other in agonized astonishment, gasped and fell back on his pillow—dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DISASTROUS CHASE.

Cowper Rousey was greatly affected by his uncle's death.

Philip Rousey had been his only living relative, and it is always a deprivation to lose the last of one's kin, no matter how strained one's relations with the latter may have been; and besides, despite the breach which had existed between them, deep down at the bottom of his heart Cowper had felt a certain amount of affection for the grim, stubborn old man.

But greatly as he was grieved by his uncle's tragic end, he was affected to a much greater extent by Margaret's announcement that she intended to marry Oscar Harmsworth.

He stood there inert—stunned by the double calamity which had descended upon his luckless head.

Margaret had thrown herself upon her knees beside the cot of the dead man and was sobbing piteously.

Aroused by the sight of her grief, Cowper moved slowly forward with the intention of endeavoring to console her.

In this, however, he was forestalled by Harmsworth who, stepping hastily to the side of the bereaved girl, laid his hand gently upon her shoulder with an air of proprietorship which made Cowper wince.

"Come, dearest," said Harmsworth softly. "You must not give way like this. Let me take you home. You can do no good here."

Cowper, hearing these words and almost maddened by the endearing term his rival used, turned upon the latter fiercely.

"Be good enough to leave Miss Adair to me," he said in a commanding voice. "I can take care of her. I think you had better go. She and I would like to be alone in our hour of grief."

"I beg your pardon," replied Harmsworth calmly, "but, as Miss Adair is my promised wife, my place is at her side and I can yield that place to nobody."

As he said these words his hand still remained on the shoulder of the kneeling girl and he proceeded to endeavor to raise her gently to her feet.

"Come, dear Margaret," he said. "Let us leave this place together. You are only adding to your pain by staying here. Come away. It will do you good to get out into the open air."

"Leave her alone," growled Cowper. "If you don't go away from her, I'll—"

"Surely you don't intend to quarrel here, in the presence of the dead," interrupted Harmsworth. "For shame, sir. Consider where you are and govern your temper."

Cowper realized the justice of this rebuke and his clenched fist relaxed.

"You are right," he said. "We cannot quarrel here. I was forgetting myself. I am sorry I threatened you.

"But," he went on with dignity, "I ask you as a great favor to leave Margaret with me now. She and I were children together. I understand her and I know best how to comfort her. Will you go?"

"I regret that I cannot comply with your request," replied Harmsworth. "You may have known Miss Adair since childhood; but as I have already reminded you, she is my betrothed."

Margaret arose slowly to her feet and, still sobbing, placed her arm within Harmsworth's.

"Take me away," she said. "You are right. It is better that I do not linger here. Take me out into the air. I feel as if I were stifling."

"Margaret!" cried Cowper entreatingly, his arms outstretched toward her.

Leaning heavily on Harmsworth she walked out of the room without even a glance in Rousey's direction.

"That settles it," the miserable young man muttered to himself. "I know now that she really loves that fellow and that there is no hope for me."

So great was his despair that at first he was disinclined to go on with his plan of searching for his mysterious bride.

What mattered it now, he asked himself, whether or not he did obtain his freedom? He might just as well remain united to his vanished bride for the rest of his days, inasmuch as Margaret Adair was going to marry Harmsworth.

But "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." After a few hours of this despairing mood, Cowper's optimism, badly battered though it was, finally came to his rescue.

"After all," he said to himself, "she isn't married to that fellow yet, and, until they are actually made man and wife, there is still a slight chance for me.

"Something may occur. She may quarrel with him before their wedding-day. She may find out his real character. I must be prepared. I must get rid of my shackles without delay so that if my opportunity should arrive I may be able to grasp it."

Having arrived at this decision, he started out the following morning for Kingston with the object of attending the clergymen's convention there and endeavoring to find the minister who had married him.

The convention was assembled in the Kingston Lyceum—the largest meeting hall in the town. Several thousand clergymen were gathered there. They were of all ages, all denominations, and from all parts of the country.

Cowper selected a seat in the front row of one of the side galleries, where he could command a view of every face in the auditorium.

Eagerly his gaze traveled all over the audience. Things had been going so badly with him, he had met with such ill luck at every turn, that he felt sure he was doomed to disappointment now. There was about one chance in fifty that the man he was looking for would be there.

Therefore he gave a start of surprise as finally his roving glance fell upon an elderly, white-haired man, who was seated in the center of the hall, listening with rapt attention to the speaker on the platform.

"It is he," he muttered joyfully. "I am actually lucky at last. It is the minister who married me. I am sure I cannot be mistaken!"

Although there seemed to be no reason for haste, inasmuch as there was little chance of the man he sought leaving his seat until the session was over, Cowper was too impatient to wait.

He jumped to his feet with such suddenness that his chair toppled over with a loud clatter and he rushed from the gallery so noisily that many frowns were directed at him.

Unaware, in his excitement, of the commotion he was causing, he ran down the stone staircase to the body of the hall and was rushing up the center aisle when an usher barred his path.

"Where are you going?" demanded the latter sternly.

"Don't stop me," gasped Cowper. "There is somebody I want to see over there! I must speak with him at once."

"What is his name?" asked the usher quietly. "Be calm, young man. Be calm. There is no need to get excited. Don't you see that you are disturbing all these good people here. Tell me the name of the gentleman you want to see and I will summon him to you."

"I don't know his name," replied Cowper with an embarrassed laugh.

The usher regarded him suspiciously.

"Don't know his name?" he repeated. "That's kind of queer. What is it you want of him, young man?"

"I want to ask him some questions."

"Well, can't you wait until recess? Must you disturb him now?"

He waited for an answer.

Greatly to the usher's amazement, instead of replying to this question, Cowper suddenly uttered a yell, which would have done credit to a Comanche, and rushed frantically out of the building.

"That fellow is wrong in his head, without any doubt," muttered the usher. "I'm mighty glad he has gone away."

Afterwards Cowper had cause to regret bitterly that he had not conducted himself in a more orderly manner. His strange behavior helped to get him into a whole lot of trouble, as will appear later.

But erratic as he seemed, Cowper really had good cause for his extraordinary conduct.

(To be continued.)

At the End of the Wave Length.

BY RANDOLPH HAYES.

A Story of the Wireless Service, and of the Fashion in Which the Rules of the Navy Mixed in with a Lovers' Quarrel.

JIMMY CONSTANCE was distracted for the first time in his two years and three months as wireless operator for the U. S. S. Oklahoma. All the fresh love that was in his twenty-six-year-old body was calling out for him to send a message to his sweetheart, asking forgiveness and assuring her that he would return for her at the end of the cruise.

At the same time an order over the ardois signal-service confronted him. A copy of it lay on his desk, staring him sternly in the face. It was signed by the commander-in-chief, and directed that all wireless stations in the fleet should be closed until further orders.

It had been laid before him that very minute, just as he was preparing to frame the words that he should send Sue. Now the great mechanism at his side was buzzing, the sparks were leaping from plug to plug, and for the life of him he could think only of that last ghastly half-hour he had spent with her on the steps of her father's house in Key West. It all came over him vividly.

He had not been feeling right that night, anyway, and he had complained petulantly, anticipating only a short lover's quarrel: "You went with him to the marine ball last week."

"Did you expect me to stay at home?" she had replied defiantly.

"Yes," he had insisted. "You could have waited until I got back. We could have gone to the Friday-night hop together."

"Huh!" she had objected scornfully. "The marine ball is the swellest thing of the year. Besides, Crelly Ancrum's a mighty fine-looking fellow. You need not think that just because I promised to marry you, I am not going out with another man when I have the chance, especially if it's the dance of the year. You're getting spoiled, Jimmy."

Then he had plunged in deeper.

"It's not only the ball," he protested angrily. "He's been calling on you every night for a week. You've been down at the ice-cream parlors with him twice since Sunday, and I'm getting the laugh from the boys all over the station. You're making a fool of me."

"Not unless you make one of yourself, Jimmy."

"Well, I'll not stand for any more of this Crelly Ancrum business."

"What will you do about it?" The look in her eyes at that moment still haunted him; it was not nearly so defiant as the words.

"I'll call it off. I'll quit!" Could he not bite his tongue out now for ever having said those words?

"Oh, very well!" She had stiffened; that likable look in her eyes disappeared.

She was severe now.

"Or I'll"—he had clenched his foolish fist—"I'll smash Crelly!"

"Don't—don't—be a fool, Jimmy!"

"Then it's quits?"

"Just as you say." Again the adorable look in the eyes.

"You like him as well as you do me!" At this point he had become almost suppliant.

"I didn't say so."

"Then you'll give him up—quit going out with him?"

"I didn't say so."

With a snort he had turned from the porch. "Then," he had cried melodramatically, expecting her to call him back, "good-by!"

But she had not called him back. She had let him go. She had said good-by, and that was all. She had let him go, and he had gone, and now he was far out on the Caribbean, on the verge of losing touch with civilization for the last time in seventeen days.

And just as he had made up his mind to apologize and reassure her and ask her to write, there had come this message from the commander-in-chief cutting off all further communication.

At this moment the door to the little wireless-house was opened, and in came an orderly with a message from the ardois service on the bridge. It was directed to Jimmy himself, and it was signed by the admiral.

It asked that he forward the enclosed message over his apparatus, as the wireless on the flagship was not as powerfuul as the Oklahoma's. Jimmy smiled to himself, pleased. Was he not the crack operator of the fleet? Did he not keep his apparatus in the best condition?

He read the message. It was directed to the Navy Department at Washington, and asked that some trunnions for a six-inch battery be forwarded to the Guantanamo navy yard for the fall battle-ship practise.

"Bah!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Mere routine," as he clamped the receiver to his head and slammed down his transmitter.

Cluck-buzz—cluck-buzz! came a weak message down the antenna.

"By the holy poker!" cried Jimmy. "She's fading already. In three minutes the sand-spit'll cut us off."

His mind was made up on the instant. It would be seventeen days before they would be again in wireless touch with land; it would be six weeks before they reached the first port, and it would be three months before he could hope to have a message taken to Sue in Key West unless he sent it within the next three minutes.

Right then and there he committed his first and only breach of discipline during his service in the navy. He slammed down, carefully, but with decision, on his sending-key, and the assistant, who was standing alongside, read out the words to himself as Jimmy sent them.

"Hallo, T," said the wireless, "T" being Pensacola's call-letter, "give Lawrence a message from Constance to his girl—Lawrence knows the one—in Key West. Say I'm wiring from the middle of the Caribbean—the last chance. I didn't mean what I said; it's all right. I'm coming back. And ask her please to write me, care the fleet, at Rio."

Cluck! Sputter! Chug! Whiz! The transmitter flamed weakly and, after a spasmodic choke, stopped. Jimmy rose with a fierce light in his eyes, slammed his chair under the table, and muttered quietly to his assistant:

"Nothing doing now for two weeks and a half."

The assistant, almost frightened, asked timidly: "What will the old man say when he finds you substituted your message for his?"

"He'll never know it. Do you suppose I'll put it in the record?"

Then Jimmy strode sullenly to the quarterdeck, where he clung to the taffrail for the next hour, morosely contemplating the sibilant swell of the soft Caribbean, casting infrequently a glance far aft to where a dim smudge of bituminous smoke told of the plebeian presence of a lumbering collier, which he contemptuously called a "beef-boat."

On the beef-boat he knew Crelly Ancrum was stationed as wireless operator. But each time he thought of the beef-boat his glance came proudly back to the aristocracy of the level-riding battle-ships, of which the Oklahoma was of the best.

Soon the disturbing assistant came sidling to the rail beside him.

"Suppose Crelly Ancrum reports your message?" he annoyingly suggested.

"Aw, Crelly wouldn't do that," Jimmy reassured him. "I know I wouldn't do it if he was in my place. He won't peach."

But Crelly did make a report, and therein lay Jimmy's downfall. The fleet had no sooner anchored at Trinidad, than the beef-boat's launch slid up to the flagship, and up the ladder clambered Crelly Ancrum with a report of that final fatal message which Jimmy Constance had sent out when

all the wireless apparatus in the fleet save his had been closed by orders.

As the admiral looked over Crelly's report, he had just finished reading Jimmy's, in which he found that his order for new trunnions had not been sent, and that Jimmy's written excuse therefor was:

"No static."

Within twenty minutes Jimmy was relieved from duty. Three days later he appeared before the court-martial and pleaded guilty to the charge of disobeying orders. The admiral submitted a recommendation for clemency to the court, and he was merely suspended "until the commander-in-chief may see fit to reinstate you."

This trouble did not worry Jimmy half so much as the fact that he had received no message from Sue. True, he could not rightfully expect a letter until he reached Rio, six weeks later, but he had hoped that she might have sent some word by wire to Trinidad.

She knew the operators along the coast. They were all his friends, and would communicate to him any message she might want to send. But there was none.

Little did he know that Crelly Ancrum's interference with his affairs of the heart had not stopped with the report to the admiral. As a matter of fact, Jimmy's message had never reached Pensacola, for the moment he had started it, Crelly, who was listening at the key of the Creole's apparatus, started his own machine working, and the ether waves are barely strong enough to withstand one circulation.

So Jimmy's message had not carried, after all. He had braved the court-martial, and was now under punishment, for sending a farewell message to his girl, a message which the girl never received.

Ignorant of Crelly's double treachery, confident that she had heard from him, proud, aloof, hurt in the estimation of his messmates, with whom he had always been a favorite, Jimmy now dragged out some miserable weeks.

When he started for shore he found that the paymaster would give him no money. His salary had been suspended. The money was being held for him, to be given out when the captain saw fit, and not until then.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders. In seven months his enlistment would be up, and he told himself that he was too shrewd to desert and run the chance of a three-years' sentence to the marine prison.

The story of this seven months would be a torture to one who has never been to sea. To Jimmy only one fact existed—he was seven months from the girl. At Rio he expected a letter. There was no letter. At Buenos Aires he looked for a letter. There was none.

Now he was not only too proud to write—he was too ashamed. She had not seen fit to answer his message, and he had not the courage to tell her he had been court-martialed and suspended from duty.

Then the fleet put about up the sick, sultry stretch to St. Thomas. It was at that port that Jimmy got his reinstatement. From being the first wireless ship in the fleet, the Oklahoma had slipped down to the position of tailender. So one day the captain sent for Jimmy and told him the admiral had ordered him back to duty.

There were still ten weeks ahead of him before the fleet should reach Norfolk, and his term of enlistment end. His fire of longing for Sue was smoldering underneath, but he had banked it with the self-assurance that he would seek her the minute he was free. Meanwhile, he knew that Crelly Ancrum had advanced. From being a sender on the beef-boat, Crelly had been promoted to a position on the flagship of the cruiser squadron which had been ordered to Cuba, and the day before the Oklahoma left St. Thomas, Jimmy got word that Crelly's ship was about to leave Havana bound for Key West.

This was almost a knife-thrust, and the only thing that made life bearable for him was the order that the Oklahoma received to proceed immediately to Norfolk. The day after they dropped anchor in Hampton Roads the chief of staff sent for Jimmy.

"Mr. Constance," said the chief, "your enlistment will be up in two weeks, and we want to assure you that we appreciate your work. Except for that trifling—ah—unpleasantness in the Caribbean, your behavior is quite satisfactory, and we hope you will reenlist. No personal feeling entered into that discipline, you understand."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Jimmy, studiously contemplating his feet. "I thank you. I didn't take anything personal out of that—that suspension."

"Then," went on the chief, brightening, "you'll reenlist. That's right, my man. The best men that ever lived have undergone discipline. You have the right stuff in you."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Jimmy, and turned to go.

He got almost to the door before he found courage to turn and blurt out:

"But I'm not going to reenlist. I can't, sir—I *can't.*" And he bolted.

Ten days later he stood on the Norfolk wharf with six months' pay in his pocket, a free man. He spent his first dollar for a telegram to De Forrest, in Washington, asking if the job he had been offered the year before was still open. Then he bought a ticket for Key West, and spent the intervening three hours until train-time in purchasing a new suit of clothes.

At Jacksonville he got his answer from De Forrest. Yes, the job was still open. He replied that he would report for duty in two weeks. When Jimmy arrived in Key West he had two hundred dollars in his pocket and—

Thirteen days of freedom!

It was dusk. He started for Sue's house. As he neared it, he stopped, alarmed. Something unusual was going on.

Japanese lanterns were hung all over the porch. Lights streamed from all the windows. Laughter floated from the parlor. There were chatter, voices, many people within—evidently a party.

He stopped a small boy in front of the house and questioned him.

"A weddin'," said the boy.

A wedding? It must be that of her sister. Or could it be of her mother, for her father had been dead for several years?

He strode up the walk and knocked boldly at the door. A girl in a party-gown opened it, and a swirl of laughter leaped out at him. No one noticed his blanched, pale face, product of the wireless-room.

The new clothes he had bought at Norfolk made him part of the throng. He sat down for a moment in the hall unnoticed.

"Here, Tom," cried one of the girls, "you go look for Crelly. We need him now. Everything is ready."

"Where's Sue?" Jimmy asked of the nearest girl.

"Dressing," she replied. "She'll be down in a minute.

He slipped off to the side porch and gave himself up to tired, delirious remembrance. The narrow, hot ship, the sticky heat of the tropics, the odor from the boilers, the joyless men, the *buzz-buzz* of the rasping wireless—all the slow nausea of sea-life swept over him.

Then *she* appeared. At first he thought it a vision, but he heard her say to two girls who followed her: "Please leave me alone for just a minute. I want to think out here in the moonlight."

She was alone.

With a stroke of instant decision, Jimmy's course appeared before him as clear as though in a hydrographic drawing. He stepped softly to her side. She looked up and did not seem surprised to see him.

Yet she asked: "Why did you come—now?"

"Why not now?" he demanded.

"Do you know what night this is?" she inquired in turn.

"No."

"My wedding night."

"A-ha!" he almost laughed. "I am so glad."

Now she was startled. Still she asked: "Why did you not write me?"

"I sent you a wireless," he replied.

"I never got it."

"Then Crelly Ancrum cut it off while he was taking it down to report it to the admiral."

"Crelly—cut—it—off? I don't understand!"

"You see, I didn't write because I was suspended from duty — court-martialed — because Crelly squealed—"

"Crelly Ancrum?" she almost hissed.

"Certainly."

She looked at him just as she had that other night, nine months before, with supplication in her eyes. "I am going to marry Crelly to-night," she said.

But in his months of exile he had pondered too deeply on the meaning of that look. This time he did not falter. He placed his arm firmly about her and started to lead her off the porch.

He was now thoroughly determined. There was no gainsaying him.

"Not to-night," he told her. "You marry *me* to-night."

He led her to the gate before she recalled that the party was waiting for her in the house. Then instinctively she started back. He drew his coat about her, and she laid her head on his arm.

"I am so happy," she whispered into his sleeve.

"Don't cry, sweetheart," he said. "You can be married to-night, just the same. There's more than one minister in this town, I guess."

Fencing With Villainy.*

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "Because of the Green House," "A Blow to Liberty," "The Road to Misfortune," etc.

A Partnership with Death in Which a Live Man Becomes a Serious Handicap to the Game.

CHAPTER XIV.

A ROADSIDE BATTLE.

"THE bank—raided!" gasped Hennon. He clutched my shoulder to steady himself after the shock.

"All our—all Miss Whitten's money—gone!" I managed to stammer out.

"And taken by Mexican Pete—the man we want!" he almost roared.

"Webb," I said, gathering my scattered senses, and bending over the wounded man, "was *that* Mexican Pete who passed just now?"

"Mexican Pete and his gang."

"Will he go to Mexico?"

"No. He isn't a Mexican. He got his name in New Mexico. He'll try for there. Don't waste time. Get a move on."

"Are you hurt much, Joe?" I asked.

"I'm hurt, but I can get along. Help me on my horse. I'll go back and tell them. Take my pistol. You—what?"

He was feeling Hennon's monkish habit, which he had worn on the ride.

"That's all right, Joe, he can ride," I explained. I took his revolver.

We helped him into the saddle again, and though he wobbled from side to side, he insisted that he was able to ride back to Dattleton.

"Now," said Hennon, "let's go. Our horses are fresh, and theirs had to get to Dattleton, and have run like the devil out of it. We'll get 'em, Dale, we'll get 'em."

We knew that scores of men must be in pursuit of the robbers. Just how Joe Webb happened to be the only one who had followed the real trail was a puzzle, but once we were in the saddle and pounding along the road after the men who had robbed the bank, we thought nothing of Joe Webb nor anybody else.

I had Joe's pistol.

"Have you got a gun with you?" I shouted to Hennon.

The thud of our horses' feet and the speed at which we were going made speech difficult.

"Yes," he answered; "somewhere under this outfit."

That ended the conversation for the time being. All there was in the minds of either of us was the fact that the Dattleton bank had been robbed. Whether the money that had been taken was ours or belonged to Miss Whitten made no difference.

I did not know how much cash the Dattleton bank was in the habit of keeping on hand. I knew it must be a large amount, for the outlying depositors, who sometimes needed big sums in a hurry, were always accommodated.

Whether the robbery would break the bank or not, I did not know. Perhaps it had made ample provision against such a loss. I did not know. In fact, I did not care.

Personally, I knew little of banking in any phase.

This thought was uppermost:

The bank was robbed.

With this only in mind, and the fact that Mexican Pete, whose testimony, if it could be wrung from him, or evidence against him, if it could be wrung from anybody else, was dead ahead and within reaching distance, spurred us on, and we communicated some of our frantic energy to the horses under us.

We pounded along the road, regardless of our own necks or the legs of our horses.

At times, by straining my ears, I fancied I could hear, far ahead of us, the faint thud of horses' hoofs. It happened to be a hard road. The air was still and dry. Sounds

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carried a long distance in the soft, quiet air of the night.

Then again there would be nothing but the rhythmic pounding of our own steeds as we bullied them ahead against all the records they had ever made, either on the cattle-plains or in a wild race for drinks at the Gray Wolf.

Fortunately, the arrangements of Padre José had included good horses.

Mile after mile was reeled off behind us. We raced neck and neck, bending low, keeping our ears open, and the horses seemed to imbibe some of our spirit of get-there-or-drop-dead-in-the-effort.

"I hear them!" shouted Hennon presently.

I listened. I, too, could catch the faint sound now. Not the intermittent thud that we had heard before, giving way at short intervals to stillness. This time it was quite incessant.

"Faster, man; faster!" I yelled.

I gave my horse a few good prods with the spurs. I didn't know whether Hennon wore spurs or not with his monkish garb, but his horse spurted ahead with mine, and at the most reckless gait I had ever ridden in my life we plunged along a road neither of us had ever been over in our lives before.

The mere fact that we were two men poorly armed, and that we were riding after four men undoubtedly supplied with repeating-rifles, did not occur to us. At any rate, it made so little impression that we did not give it place in our thoughts.

Mexican Pete was ahead with our money.

I listened all the time. The sounds of the other galloping horses grew louder.

"Not an eighth of a mile away," shouted Hennon.

I did not answer.

"Let me get my hands on Mexican Pete!" he bawled.

I was willing to let him. I was spurring the life out of my horse to help give him a chance. And I wanted the same chance myself.

We were drawing close. Peering ahead in the darkness, I fancied I could just make out the dark forms of riders. I could not distinguish the number of them.

Suddenly the galloping ceased.

"Duck!" yelled Hennon.

There were rifle-flashes, and reports followed immediately. Then bullets whistled and sang queer tunes in the air; but neither of us was hit.

We did not stop, and the halt the robbers had made brought us right up to them.

We could make out their figures now. Four men on horseback, the same as had passed us before Joe Webb had fallen.

Without waiting for Hennon, I fired. My shot was answered. The robbers no longer sought to run. It was fight or nothing. Of course, the odds were all against us. The feel of the revolver I had taken from Webb told me that it was a thirty-eight. This ought to do damage at the range we had. It was as deadly at close quarters as a rifle. It didn't know what weapon Hennon had, but I knew he owned a forty-two.

Curses filled the air. It is a marvel, now that I can look back upon that fight from the calm, dispassionate point of view of afterward, that nobody was killed. But even in battle it is so. Thousands of men will face each other in stern combat all day, and but a few hundred fall.

Something struck me. I did not know whether it was a bullet, or a knife, or a club. It half stunned me. My horse was rearing and plunging, and I went over to one side on the ground.

"Stop!" I heard a commanding voice call.

The firing immediately ceased. So Hennon was silenced also. I fancied he must be dead.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE TOILS.

"No killing here," came the same commanding voice.

"Well, what the devil do you want? They tried to kill us, didn't they? What do you want us to do with them?"

"No killing here, I tell you," said the same voice. "Tie 'em up and put 'em on horses, and let's get away. They've got bloodhounds in Dattleton."

"Which way you goin' now?"

"There's a lane near here that leads to Wapper's Creek. If we get into the creek, we can ride up a quarter of a mile to Ganning's Woods. That's thick enough to hide us till daylight. Then we can tell what to do."

I was seized by no very gentle or friendly hands, and in a moment was tied hand and foot. Then I was picked up like a meal-sack and slung across the back of a horse. It was no very comfortable position.

I had sense enough to realize that Hennon and I had displayed no very great commonsense in running after Mexican Pete and his gang without some one else to help us.

Obeying the commands of their chief, the band took the lane that cut off from the highway, and, after jolting along for a time, we descended a bank into a stream. It was not a very deep one, and the bottom seemed to afford good footing for the horses.

"Are you alive, Hennon?" I asked.

"Shut up!" ordered the leader. "It's lucky for you you're alive yourself. No telling when you'll be dead."

With this pleasing thought in my mind I kept silent, and we rode on in that way.

Then, after a time, we turned again and clambered up another bank, and the band came to a halt.

"Here you, Bill," said the leader, "find that path through the woods to the old camp."

Our halt was but temporary, and no attempt was made to ease my painful position. In fact, none of the outlaws dismounted.

"Come on," I heard some one say, probably the one called Bill, and we started again.

We entered a cool lane through woods. The tread of the horses was almost noiseless. Dark as it had been before, it was still darker in here. The odor of damp turf came up to me. Occasionally a low branch would scratch my face.

It was evident that the robbers knew the road even in the dark. Our progress, to be sure, was slow. But it was certain the outlaws were putting distance between them and their pursuers.

"Here we are," finally announced the leader. We had evidently broken through into a clearing. What manner of place it was I could not tell in the dark. It was, however, enough lighter here to enable me to make out the forms of our captors; and I also saw Hennon thrown across the back of a horse the same as I was.

"Goin' to camp here, Pete?" somebody inquired.

"Till daylight. I don't know which way to take from here till I know what Hicks is doin'."

Two men grasped me and pulled me from the horse. My feet being tied together, I could not very well stand. A brutal blow on the side of the head sent me tumbling to the ground.

"Get the other one down. Is he dead?" asked somebody.

Nobody took the trouble to ascertain. Hennon was dragged from his horse and served in the same manner as I had been.

It so happened that as he fell he landed so near me that I could feel his elbow with mine.

I gave him a nudge. He answered with another. I knew he was alive and perfectly conscious.

The outlaws now busied themselves picketing their horses.

"Were you shot?" I whispered to Hennon.

"No," he whispered back. "I got dizzy and fell."

"Keep quiet," I whispered again. "We'll get these things off and escape."

He did not answer, but nudged my elbow to show that he understood.

"You fellows go to sleep," said the voice of the leader. "I'll keep watch. If I hear any sound at all, I'll wake you."

"But what'll we do with these men?" asked one of his followers. "We can't lumber up with a couple of fools like these. They tried their darndest to kill us, and did put a bullet through Jake's arm. I say we ought to kill 'em now."

"Sure thing," chimed in another. "Get 'em out of the way."

"Now, look here," came the angry voice of the leader. "What's the name of the boss of this here outfit?"

"Mexican Pete," the other three answered.

"Good guess. Well, these fellows ain't goin' to be killed here. Let me tell you that Jim Hicks ain't no fool. And he's cantankerous as Hades after that business in the Gray Wolf last year. All this palaver about them two fellows Dale and Hennon killin' Whitten is bosh, an' you know it. They tried to stop us. You know it."

I nudged Hennon, and his elbow answered.

"I'd like to see them fellers ag'in," said a voice I had not heard before. "I'd just like to meet 'em. That Dale punched like a bull, and the other fellow kicked like a forty-mule-power machine."

"And they got the mine after all."

"They're in trouble enough," said Mexican Pete. "One is dead, and the other in jail for killin' him."

"Good job."

I shuddered to think what might happen

if these miscreants knew that the men they were speaking of lay bound and at their mercy.

The camp was soon quiet. All but Mexican Pete found a place to lie down. I could hear the horses sometimes moving in their restlessness, but beyond an occasional snore from the sleepers, there was no sound.

I had no overwhelming desire to remain their prisoner until morning and have them recognize us. I doubt if any man ever had such a flood of unpleasant thoughts surging through his brain as tormented me now.

I had visions of all sorts. I could feel even in anticipation the pains of torture, for I knew the nature of such men as Mexican Pete, and realized that the quick and merciful death of a man he hated would scarcely satisfy him.

I began wriggling and twisting and trying to release my hands of the thongs that bound them together at the wrists. These seemed to be leather. My hands were tied behind me. I had the free use of my fingers, and could have untied the cords at my feet if I could reach them. But this was impossible.

But then a sudden inspiration seized me. I reached over, by lying on my side, and began trying to untie the knot at Hennon's wrists. He realized what I was attempting to do, and lay perfectly quiet.

In a short time I had the knot released, and his hands were free.

He then returned the service, and soon I had the use of my hands.

All this was not done in a moment, nor was it a safe nor easy task. We were compelled to lay with our backs to each other while I was freeing Hennon's hands, and there was every possibility of Mexican Pete discovering our position and what we were trying to do.

But he had probably overlooked the possibility of any such trick as that, and was bending all his energies to keeping guard and listening for the faintest sound of an attacking posse.

I then reached down and began untying my feet, and Hennon did likewise. By the time we had accomplished all this the gray dawn began to show, and our danger increased.

How were we to utilize the freedom of our limbs now that we had it?

"Roll," I whispered to Hennon.

He began to roll, and I slowly followed suit.

"Hey!" came a startled shout. "Look at 'em! Goin' to roll away! And by the jumpin' geewhillecks, one of 'em's a monk!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A TERRIBLE POSITION.

CONSTERNATION filled my soul. The four outlaws gathered around; and as it was perfectly evident that we had succeeded in releasing our hands and feet, there was no use going through the farce of remaining on the ground. I at once got up, and Hennon followed suit.

"Well, well, well! You? Out of jail, eh? Arrested for the murder of your partner, and paradin' the roads of Texas at night with a priest, eh? This is a de-e-lightful surprise. You know me, I reckon."

"Yes," I replied. "You are Mexican Pete, the man who led the attack on Thomas Whitten a year ago in the Gray Wolf."

"Yes, and I know you. You're the fool that butted in. Know what? I'd rather have you here in my clutches than all the money we took from the Dattleton Bank. But who the deuce is your saintly friend?"

"It is the privilege," I said, "of every prisoner to have a spiritual adviser."

"Don't say! And this is your spiritual adviser, is it, who rides at night and chases bank-robbers? Oh, ho! Let's see. I'm pretty good at faces, even if they are disguised. But a monk's face is his own. No false beard and wig to deal with here."

He took off Hennon's head covering.

A howl of laughter went up from all four.

"It's the other fellow!" bawled one of the band. "An' him a paradin' as a holy man! Well, wouldn't it give you the shivers?"

Mexican Pete seemed at a loss. His bronzed face looked puzzled.

"Put me on to the game, will you?" he said. "I've played a few tricks in this world myself, but I'm blamed if I ever saw the likes of this. What is it? Are you both in the same boat with me? Are you puttin' up a job in one crime to hide a bigger one? What is it? Tell a poor novice in the paths of wickedness."

"It is a simple tale," I said. "My friend became thoughtful. For months he believed he had been a wicked man. And then, to expiate his sins, he became as you see him now, a member of a monastic order."

"Say! Do you think that gabble goes

with me? Don't you think I know Padre José? He'd hang me as quick as Jim Hicks would. He's helpin' you do this to catch somebody. I know him. He stands in with the law and order gang all the time. Well, we'll show him a trick or two now. We've got *you*. That's something."

"Aw, quit your eternal palaver," cut in one of Pete's men. "You get more like an old woman every day. If your idea is to make guests of these fellers, say so, an' the rest of us'll quit. If you're goin' to kill 'em, get at it. We ain't out on no Sunday-school picnic."

The one who seemed most venomous was the one I had shot. His arm had been attended to by one of his comrades and was now in a sling.

"I don't want no killin' here," said Mexican Pete. "A fight's a fight any time, and we can make up some kind of a yarn about self-defense, or cheatin' at cards, or something. But when you kill a man in cold blood in this part of Texas, you've got Jim Hicks on your trail, and there's no let up this side of Hades. See? We can take 'em along, and when we get in our own surroundin's, we can do as we like."

"But they're in the way. We can't spend time watchin' them an' lookin' out for Hicks too."

"Shut up! You'll do as I say, I reckon. I'm sorry we took 'em, same as you are. But they would chase us. Now, somebody get a move on and get breakfast. What have we got?"

"Oh," said the man I had wounded, with a sarcastic laugh, "fresh trout, Kentucky oysters, Rocky Mountain shad, Gulf Stream turkeys, any old thing like that. Hang it! there ain't a thing to eat here, and you know it."

"And what's more," put in another outlaw, "we don't dare shoot anything here. Hicks's men must be all around us by this time. If it wasn't for that creek they'd 'a' had us long ago. Let's hit the trail to a better world farther north."

"If we reach Si Wiggins's ranch he'll set us out a feed," said another of the band. "He's game for our kind. He's afraid of us."

One of the gang had just started toward the horses when there came a sudden rifle shot from somewhere in the woods. Everybody stood still, nerves all tense.

"Guns," cried Mexican Pete, and his men sprang for their rifles.

"Mexican Pete, you're caught," came a voice from the thicket. "You know me. Better give up. Worse for you if you're taken."

"Give up hell!" shouted back Pete. "Come and take us, Jim Hicks. It'll be you or me now, I reckon."

"What'll we do with these two?" asked one of the robbers.

Everything was done in the twinkling of an eye. Mexican Pete seemed to know that he was caught. With the greatest haul of swag that had ever come to his outlaw hands, he was surrounded by foes that wanted his blood, and he knew they would get it.

He glanced at us. A savage, half-wild and desperate expression crossed his face.

"Here, you!" he said, "we've got extra rifles. Take 'em and use 'em. Here they are."

"I won't shoot at friends and officers of the law," I told him.

"The Hades you won't. Then I'll fill you full of holes before your friends can reach you. Take that gun."

Mechanically I took the rifle he put in my hand.

"Now you," he told Hennon, and Ralph was too weak to make any kind of resistance. He reached out his hand and took the weapon.

"Now if you don't shoot at Hicks's posse I'll shoot at you," said Mexican Pete.

Here was a position to try a man's soul if ever there was one.

I knew that it might be possible to pretend to shoot at the invisible men among the trees and by a quick action shoot Mexican Pete instead. But there were two reasons why this would not do.

In the first place I was so placed that if I did that at least two of his men could see me, and a bullet through my own head would be my reward.

In the second place I wanted Mexican Pete captured and not killed. I wanted him taken back to Dattleton and identified by somebody as the man who led the attack on Whitten a year before. And I wanted him so cornered and pinned down that he would make a full confession and free us.

So I stood there, with the unfired gun in my hand, as did Hennon, when a volley came from the woods. The robbers seemed to be panic-stricken yet I knew they were brave men.

Once in a while one of the sheriff's posse

would show himself and the outlaws would shoot toward him.

There was no chance of escape. Hicks had traced them well, and, knowing he had them in a trap, took his time. He had the camp completely surrounded. The men themselves might try to sneak away through the woods, but they would have to leave all their booty behind them.

The firing was intermittent. Suddenly I saw Mexican Pete's hands go up in the air.

"My God! I'm shot! Boys, make the trail quick."

He fell flat on his face. For a moment the others were stunned.

It was the moment Hicks was waiting for. He burst into the clearing with a shout of command and a score of men from every direction came pouring in.

"Don't let one escape!" shouted the sheriff.

Then he saw me.

"Well—by thunder! What are you doing here?"

"Ralph and I were taking a ride and these fellows went past as we were resting by the wayside. Joe Webb came along wounded, and told us that Mexican Pete had robbed the Dattleton bank. So we chased them. But we don't seem to have done any good."

"Don't, eh? Well, if it hadn't been for you chasing them, and having a fight, we wouldn't have caught them this side of Mexico. But it's all over now. Harness 'em up, boys, and get Mexican Pete on a horse, and let's get back to Dattleton. This will be a great day for more reasons than one. Ready? Forward, march!"

CHAPTER XVII.

SEVERAL DISCOVERIES.

It *was* a great day at Dattleton. The four bank robbers were put in jail under a strong guard. A doctor was in attenddance upon Mexican Pete. The money was returned to the bank.

Detective Keene Burns, who had been away from Dattleton for a few days, nobody knowing anything about him, had returned.

"Everything is moving like clockwork," reported Dalton, who was among the first to greet us. "I've told Hicks not to give Hennon away yet. Be at my office at three o'clock. We'll have some fun."

"It's about time I got some fun out of this," I said. "Anything new?"

"Sure. You'll get a notice."

And I did. Dalton was so constructed mentally that he had to go at things in what seemed to me a melodramatic style, but perhaps his methods had their usefulness.

In the afternoon I received this:

> MR. JOHN DALE:
>
> In the matter of the will of Ralph Hennon, recently deceased, you will be at my office at three P.M. to-day. You will appear in the custody of the sheriff.
>
> RUFUS DALTON, REFEREE.

Hennon got no notice, but of course he knew he was to be there.

Hicks came for me in time, and when we reached Dalton's office Mr. Caleb Hennon was there, and so was Mr. Keene Burns, the detective, who had been brought to Dattleton by Miss Whitten to convict me of the murder of her father.

"Gentlemen," began Dalton, with his most grim and judicial air, "I believe that all who are concerned in the will of Ralph Hennon, and the circumstance of his death, are here.

"Mr. Caleb Hennon, the uncle of the late Ralph Hennon, has made application before Justice Malloy, for letters of administration in the estate of Ralph Hennon. I, as the custodian of the will of Ralph Hennon, opposed the motion, because the will makes Mr. John Dale the executor of the estate, and guardian of Robert Hennon, son of the testator. John Dale has for a time been in jail, not under an indictment, but arrested on a verbal charge made by Caleb Hennon, of the murder of his partner, Hennon.

"I have been appointed referee by Justice Malloy. In the taking of testimony I will begin with Mr. Keene Burns."

I stared at Burns in amazement. I could not imagine what he could have to do with the case.

"Mr. Referee, and gentlemen," he said blandly, patting his bald head once or twice, "I came here in the employ of a young lady, who had, through advisers, become convinced that the prisoner in the present case was the murderer of her father. And the premises seemed to me, in Chicago, to be correct. I arrived here and went to see the prisoner, in company with Miss Whitten, to accuse him of this murder.

"I found him to be a man nobody would suspect, off hand, of being a murderer. When the subject of the mine on the Red Fork was mentioned, and the young lady intimated that she had been robbed as well as her father, the prisoner immediately wrote out his check for the entire amount and handed it to her.

"This led me to make a closer scrutiny of the man and I found my suspicions weakening.

"And while I was in that plastic state, willing to be convinced against my own convictions, two monks entered the jail and came to the prisoner's cell. I at once detected a nervousness on the part of the younger one, who called himself Brother Michael.

"He started at statements that could startle nobody except one actually intimate with the circumstances. From the first I knew this man was not what he pretended to be. I studied him. I knew when I left that cell that this Brother Michael was the Ralph Hennon who was supposed to be murdered on Red Fork."

"Great Heavens!" cried Caleb Hennon. "Is that true? Is not my nephew dead!"

"Be still," said Dalton sternly. "Go on, Mr. Burns."

"Here was a situation, gentlemen, that was new even to me, a detective of many years' experience. Here was a man in jail for murdering his partner, and here was his partner, supposed to have been murdered, in the disguise of a monk, talking to him on the most friendly terms.

"It struck me at once that there was something queer about it, and I began to look deep into things. The result is, gentlemen, that I found that Caleb Hennon, who—"

"I must go—the air is stifling," murmured Caleb.

"Sit down. The door is locked. You can't get out," said Dalton.

"I realized that there was a closer connection between the two cases, the supposed murder of Hennon and the real murder of Whitten, than any one imagined. I knew that the murder of Hennon had brought about the suspicions concerning Dale in the Whitten case, and I resolved to take it upon myself to ferret out both cases.

"I found, as I started to say, when Mr. Hennon interrupted, that Mr. Caleb Hennon was involved in a financial deal that made it necessary for him to have a hundred thousand dollars in three months or be disgraced, and probably go to jail. His standing in the business world was such that it was impossible for him to raise such an amount. He left New York.

"Here I will say that I was materially helped by Sheriff Hicks. While I was laboriously tracing Caleb Hennon, Hicks sent me word that he wanted me at once. I had traced Mr. Hennon as far as New Orleans and I learned no more of him there. All trace of Mr. Hennon was lost at New Orleans. But, when I had returned here and had seen Mr. Hicks I discovered that Mr. Caleb Hennon had gone from New Orleans to Hillton, which, as you know, is about fifty miles from Dattleton and about ten miles north of the Red Fork of the Brazos where these two men had their mining camp.

"At the Eagle Hotel, in Hillton, a chambermaid found a false beard and wig after the departure of a certain James Berken, and, having heard that Dattleton was having its fill of murder mysteries, the proprietor of the Eagle Hotel sent the beard and wig to Sheriff Hicks.

"I learned in Hillton that Mr. James Berken, otherwise Caleb Hennon, had rented a gun from a local dealer, and said that he was going to try the shooting. He tried, and though the gun had been used, there was never any evidence that he brought down any game.

"The day after Ralph Hennon was shot Mr. James Berken returned the gun and left Hillton, and the chambermaid found his hair and beard in his room.

"That is all my story concerning the attempt on the life of Ralph Hennon, and Mr. Caleb Hennon will now become the prisoner of the sheriff of your county instead of John Dale."

The face of Hennon was ghastly. But the iron hand of Hicks had him fast, and leaving us to congratulate each other over the success of Mr. Keene Burns, the old man was led away.

We were still laughing and talking about it when Padre José came in.

"Quick," he said. "I want you, Dalton."

"What is it, *padre?*"

"Mexican Pete, otherwise Peter Moston, is dying, and has made a full confession of the murder of Thomas Whitten. I want you as notary public to take down his dying confession."

Dalton seized his seal and started with the *padre*.

And that night Dattleton had something of a celebration, and the Gray Wolf must have done a rousing business.

Caleb Hennon was in jail. Hennon and I were now perfectly exonerated of all blame in the death of Thomas Whitten. Hicks was a sort of double hero, and everybody was so busy laughing that nobody knew what he was laughing about.

Hennon spent the night with Padre José, too used up for anything else. I spent the evening with Nellie Whitten.

"Can you ever forgive me?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "Perhaps your suspicions were natural. But we have not, after all, disposed of the question of the money. Hennon and I are agreed that you must take it."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. I shall remain a one-third partner, and unless you get to work and show me that you forgive me by running the mine as you have done, I shall not believe that you forgive me at all."

"Well—I suppose—but when do you go back to Chicago?"

"I don't know. I have seen my father's grave, and have not seen the mine he discovered. If you will, you may drive me out there to-morrow."

I did so.

We are all three still interested in the mine on the Red Fork of the Brazos, and I am very much interested in Nellie Whitten. From hints she has let fall I hope she is interested in me. But you never can tell much about a woman till you've got her, and then you can't tell anything at all.

THE END.

FACING THE BOSS.

BY MUNSON HILL.

The Editor's Ultimatum and How the Advertising Man Met It.

THE editor looked over his glasses.

"Cranthorpe," he said, "I want to speak to you."

Cranthorpe put down the paper and leisurely strolled over to the editor's desk.

"Did you call me?" he asked.

"Yes, I've got your expense account here. Five dollars for last week. I've also got your expense accounts for the last month. They total twenty-four dollars and some odd cents. When I add your salary the total reaches fifty-four dollars."

"That, I believe, is correct," said Cranthorpe wearily.

"There's no believing about it. It's a fact. Now, how much advertising have you secured since you came here three months ago?"

"Well, really, now I come to think about it, I'm afraid I haven't secured any."

The editor looked mad.

"You've got just twenty-four hours to get some advertising. If you don't produce at least a full-page ad by this time to-morrow, you're fired. That's all I have to say."

"Thank you," Cranthorpe said, and then returned to finish the serial instalment, the reading of which had been so suddenly and rudely interrupted.

Cranthorpe was not energetic. During his seven years' experience in newspaper work he had never been known to hurry. That was probably the reason he was only drawing eight dollars per instead of a salary.

But he had some money to eke out his weekly dole, and, as he himself said: "It's an awful bore having to work, anyway."

But, nevertheless, the editor's threat had disturbed his peaceful calm, and, having only seventy dollars left of his little hoard of cold cash, he looked wearily about him for a solution to his difficulty.

Then the most brilliant idea of his career occurred to him. He argued that if he purchased enough goods from a firm, they would be sure to give him an ad. In any case, he could make sure of the proposition first, and then he could meet the editor in the morning with an untroubled mind.

Clothes were the most useful thing, according to his idea, and it was to the largest

clothing establishment in the town that he went.

"Look here," he said to the proprietor, "I want a full-page ad from you."

"But," the proprietor objected, "I never advertise."

Cranthorpe looked astonished.

"Never advertise!" he exclaimed. "It's about time you started in. Now, I've a proposition to make to you. If you'll give me a full-page ad, I'll buy the best overcoat you've got in this store and pay spot cash for it."

The proprietor began to grow interested.

"Even then," he said, "my profit on the overcoat won't cover the cost of the ad."

"You must expect to stand some risk," retorted Cranthorpe.

"I won't run any risk at all," said the proprietor. "If you can't make a better proposal than that, the deal is off."

Cranthorpe was worried. He hated to part with all his money just to get the ad, but he hated still more to lose his job. Finally he decided.

"If you'll give me the ad," he said, "I'll not only buy the overcoat, but a suit of clothes as well."

"You're on!" ejaculated the proprietor.

II.

CRANTHORPE strolled into the office next morning on time, an almost unprecedented condescension on his part. He was arrayed in a well-fitting gray suit in the very height of fashion, and an overcoat that would have done credit to a duke.

He felt well-dressed and, with an order for a column ad in his pocket, he held his head up in the air as if he owned not merely the country paper on which he worked, but every other paper in the States besides.

Now, the real owner had been abroad, and hadn't met Cranthorpe; nor had Cranthorpe any knowledge of him.

The belief that such a man actually existed was firmly planted in his mind, but apart from that he knew nothing.

As he entered the office a small, peppery-looking individual seized him by the arm.

"You're on time, I see," he said. "Sit down, sit down," and he thrust Cranthorpe into a chair beside the editor's desk, and himself took the editor's chair.

"I'm Mr. Pelton," he said, "owner of this paper. I like a man who is punctual."

Cranthorpe congratulated himself that he had chosen that particular morning for being early, but he said nothing.

"Now," said Mr. Pelton, "how many years have you been in the newspaper business?"

"Seven years," Cranthorpe answered him, wondering whither the questions were leading him.

"As what?"

"Oh, I've been a reporter, I've been in the office, I've been on the advertising staff."

"In fact," said Mr. Pelton, "you've had an all-round experience, eh?"

"Yes."

"Good; there's nothing like an all-round experience. I suppose your references are all right?"

"Oh, yes! I've excellent references."

"That's good. That's very good, indeed. Were you ever at college?"

"Yes. I had four years at college."

"I'm glad to hear that. It is an excellent beginning for a young man. How old are you?"

"Twenty-seven."

"H'm! Rather young. But better that than too old. I notice that you are very well dressed. Excuse me for putting the matter so bluntly, but I never mince words. I like a well-dressed man. It's a good example for the office-force."

Cranthorpe was all at sea. He couldn't fathom the meaning of Mr. Pelton's questions. But he was glad now that he had bought that suit of clothes.

Mr. Pelton was about to say something else when the editor walked in. He was late, and looked confused when he saw that Mr. Pelton occupied his chair.

Mr. Pelton shook him by the hand.

"Good morning," he said. "I'm just talking to our new business manager, Mr. Scantle."

The editor looked at Cranthorpe, and then at Mr. Pelton.

"Mr. Scantle?" he said. "That's not Mr. Scantle. That's Cranthorpe, my advertising man, and a mighty poor one at that."

Cranthorpe waited for things to happen. He didn't wait long.

Mr. Pelton, thinking that the editor had suddenly gone mad, gazed hopelessly at Cranthorpe and then at the editor.

"Not Mr. Scantle?" he exclaimed. "Not Mr. Scantle? You must be crazy. Why, I've been talking to him for a quarter of

an hour, and do you mean to tell me I don't know whom I've been talking to? I don't feel inclined for any nonsense."

The editor grew desperate.

"I don't care," he said, "whether you know or whether you don't know; but I do know that this is Cranthorpe, one of the worst advertising men we ever had in the place."

Mr. Pelton turned in astonishment to Cranthorpe.

"Is your name Cranthorpe?" he almost shouted.

"It is," said Cranthorpe quietly.

"And you're one of the advertising men on this paper?"

"I am."

"Then how dare you pass yourself off as Mr. Scantle?"

"I didn't."

"You did. Don't contradict me. I've been talking to you all along as Mr. Scantle."

"Excuse me," interposed Cranthorpe. "You never mentioned any names, and you didn't even ask me for mine."

Mr. Pelton was silent for a few moments.

"You're right," he said. "I didn't mention any names. Nevertheless, you should have told me when you saw I had made a mistake."

"I don't think you did make a mistake."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I'm quite ready to take on the job as business manager."

"You? Why, the editor says you are the worst advertising man he ever had on the premises."

"That," said Cranthorpe, "is where he makes the biggest mistake of his life. I think you've been trying for some years to get an ad from Floyd, the clothier?"

"We have," said Mr. Pelton; "but we haven't got it, and we shall never get it. How about that?"

"That is another mistake," said Cranthorpe quietly, "because I've got the order here for a full-column ad from Floyd," and he drew out the contract he had secured on the strength of his purchases.

Mr. Pelton took it.

"Did you get this yourself?" he asked.

"I did."

"Why, we've—"

"Mr. Scantle wishes to see you, sir," interrupted the office-boy.

"Mr. Scantle? Oh, yes! Tell him that the position of business manager has already been filled by our Mr. Cranthorpe," and Mr. Pelton added, turning to Cranthorpe: "The job is worth fifty a week to you."

THE BLIZZARD JUGGLER.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.

How a Big Snow-Storm Was Turned to Account in a Small Town Cut Off from City Connection.

"OF course," conceded Pierce, "it is an experiment."

"An experiment?" echoed Mallock. "About as much of an experiment as if an avalanche fell on me!"

"Then you're not going to try?"

Mallock replied:

"Of course I'm going to try! Providence doesn't give a bull-dog jaw like mine to the sort of fellow who will sit calmly down and let an avalanche bury him. No! I'm going to try to fight my way upward through it. And if I get to the top I'll sell it as real estate. But," he added bitterly, "I'd be a born fool if I didn't realize I haven't one chance in ten thousand."

"If you go into the battle with that spirit," observed Pierce, "you're beaten before you start."

"I am? Well, before I'm through, the world at large will know there has been a battle. Now help me lock up the store. We'll both be the better for a good night's sleep. In the morning we will renew the discussion."

But Joe Mallock did not begin his much-needed sleep as quickly as he might have done. Instead, when his assistant had gone, he placed paper, pen, and ink on the oil-cloth-covered counter, drew a lamp nearer and began his daily letter to The Girl. These letters were usually of no interest

save to their recipient. But on this night he had much to say.

I can't leave town Sunday, for I am going to be busy day and night from to-morrow on. Let me tell you in just a few words what has happened:

You know how hard I've been trying, for over a year, to make Mr. Cauldwell take me in as partner? I've explained that I am doing the *real* work of the store; that it is *my* plans and ideas which have nearly doubled his business; that I've refused three good offers out of loyalty to his interests. Well, I spoke to him about it again to-day, just as he was starting for New York on his semi-yearly "buying trip." What do you suppose he said? He grunted and answered me:

"Young man, there may be sense in what you say. Or there may not. I'll make a deal with you. My profits on this store average $120. a week. You claim that, as partner, you could double those profits. I'll give you a chance. I'm going to be gone two weeks. Show me 480.00 net profits when I get back and I'll take you in as equal partner. Fail to do it and you must pledge yourself to stay on here as manager at $28 a week for three years longer, with no further talk of partnership. Is it a bargain?"

It took my breath away. Then I saw the trap. In early January our business nearly always falls off. It never yet has risen at that time. It's the slack season between the Christmas trade and the Easter. Mr. Cauldwell's profits drop to $90 or $80 a week. There is no earthly chance of bringing them up to $120, to say nothing of doubling that. He knows it.

Yet, if by a miracle I *could* do it, I know Mr. Cauldwell will keep his word and make me a partner. If I *can't* he'll expect me to keep mine. That's the sort of man he is. You'll think me crazy, I suppose, but I've accepted the challenge. Pray for a miracle!

P. S.—Mr. Reuff, our real competitor here in Smithville, is already beginning to lay himself out to catch the extra custom, as he always does whenever Mr. Cauldwell goes away. Delightful prospect! To-morrow morning my campaign begins.

Mallock was up and busy in the bitter gray January dawn. Before Pierce and the other clerks appeared, he had set out a new and attractive window display; and, after careful figuring, had arranged a series of alluring, stenciled price-lists across the top of the street-sign, where their big lettering could not help but catch the gaze of passers-by.

Then defiantly he glared across the street at the store of Reuff & Co. He knew his own windows and prices were far more tempting than Reuff's. And as the tide of early morning shopping set his way, he began to take heart.

But an hour later, Pierce drew him to the door and pointed across the street. There, over the top of Reuff's sign, hung a glaring array of prices, similar to Mallock's, but with a uniform ten per cent reduction.

"The first gun in the fight," observed Joe calmly.

"In the massacre, I'm afraid," answered Pierce. "See, the wind is already setting the other way. Our store's emptying and Reuff's is filling."

"Copy out a duplicate list of prices!" commanded Mallock.

"To equal his? We *can't!* He's down to cost already."

"Do as I say. This is my *fight*. If I cost Mr. Cauldwell anything by my reductions, I'll pay him out of my own savings. And, while you're about it, slice off five per cent from the prices."

Never had there been such a shopping day at Smithville. People told each other of the rival stores' reductions and every one turned out to profit by the slaughter of rates. At noon, Reuff made another five per cent cut; and a little later Mallock followed it with a similar one.

At closing time, Reuff's ponderous figure rolled into the Cauldwell store. Mallock met him at the entrance.

"Well, Mr. Reuff," he said pleasantly, "what can we do for you this evening? I suppose you've come to buy something that can't be bought across the street. Very wise. Many people do that. Our assortment is—"

"Say, you young idiot!" puffed Reuff, "what d'ye mean by cutting rates like this? You'll have your boss bankrupt."

"That's our affair," answered Mallock.

"You've lost money to-day," grumbled Reuff. "So have I. This sort of thing will clean out both our stocks and leave us broke. What do you say to starting fresh to-morrow with the old prices? No use cutting each other's throats. We'll take down those cost-signs and go on as before. Is it a bargain?"

"Y-e-s-s!" reluctantly agreed Mallock, trying to hide his joy at the let-up. "I suppose so."

When Reuff had gone, he sat down and scribbled an order to a New York wholesale house for a replenishment of the stock that the day's "sacrifice sales" had depleted.

"How do we stand?" asked Pierce.

"Biggest day's business since December 24th," replied Mallock, "and not one penny of profit," he added grimly.

Next morning both rivals had removed the alluring prices from above their signs. Mallock was glad of the breathing-spell, and set about concocting new ideas for trade.

"What's up?" queried Pierce at eleven o'clock. "This is the slackest day we've ever had."

"Everybody bought yesterday."

"And everybody's buying to-day," retorted Pierce. "But they're buying at Reuff's. I'm going to drop over there for a look."

Five minutes later he came back.

"What do you suppose the old fox has done?" he asked Mallock. "Made a general mark-down on all sorts of goods. It's advertised on a big placard *inside* the door where we can't see it from here. Prices higher than yesterday, but low enough to cause a stampede from here."

"I might have known that a kid like' myself had no chance at cunning against a veteran like Reuff!" growled Mallock. "I'll win out yet, though! He's taken a trick. The next is mine."

But the next trick was *not* Mallock's. Nor the next. Nor the next. When it came to sheer craftiness, he was as a child in the hands of the elder, wiser man. At last he saw this himself.

"I've played the fool!" he confessed to Pierce, at the end of the first week. "If I'd gone ahead, doing the best I could, without thinking anything about Reuff or his store, I could have kept up a tolerable average of profits. But I lost sight of the real issue and tried to fight Reuff on his own ground. Here's the result."

He held up a slip of paper—the store's weekly "statement." Pierce glanced at it; then whistled long and low.

"Net profits $38.75!" he exclaimed. "The lowest in ten years. Old Cauldwell will foam at the mouth! I'm afraid this is good-by to your chance of that partnership. For the next three years it'll be $28.00 a week for you, instead of $120.00. Quite a tidy bit of difference!"

"You old Job's comforter!" cried Mallock. "There's a week yet. And—"

An envelope was handed to him. He tore it open, disclosing a bill of lading.

"Good!" said he. "We're pretty low in stock. I sent for full replenishing a week ago. The things ought to have been here yesterday. If— Hello! Our wholesalers must have gone insane. What do they mean by saying here, 'The unusual size of your esteemed order caused a delay of'— I ordered the usual—good Heavens!" he broke off. "*Look* at that bill of lading!"

Pierce glanced at it over Mallock's shoulder.

"Three car-loads!" he gasped. "Three *car-loads*. What on earth — why, that's enough provisions and staples to supply this whole county. Their shipping-clerk ought to be fired for such a blunder!"

Mallock did not hear. He had reached the telephone-booth at a bound and called up the New York wholesalers by long distance. In ten minutes he came out of the booth.

"Well?" asked Pierce.

"Well!" rejoined Mallock. "It's *their* mistake, all right. They got our orders mixed with one from a big Chicago supply warehouse. The Chicago things are coming —in three jammed car-loads—into the Smithville freight-yards at this very moment, I suppose. And *our* dinky little order is rattling west to Chicago. The wholesalers say they will rectify the blunder. But—"

"But what? You lose nothing by it."

"You don't understand. Our stock is practically exhausted. Already we are out of a lot of things. And people are going to Reuff's for them. Before our new supplies can get here by freight we'll be cleaned out as dry as a whistle. And Reuff will get every dollar's worth of trade. That'll mean—"

"Why not take some goods from those three car-loads? They're consigned to us."

"Because if we break into a consignment, we'll have to take it *all*. That's the rule, and you know it as well as I do. Mr. Cauldwell would be tickled to death, wouldn't he, if I did a thing like that and saddled him with four times as many goods as he had storage for? It'd be worse than going short. No, I'll have to take my medicine."

"The poor partnership!" sighed Pierce. "It—"

"Hang the partnership!" broke in Mallock. "I'm past thinking of that! It's gone for good and I won't whine over getting the worst of a bargain. It's Mr. Cauldwell's interest I'm thinking of now! This will not only mean a big cash loss to him,

but a lot of the temporary trade that goes to Reuff's will stay there. Oh, I'm in a sweet mess! Here I try to prove myself worthy to be a partner in this concern, and in one short week I threaten to wreck my employer. I don't know what's come over me!"

"It's *luck!*" pronounced the other. "Luck runs in streaks, good and bad. And when a mere boy like yourself says: 'I'll take Fortune by the throat!' then old Dame Fortune is apt to be the one who does the throttling. But maybe Reuff is short of stock, too. He may—"

"Not he. At the station yesterday he said he expected a half car-load of staples in by to-morrow. He never lets himself get caught in a corner. It's *I* that am stuck."

"To make things pleasanter," said Pierce, "it's beginning to snow. That'll mean light trade all day and *no* trade for the evening. Maybe we can skimp along on the stock we've got, after all."

"Another bit of Job's comforting!" assented Mallock. "See, Reuff's store is running up a snow sign: '*Rubbers and umbrellas. Special sale to-day.*'"

"Why don't *you* run up one, too? Take advantage of the bad weather and—"

"And advertise things we haven't got? There are just the three umbrellas and four pairs of rubbers in the store. And one of those umbrellas was left here by mistake to-day. I'm the original Mr. Uppagainstit."

"How about your bulldog jaw now?"

"It's just looking for a new enemy to grip! I'm not down and out yet."

"From where I sit, you're a fine imitation of it," consoled Pierce.

"Look at that snow! It's just like a baby blizzard."

The "Baby Blizzard" proved a thriving infant. By noon it had waxed to "man's size." By dusk, the streets lay deserted, and choked with six-foot drifts. A sixty-mile-an-hour gale howled through the empty thoroughfares, shaking trees and houses and whirling before it a flying mountain of snow. Not since 1888 had such a storm swept Smithville.

By six o'clock the telephone and telegraph wires were down. By seven all railroad traffic ceased. The last link with the outer world snapped. Smithville and its outlying villages were as utterly isolated as if they had been built around the north pole.

Late the following day, when the storm momentarily slackened, folk crept out of of their homes and beat a cautious way through the snow-drifts to the nearest food dispensaries. It had been a mild winter thus far and many people were still wearing "fall weight" clothing. This defect they hastened to repair.

Before night every particle of food and clothing of the scanty stock that had still remained in Cauldwell's store was gone. People leaving the gutted emporium surged across to Reuff's. The snow was still falling. Scared citizens, fearing starvation, clamored to buy any sort of food at any cost.

"If our consignment had come in on time," grumbled Pierce next morning, "we could have done a land office business. Reuff is selling everything at double prices and clearing up a pile. The old scoundrel is wringing his hands because his new shipment was held up by the blizzard, and hasn't—Hold on! Where are you going? You'll freeze to death, chasing out into that storm without hat or coat. Where are you off to?"

"To take old Mrs. Fortune by the throat again," roared Mallock, over his shoulder. "To set the bulldog jaw into another grip!"

He was struggling with the snow-jammed back door of the store as he spoke.

"I don't understand," muttered Pierce.

"You don't, eh? I'm going to the freight yards and order that three-car consignment sent here in a rush. Railroad connection won't reestablish for another four days or more. And I'll sell those carloads at a profit that'll mean future customers to the store as well as the partnership to me. The miracle has *happened!*"

He was out and away in a swirl of white, powdery snow.

"Good old Mallock!" said Pierce to himself. "Fate's fighting for him at last. He could make a fortune by selling those provisions at famine rates. But the big-hearted idiot will charge his hungry, shivering customers just the regular prices. Or, maybe, less. I know him!"

The front door blew open a little later and Reuff's huge figure in its bearskin overcoat lurched in.

"Where's Mallock?" he demanded.

"Out," was Pierce's curt reply.

"I got to see him in a rush," went on Reuff eagerly. "Where's he gone?"

"Just across to the freight yards," said Pierce airily. "You see, the blizzard's caused a bit of a rush on our goods. And as we're beginning to get low, he's stepped over to order one of our three car-loads of stuff sent around. We've plenty to last out. How about *you?*"

Under the folds of the big fur coat Reuff wiggled uncomfortably. But, for once, his need was too great for evasion.

"I want to make a deal with him for some of those goods," he mumbled, as if the words hurt him. "I'm sold out. There's no use lying when everybody knows it. I'm sold out and my next consignment is snowed under somewhere between here and New York. I heard yesterday about that blunder of the wholesale house and how Mallock's stuck with three car-loads of stuff. I thought, maybe, I'd help him out by taking half of it off his hands, as a neighborly good turn and—"

"And not lose all your customers to him?" finished Pierce. "Real kind of you, but just a wee bit too late."

"You don't understand," declared Reuff. "I—"

"No? Perhaps not. But Mallock does. Here he is! Joe, Mr. Reuff is over here to pay a neighborly call and help you out by buying half your three car-loads of—"

"I'll pay you market rates for half of 'em," interposed Reuff, facing Mallock excitedly. "And—and I'll pay you ten per cent over that if you'll let me have *all* of 'em."

"Good idea!" approved Mallock. "You'll pay market rates to keep your store open while Smithville's snowbound. And you'll pay ten per cent more if you can corner the provision market, so that we'll be put temporarily out of business and you can charge your starving customers double or treble rates? Fine idea!"

"You—you insult me!" blustered Reuff.

"No, I don't," rapped Mallock. "I don't think a man who will charge needy people double rates during a blizzard, as you've been doing, can be insulted. You want those three car-loads that are consigned to us. Is that right?"

"Yes," returned Reuff sullenly.

"Suppose they don't happen to contain the quality of goods you ordered?"

"I don't care. At a time like this, a man can't pick and choose the kind of food and clothes he sells. I offer you a ten per cent advance—"

"And I refuse it. Good day."

"Hold on!" implored Reuff. "Don't get hasty! I'll make it fifteen per cent—"

"You can't have it."

"What then? Make me an offer."

"I make no offer. I don't want to sell. If you buy, you do so on your own insistence. *But*—if you *do* want to buy, the contents of those three cars are yours for—"

"For what? Make a price, man! Quick! There's no time to lose. How much?"

"For just the face value of their bill of lading. Not one cent more."

"Mallock!" yelled Pierce, "you're plumb crazy! He—"

"Shut up, Pierce!" squealed Reuff, jumping up and down in glee. "You're witness to what he said! I get the whole three car-loads at reg-lar price. No advance. No—"

"At cash terms," interrupted Mallock. "Here is the bill of lading. You can see the price named."

Reuff glanced at the sum total at the bottom, grunted and replied:

"About average prices, I should think. Maybe a trifle more. But that's all right. Cash, you say? Here's my check. Let Pierce take it over to the bank and get the money, if you're afraid it ain't good. I'll wait here. When he comes back you'll give me a bill of sale, and—"

"Mallock," exclaimed Pierce, holding the check doubtfully, "you're doing a criminally foolish thing! You're giving this man a corner on all the local provisions. It'll be an awful knock to Cauldwell's future trade. He—"

"I'm boss here, Pierce," said Mallock quietly. "Go and get that money."

Muttering and scowling, Pierce obeyed. When he came back, Reuff had made out a bill of sale and was reading it to Mallock.

"'*Contents of the aforesaid three cars,*'" he finished as Pierce came in, "'*as named in accompanying bill of lading.*' No use in my inventorying them now. The total's what you want. That all right?"

"Yes," returned Mallock. "I'll sign it as soon as I count the money. By the way," pausing, pen in hand, "will you sell the things to your customers at regular market rates?"

"Think I'm a dummy?" snorted Reuff. "Not me! I'll clear three hundred per cent. off'n this deal. If folks want food, let 'em pay for it. That's what I say."

Mallock sighed, affixed his signature to the bill and tossed the papers across the counter to Reuff. The latter gathered them up. At the door he turned.

"Young feller," he chuckled, "you may be a good wood sawyer, but you're the punkest business man I *ever* met. You had a chance to make a fortune off'n them car-loads by selling at famine rates, or even by selling 'em to *me*. I'd have paid double their value sooner'n not get 'em. As it is—"

"As it is," said Mallock cheerily, "you've paid just what the wholesalers charged *us*. So we've given you your money's worth, and there can be no kick on either side. That's *my* way of doing business. Good day."

"Mallock!" cried Pierce, as the door closed behind Reuff. "You've thrown away the chance of your life! Thrown it away with both hands!"

"How so? The sales we'll make during the next week will bring up our average, and more than give me the $480 extra I needed to become a partner. Mr. Cauldwell never breaks his word. The partnership's mine!"

"But the store stays shut till our next batch of stuff comes from the wholesalers! You can't sell what you haven't got. And Reuff—"

"Not necessarily. At the freight yards I found half a car-load of provisions, clothes, etc., that Mr. Cauldwell had evidently ordered shipped here when he got to New York. It's new stuff and he didn't mean it to be used yet. He probably found he could save cash by buying in some one's entire stock. But it will serve to keep this store going till the railroads are open again. It came in on the last train before the blizzard. That's why I didn't know it was there till I went over to the station just now.

"I've ordered it carted up in a rush. It ought to be here in half an hour or less. And as we're the only concern in town with staples for sale, I figure out that our profits will not only give me the amount I need for the partnership, but leave a good margin besides. To sell half a car-load, in four days—even at market rates—with no competition—"

"No *competition?*" mocked Pierce, "only three car-loads of it! Reuff has six times the stock we have. The trade has set his way for two days, and—"

"It will set *our* way in less than an hour. Reuff's is closed and will stay closed till—"

"Closed? With three car-loads of—"

"Of 'patent paints,' 'white lead,' 'mixing oils,' 'fixatifs,' 'driers,' 'French putty,' and 'imported camel's hair paint-brushes'! All those things are good in their way, but there won't be much feverish trade in them, during a famine week."

"What on earth are you talking about? The three car-loads—"

"Consists of painters' supplies, ordered from Chicago. If Reuff hadn't been in so much of a hurry to rob us, he would, perhaps, have read the invoice instead of only the total. But he knew the sort of goods our wholesalers ship us, as a rule, and when he heard these things were consigned to a Chicago '*supply* house,' he naturally thought it referred to *provision* supplies. The 'total' was about the same, luckily, as it would have been for the same amount of food, etc. He knows better by this time, if he's read the inventory or gone to the freight yards. I found it out, the first crate I examined. Then I looked over the bill-of-lading items for the first time, and—

"You know the rest."

"I—I see! I—"

"So will Reuff. If he cares to sell white lead and paint-brushes at treble rates to hungry people, he may make a handsome profit. If he doesn't the consignees in Chicago will, of course, take the stuff off his hands at regular rates. So he'll lose nothing—except a week's trade. You heard me warn him the stuff might not be what he wanted. And you heard me refuse to sell it at an advance. He can't complain. If he does, we'll be too busy to listen. For here comes the first van-load of provisions. And about fifty people are following it to this store. They're bringing my partnership! They and the rest of Smithville."

"Say!" gasped Pierce, gaining his breath again, "I've heard that honesty is the best policy. But you're the first man I ever heard of who could make it pay *dividends!* Here's to the firm of Cauldwell and Mallock, Blizzard Jugglers!"

"Come in, Mr. Reuff," invited Mallock, as his speechless, purple rival stamped into the store, "anything we can sell you? We strive to please."

A DENTIST'S DILEMMA.

BY HARTRIDGE D. TYLER.

A Unique Way to Get Patients and the Flaw in a Scheme That Looked at First So Promising.

A TOOTH in the plate is worth two in the jaw. That is, if I make the plate.

I am a dentist. It isn't conceit that prompts me to make the above remark, I am merely repeating the opinion of hundreds of my patients. I am not only a good dentist, but a prosperous one.

'Twas not always thus, as they say in stories. There was a time when I had to melt up my signet ring to make gold fillings; another time when I had to pull the teeth of a garden rake through a gentleman's yard in a near-by town thereby getting together enough money to come back and hold the fort for three days more. That wasn't so long ago either. And this is how it came about that I first shook the faltering hand of Dame Prosperity.

One day in June, two years ago, I found myself a sweet man graduate from a school in dentistry. I had learned to fill teeth backward and forward with the left hand as well as the right. I had mastered the principles of amalgam. I could pull a tooth as neatly as a stump-puller can operate on a root.

In other words, I was ready; I stood alone with my sheepskin diploma in my hand, a firm smile on my face, the future all before me, all knowledge of dentistry behind me.

The city being overcrowded with dentists offering to put a crown on a chimney-sweep for a dollar and fifty cents in thirty cent instalments; and other gentlemen offering painless extractions of teeth, money and oaths, I went to the country. Picking a nice little town of five thousand in Michigan, I hung out my shingle, set up my chair, and then sat around in it waiting for business.

My sign read:

DR. ROGERS, D. D. S.
Painless Dentist.

It was quite right. I was perfectly painless; to the best of my knowledge I never experienced the slightest pain in pulling the most stubborn tooth in my practise.

But somehow the sign failed to work. It was like last season's fly paper, didn't catch a thing.

Well, when I got down to the point where I had to think of filling my own mouth instead of some one else's teeth, I began to do some very serious figuring.

A thousand schemes presented themselves. I boiled them all down and finally realized that I must advertise. He who hesitates is lost; he who advertises is saved. That was my motto.

I wouldn't have anything to do with ordinary schemes, I determined. Something original was the thing I sought from the time I roasted my egg over the gas-jet in the morning until I turned out the same jet at night.

At last I hit on it. It was a great idea, big enough and new enough to make the greatest advertising man in the land turn pale, break his contract and suggest that I fill his tee—I mean, suggest that I fill his place.

This was it: I had a bunch of neat billheads printed. They looked very nice and the envelopes to match, with my name proudly adorning the upper left-hand corner made the whole thing look very attractive.

Then I took the directory of my town and went through it carefully, picking out the names of the most prominent citizens. After that I wrote out a neat bill to each one. Something like this:

John Jones, Dr. to Dr. Rogers, D. D. S.

For one gold filling	$8.00
One crown	5.00
Pulling root and killing nerve	4.00
Cleaning teeth	2.00
	$19.00

The first day I sent out twenty of these bills to people I had never seen. Then I

sat back to see what came of it. I expected a great howl of rage when these gentlemen received bills from me for services I had never rendered them.

Two days later I found eight letters in my mail; it was quite astounding. I opened six of them rapidly; each one contained the bill I had sent out and a little note from the gentleman to whom I had sent it.

"There must be some mistake," each suggested in a letter enclosed with the returned bill. The letters were very polite.

I sat down and answered them at once, explaining that the bill had been meant for some one else in each case, and ending up something like this:

> I am very sorry that this mistake has occurred, and I do hope you will not attribute it to carelessness in business methods on my part. The fact is, I have been so rushed since my opening day in your city that I have had to turn my bills over to a clerk, and the mistake was doubtless made by her some evening after she had spent a busy day taking in money and writing receipts for me.
>
> If you will be so good as to overlook this error I shall be grateful to you. If you need any dental work done, either you or your family, I will be pleased to inspect any such prospective work and make good terms to show you that I am sorry to have troubled you.
>
> Believe me, at your service,
>
> Very sincerely,
>
> DR. ROGERS.

That was rather good. I say, I sent out six of those in answer right away. Then I opened the remaining two letters and found to my utmost surprise that one contained a check; a check for six dollars and the bill I had sent out.

Horrible! I was never so tempted in my life. Here was my scheme overworking itself; I had never expected that anybody would really think he owed the money. Well, it gave me a grand opportunity. I put the check far away from my itching fingers on the desk, smothered its cry of "Cash" with a paper-weight and wrote a very elegant note to the gentleman who had sent the check, explaining that the bill had been sent to him by mistake and that I was returning his check therewith.

Evidently some of his family had had dental work done and he took my bill for the genuine one.

Well, say, that was a grand idea of mine, all right. The very next day two gentlemen brought children of theirs in to have their teeth fixed. Each one said he understood about the mistake in the bill and it was all right and everything, but if I would sort of like to repay them for their trouble I might make them a low price on the work under consideration.

Well, maybe I didn't, make low prices. I charged at just about cost.

A week later I had saved enough money out of my two patients to send out fifty more nice little bills to gentlemen I never had seen. Then for three or four days I was busy explaining the awkward mistakes.

That worked fine; by telling how sorry I was and offering to do the work cheaper for them to repay the trouble I had caused with my mistake, I managed to gather in seven new patients. That put me on the road to Wellville.

Every night I went to the best restaurant in town and filled a certain cavity for myself. Oh, it's nice to be able to eat and pay for it, and to drop on one's languorous pillow of nights and dream of angels filling your pockets with eighteen carat gold.

At the end of the first month I showed sixty dollars actual profit and I had two or three patients coming to me.

Then I grew bold and sent out a hundred bills. There's nothing like keeping after a good thing. I became more adroit in writing my replies, every letter of explanation breathed the spirit of generosity; I even became bold enough to quote actual prices, bargain prices for work in these letters.

This batch brought me some patients right at the start and I was going around mentally pricing automobiles and snapping my fingers in the face of the town banker when something happened.

Something always happens. Did you ever notice that? When you are swimming along, swallowing great drafts of success and diving into the pool of fortune, you always crack your head on a rock or swallow too much of the waters of prosperity and then you have to be dragged up and rolled on a barrel.

Well, right in the midst of all this mental coupon-cutting came the thunderbolt from the clear sky.

It was on a Tuesday morning—oh, well do I remember that Tuesday in September. That sounds more like poetry now than it did then. I was down at my office early. It was just after I had sent out the batch of one hundred letters.

I put on my nice white coat, lighted my little alcohol lamp, set the water running in the basin attached to my chair and got out some of my choicest drills. This would be a big day, of that I was sure.

While I was fooling with a set of false teeth I was mending for a vegetarian, I heard the front door bang open.

"Ah, the early worm!" I cried to myself, jumping to my feet and rushing to the reception-room with a warm smile of welcome on my features and my hand outstretched to take the money.

I stepped back to avoid being knocked over by a very irate gentleman and his buxom wife.

I had never seen the man before and I never hoped to see him again. He had a heavy, fierce mustache for eyebrows and his nose curled up like Napoleon's on the battle-field. There was red blood in his eye and a white paper in his hand.

"Why, how do you do? Tooth trouble you?" I asked in my most solicitous tone.

"No, but I'll trouble you to make good, young man," he howled like a quartet from the best Roman mob you ever saw.

"No trouble at all, I assure you," I answered with a profound bow. "I can make anything good, from a decayed tooth to broken enamel. Now if you will just walk into my work-room I will investigate the tooth that is driving you wild; I would suggest that if I put just a touch of aconite and iodin in the cavity you will have immediate relief; then I can put a little burning solution on your gums and you will never more be troubled by the softness of them and you will note to your great surprise that the solution will absolutely dissolve all the tartar and calm the troubled state of your mind. Just step in, please."

"Very pretty speech," he sneered. "But I'll trouble you to make good. My wife will trouble you to make good, also. You can't think you can impose on her just because she is a lady."

I turned and looked at his wife; I had never seen her in my life before, either.

"Oh, your wife is troubled with a pit in one of her cuspids, or is it the wisdom tooth that is—"

"You'd do well if you had more wisdom teeth," the gentleman barked, waving the white paper before my eyes.

"What have you here?" I asked curiously. "Is it your papers of commitment to the insane asylum, or—"

"Now, young man," the overbearing gentleman broke in, catching me by the shoulder and thrusting the paper beneath my nose, "don't think you can come anything on me. Why, you act as though you never saw me before, or my wife either."

"Why I never did," I answered.

"Then how does it happen you present me with this bill for the frightful work you have done on my wife's teeth?"

I quailed and glanced at the bill; it was one of the last batch of the hundred. I saw the figure, nineteen dollars, "for dental services in full."

"You are the most impudent man I ever saw," went on the heavy eyebrowed gentleman, taking back the bill and thrusting it carefully into his coat-pocket. "I demand satisfaction."

"What is it you want me to do?" I asked, a good deal unnerved by the sight of my bill and the consequences which seemed about to be visited on my blameful head.

"I want you to go over your work on my wife's teeth and fix them up carefully. I want you to put in new bridge-work. The work you did is shameless. Just go in there and examine my wife's mouth. Your bridges have broken down already and your 'gold' crowns must have been made of brass."

"Oh," I breathed, for now I began to understand.

This gentleman was sharper than I. He had outwitted me; he was fighting me with my own weapons. I would have to make good. Evidently his wife had been victimized by some poor dentist, and when the man received my advertising bill he saw an opportunity to get something for nothing. He would call my bluff on that bill I had sent him. He would make me do over the poor work of the other man.

I quailed with the thought of it. He had me right. I couldn't protest at all. I'd have to do the work. I rather appreciated his cleverness in taking advantage of the bill I had sent him.

"Are you going to do the right thing and furnish the nineteen dollars' worth of work your bill calls for?" he demanded. "My wife is not satisfied with what you have already done. I am not satisfied. It is an outrage, and it's up to you to make good."

"Certainly. I shall be pleased to finish the work. I am sorry it was not wholly satisfactory," I answered with a bow.

He had me dead to rights. I couldn't let this story get out. I wouldn't want all this bill advertising of mine revealed to the public. "I am sorry you didn't like my work. If you had told me when I finished it I would not have sent in the bill until all was as it should be," I added.

"All right. All I want you to do is make good," he answered.

So I led his wife to the chair and examined her teeth. The sight nearly gave me heart failure. It was the most complicated job I ever saw in my life. She had had a great deal of work done on her teeth and the last job, the bridging of five teeth together on each side of her lower jaw, had been wretchedly botched. It would cost me nearly a hundred dollars in labor and material to put the thing right.

"I'm sorry," I said, looking up at the man boldly, "but the work looks all right to me. I refuse to make any changes at all. As to your paying the—"

He cut me off with:

"Then I'll sue you for malpractise."

"Where's your proof?" I queried.

For answer he pulled out that nasty bill I had sent him and flashed it before my face.

"There's the proof that you did the work. It will hold in any court."

I gulped and looked weakly at my little cavity mirror. There was only one way out of it. He had me. I could never stand suit for malpractise. It would ruin my reputation forever.

"I—I guess I'll do the work over," I answered swallowing hard.

And I began at once, ripping out the flimsy bridge to take the impressions for one of my own making.

Well, that woman came to the office nearly every day for two weeks. I worked on her steadily, never saying a word. It rather rankled in my mind that I had been such a fool as to send out those bills.

I was fairly caught. I had learned my little lesson. I didn't care if I never made another cent, I wouldn't resort to freak advertising again.

This job was ruining my business. Several times I had to turn people away while I was doing a two-hour stretch over my charity patient.

Well, there was some satisfaction after all. I would get nineteen dollars out of the old grouch, her husband. I was glad the bill I happened to send him for services rendered was so large. That would help pay for my materials, though my time alone already amounted up to eighty-five dollars on the one job.

Maybe you think I didn't work hard on that case. I did the best I was capable of; I didn't spare materials or labor. It wasn't that I took so much pride in the thing, but his threat concerning malpractise echoed in my mind.

I was almost ruined as it was. My sixty dollars clear profit from the month before all went in materials and living expenses while I was on this job of paying the fiddler for my folly. I couldn't send out any more bills. I was right up against it.

Thank Heaven, at last I had polished off the final rough edge of gold and had cleaned up with pumice-powder and a bristle brush. If I do say it myself, I never saw a prettier job. It was perfect. I was so fascinated looking into that mouth I almost forgot how I had been done myself by the job.

Her husband came to call for her and look at the work. I showed it to him proudly. He glared at it grumpily.

"Oh, well, it's not very good work," he said, "but I suppose it will have to do. You could have done more."

That was gratitude for you; after I'd sweat my very life blood on that job and spent all my profits from the month before in making restitution for my folly!

"You are satisfied with the job then?" I asked, having a sinking feeling as I feared he might not pay me the nineteen dollars.

"Oh, it'll do all right; but you could have done better," he answered again.

"Well, I'm sorry you're not wholly pleased," I said nervously.

Then I slipped my hand into my breast-pocket. I had written out a new bill, I couldn't charge any more; nineteen dollars, my bill read, and the job was worth a hundred and nineteen.

I laid my bill gently in his hands.

"Well, what's this?" he asked, looking at it as though it were a bomb.

"That's your bill. I didn't charge any more for doing the work all over again. It reads nineteen dollars. I will be pleased if you will pay me cash; I have been under very heavy expenses—er, just recently."

"Nineteen dollars? That's a good deal," he said slowly.

"But that's the price we agreed on when

I did the work—er—the first time, you know. If you will recall the first bill I sent you, which you protested, you will remember it read nineteen dollars."

"Yes, that's right," he answered.

I stood awkwardly waiting for him to count the nineteen dollars into my hand. He reached into his hip-pocket and tugged at a black leather pocketbook. Finally he got it out and my mouth watered as I noticed how fat it was with currency. It fairly bulged.

My hand trembled as he opened the pocketbook and I saw a neat roll within. I hoped in his generosity he might give me a twenty-dollar bill from the top and tell me to keep the change.

"Nineteen dollars, you said the bill was?" he asked.

"Yes."

"That's right."

He thumbed over the bills and finally came to the bottom of the stack. Pulling up a little flap in the bill-fold, he drew out a slip of folded paper.

"Yes, a check will do," I said with some disappointment, "but I would rather have the cash."

"What's that?" he asked, unfolding the white paper leisurely.

I repeated it.

"Oh," he said, almost forgetting himself and nearly smiling. "This ain't a check. It's the original bill you sent me. Do you recognize it?"

"Oh," I answered, "that's all right. Just give me the other and I'll tear it up." I tremblingly pushed a dollar bill toward him. "Here's a dollar," I added. "Just give me that twenty-dollar bill on the top there and we're square. Then I'll receipt the original bill you have in your hand."

"What for?" he asked sharply.

"So you will have something to prove that you have paid for the job."

"But I've got that already."

"What do you mean?" I cried, my eyes looming large in fear.

"Why, there's your receipted bill, that's what I was fishing in my wallet for. I paid that bill before I made the kick about the poor job you did." He thrust it before my eyes. "See! There's your signature. The bill reads, 'for dental services in full, $19.00.' Right below here you signed it yourself, 'Received Payment, Rogers.'"

Great Heavens! Then I remembered. I had receipted about fifty of the last hundred bills I sent out. I thought it would be better to send receipted bills than unpaid ones, so no one would tempt me by sending a check in payment, as the one fellow did, and so nobody would be mad, as some were, when they received an unpaid bill from me.

My nineteen dollars was gone. My vision blurred and my head swam, but I saw the old man chuckle as he tucked the receipt back into his wallet, strapped it and shoved it deep down into his hip-pocket with a look of satisfaction.

Half an egg is better than none. I had had only half an egg for breakfast that morning, saving the yolk for lunch, and hoping to buy a real dinner when I got the nineteen dollars. Lack of nourishment or something made me keel over. I guess I fainted; anyway, something seemed to give way in my brain when I came face to face with that receipted bill.

That isn't the end to the story. It might have been if I hadn't been awakened from my faint by a bottle of chloroform thrown in my face by my lady patient and a bottle of alcohol added by her husband. Then, realizing what they'd done they dragged me to the sink and laid my head gently in it, turning on both faucets in their frenzy.

They were really frightened.

When I came to the man explained. He was editor of the county paper. He had received my bill just after his wife had had the poor job of dentistry done in a neighboring town. He saw through my scheme and took advantage of the chance it offered.

By threatening me with suit for malpractise he knew I would do my best work. He said he was very well satisfied with the job and made me a very handsome offer. He paid me fifty dollars in cash for my work and gave me two hundred dollars' worth of advertising space in his paper for nothing.

"If you're going to advertise, do it legitimately. We've got sixty-five hundred circulation and that space I'm giving you will pay you so well you'll keep it always," he told me, with pardonable pride.

Well, he was right. While his circulation was really only twelve hundred and fifty, his paper had many more readers, being handed around from family to family.

I got all the business there was, and the old skinflint told the joke on the side to a lot of his friends, I guess. But I didn't care much, for he must have added that the work was good, for lots of people came to have me do work for them (some from quite a long distance), explaining with a hidden smile that the editor had told them about me.

It pays to advertise, there's no doubt about that, but do the job right. Don't send out bills, like I did, or if you must be so foolish as to do that, for Heaven's sake *don't receipt them.*

The Snuffing Out of a Star.

BY JOHN WILSTACH.

A Queer Turn of Affairs in Stageland That Had To Do with the First and Second Performance of a New Play.

NORMAN DUNBAR concluded that he was leaving London and the past forever behind him when he signed a contract for New York in a theatrical manager's office on the Strand. No more touring the provinces for him! He would never return to them. He would starve on Broadway—first. No warning told him he might starve there—at last!

With a wave of his hand Dunbar on board ship dramatically blotted out the blur that was left of the British coast.

Being an actor, as well as a writer of unpopular songs, he felt like framing up a little verse—something on this order:

> If only the star gets sick,
> I will shine like a comet quick.

For, let it be known at once, Dunbar was the understudy of the English actor who was expected by the press on the other side to take the sky-scrapers off their foundations, and the public off its feet, because of his volcanic ability.

A week previous it had been decided that Manville, the English star in question, should have an understudy of the same nationality. Manville was an erratic individual, cursed with a habit of sometimes showing up too late to get into his make-up for the opening scene.

After their first meeting, when the star had glowered angrily because Dunbar hadn't been sufficiently humble, there was as much friendship lost between them as between two goaded prize-fighters.

When they landed in New York, rehearsals began at once, and Dunbar had scant time to himself. When he was not giving a reading, Dunbar was obliged to watch how the star did things. The conclusion he came to was that he could do them better.

Curiously enough, the assistant stage-manager, who was an American, agreed with him.

"That fellow makes his points in a way that doesn't get over here," he said, "however good his technique may be. You play the part in a broader manner; and, added to that, you'd look better in both of those love-scenes."

Three days before "The Change" opened, Dunbar was crestfallen to discover that Manville was in better health than ever.

Oh, if he could do something — that wouldn't send him to jail, yet put his hated rival out of the way for about a week!

But he must hold his peace and wait for the scales of fortune to turn in his favor.

The night of the opening performance found him at the theater long before any of the principals had arrived.

For some unknown reason, he felt unusually nervous. Why he didn't appear perfectly at ease was a mystery to him, since there was little chance of his filling a sick man's shoes. It is a fact that every actor is at heart a gambler; the profession is one of uncertainty; any moment an unbeknown may bob up out of obscurity, and the radiance of an established star be dimmed.

The members of the company were expected to be at the theater by half past seven. By that time all had passed to their dressing-rooms—all except Manville, the star.

Dunbar's hopes rose sky-high, while the stage-manager was giving a good imitation of a man throwing a fit. He sent a messenger to the hotel where Manville was stop-

ping, and gave directions to the leader of the orchestra that the overture was to be played ten minutes later than previous arrangements had called for.

In a fever of suspense, Dunbar watched for the boy to return. In less than a quarter of an hour he was back with the news that Manville was sick in bed from indigestion, caused by eating and drinking to the success of the play.

The doctor's mandate was that he must not stir under any circumstances!

Wild with delight, Dunbar waited for the nod from the stage manager that told him to go to his dressing-room and get in readiness to play the principal male part in "The Change."

While he was changing his costume, and mumbling over the lines that he was to deliver to a critical first-night audience, the stage director and the manager of the theater conversed together.

"It's altogether too late to make an announcement before the curtain that Manville is ill," the manager declared, "and as he isn't known in New York, we may be able to get away with a deception. Manville can go on to-morrow night in any case, and if the play makes a hit we won't be the loser."

"I agree with you," replied the stage director. "The audience wouldn't be in a receptive state of mind if they knew they were going to see an understudy in the leading rôle. We'll let things slide and see if we have luck."

So they told Dunbar that no mention of the change would be made to the first-nighters, and that he wouldn't be obliged to work against any ingrained prejudice against understudies.

The history of the opening performances of all successful plays is very much the same. "The Change" made an enormous hit, if the manner in which it was received counted for anything, and Dunbar came in for a lion's share of the laudation.

After the drop of the final curtain, he imagined that he was walking on air and wearing a laurel wreath.

Also, he felt that he couldn't wait until the next morning to read what the dreaded critics had to say.

When he finally had the papers in his hand, he found that, with but a single exception, all of those present highly praised his work. It so happened that the first performance of a musical comedy had also taken place the previous evening, and some of the reviewers had chosen to attend it, instead of going to "The Change."

All day Dunbar wandered in the clouds, but when he reached the theater that evening he came down to earth with a bang.

There, in the stage-door entrance, stood Manville, not looking at all fit, but with a determined expression on his face.

"I see by the morning papers," he said, "that you made quite a hit last night. Well, I shall have the benefit of it this evening. I'm quite recovered, thank you, and shall be very careful of my health in the future."

And he looked as if he meant what he said.

Dunbar felt a sinking of the heart, and gulped down a hasty reply.

What was there to say? Nothing to the point that he could think of at the moment. Better to keep a sharp watch on his tongue and take his disappointment like a man.

He had had his chance, made good, and yet what had it availed him?

The other man was going into the part to-night.

He watched Manville, from the wings, playing the rôle in which he himself had scored such a triumph, and he realized that the performance was not a good one.

It was a shame that he had been taken out after he had made a hit, but an understudy is only supposed to fit in in an emergency, and he had earned his meager salary by using his talent for the benefit of the man he hated.

What a farce of fate the whole affair was!

After the drop of the curtain on the second act, Dunbar could endure it no longer. He retired to his dressing-room, there to brood over the strange trend events had taken.

So he wasn't present when the third act finished and the perfunctory applause of the crowded house gave proof that Manville hadn't taken with them nearly as strongly as Dunbar had with the blasé first-nighters.

Nor could he know that the critics who had been unable to be on hand the previous evening, and the dramatic writers for the weeklies and the magazines, were out in front in a body.

Naturally enough, they had read the notices that had appeared after the opening of "The Change," and were quite prepared to add their share of commendation to the sum total of critical approval.

By one of those freaks of news-scattering that cannot be accounted for, the idea was spread that an understudy was now playing the principal r'le. Several newspaper men dropped in who had seen the drama the night before, and they let fall the item of information that another man, not nearly as effective, was substituting for the star.

This peculiar state of affairs finally reached the ears of the manager, but he was powerless to take action, as he couldn't very well announce at this late date that an understudy had fooled the people on the opening night.

It would be dangerous, just now.

He bided his time, thinking that the threatening cloud would blow over.

The next morning, however, the newspapers came out with the information that a clumsy understudy had played the principal rôle in "The Change" on its second performance, and a general hope was expressed that the actor who had been so strongly praised was not dangerously ill.

The critics who hadn't been on hand the first night voiced their regret at being obliged to see an inferior actor in the leading rôle, and hoped that he would not hold it long.

The manager of the company was wild with excitement. If he didn't take some immediate action, the play that had scored such a sweeping success would be doomed to failure.

In this crisis there was only one thing to do.

He called Manville, sick with grief, into his private office and told him that he would pay him his salary during the run of the piece, but that he must discontinue playing in "The Change" and take the next steamer back to England.

Then he sent his private secretary to Dunbar and requested him to put in an appearance at his office at twelve o'clock. The understudy knew that something was in the wind, but he couldn't guess what it was.

Ten minutes before the time appointed he showed up at the theater and sent in his card. He was admitted immediately.

The manager rose from his chair and shook him warmly by the hand, an act of friendship which he had withheld in the past.

"Mr. Dunbar," he said, "since you made such a hit the opening night, and Manville failed so signally when he played his original part, I have decided to put you in for the entire run. If you will accept the liberal rise of salary, please sign this contract which I have drawn up."

You can probably guess what Dunbar's answer was.

THE PRIVATE OFFICER.

BY JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE.

The Rivalry Between a West Pointer and a Civilian Leading Up to a Deception That Had a Tangible Excuse.

"YOU look awfully nice in a uniform, and without a mustache, Harry," and Muriel March smiled mischievously as she spoke.

"Well, I'll be the goat," answered Mr. Henry Lampton coolly. "What's the answer?"

"There's no goat and no answer," pouted the girl. "I merely remarked that you look lots nicer without your mustache and with a handsome uniform on."

The man narrowed his eyes and smiled with an awakening mystification, but he refused to be caught.

"Well, I'll take your word for it, Muriel," he said. "I haven't seen myself without a mustache for a number of years, and I never had the ecstasy of beholding myself in a uniform, but my natural vanity tells me that I must look all to the good. Where did you see me in such a guise? I'm sure I wasn't present in the flesh."

"You look so much trimmer in soldier clothes," she went on. "I never realized what an Apollo you were until I saw you in full-dress uniform. If I were you, I'd never wear those baggy, unbecoming citizens' suits again. And you've got too good a mouth to be covered up with a bristly mustache."

"Do you think we shall have a late autumn?" inquired Lampton.

"Oh, you can't fool me!" cried the girl jubilantly. "I know perfectly well that I've got you absolutely fussed. What will you give me to tell you how and where I saw you in military uniform?"

Lampton sniffed with assumed disgust and took time to light a cigarette before replying:

"Not a sou marquee, my dear. Why, I set too much store even upon this burned match to offer it for a piece of information I desire so little."

Muriel frowned with childish disappointment.

"All right," she said, "if you want to be disagreeable and not play, *I* don't care. I won't tell you about the uniform and the mustache now if you offer me five pounds of bonbons and some orchids. I'll *never* tell you about it—and it's awfully interesting. Now we'll drop the subject. Yes, I think we shall have a late autumn. Do you like your autumns late or early, or medium?"

"Whatever way you choose to order, it will be perfectly agreeable to me, Muriel," replied Lampton.

They chatted lightly for a few minutes, on the ephemeral social matters of the hour. Then Lampton got up, stretched himself, yawned, and sighed wearily, with the easy familiarity of an old friend.

"Well, I must go," he said regretfully.

The girl showed every feminine indication of having something on her mind. She waited till the very last—he was almost out of the room—before she made her renewal of attack.

"Oh," she said, in an off-hand manner, "I didn't tell you what a dandy time I had at West Point with the Sibleys."

"I suppose you danced yourself into a decline, and flirted outrageously with every wasp-waisted cadet in the place," sniffed Lampton.

The girl affected not to hear the remark.

"He was the handsomest man I ever saw, I think, Harry," she said dreamily.

"Who?" cried Lampton, taken off his guard at last.

"Cadet-captain Frothingham," she answered, still dreamily. "You ought to take it as a pretty big compliment, Harry, because he really did look enough like you to be your brother."

Lampton was now quite flushed and ill at ease.

"Oh," he said. "I knew I'd get the answer to the pipe-dream if I waited long enough. That's the picture of me in uniform and beardless face, is it?"

"He's a little younger than you, I think," went on the girl, "but he has your height and complexion, and your nose and eyes and mouth and everything. Of course his figure is finer than yours, because he's trained so splendidly, and—well—I guess you might improve your manners a little by imitating him, Mr. Lampton."

"This would be very funny if it were not really serious," rejoined Lampton gravely. "You don't mean to be really unkind, Muriel, I know; but you make me seem ridiculous to all our acquaintances. We're not actually engaged, to be sure, but every one assumes as much, and every one laughs at me for a fool, for trailing complacently along while you are pleased to keep me guessing, and go on flirting with every whippersnapper that comes along."

"There is always a remedy, Harry," said the girl coldly. "You know you can stop 'trailing complacently along' any time you choose. I am not keeping you."

"That's just it," groaned the man. "You wouldn't care any more about losing me than losing your dog, nor as much. And yet I'm just poor fool enough to keep on trying and hoping. But there's got to be an end of it!"

"You're frightfully stupid and tiresome to-day, Harry," broke out the girl with sudden flippancy. "Now, I was going to ask you to take Harriet Sibley and me up to the West Point-Princeton game on Saturday, and I don't know whether I shall now."

"H-m!" growled the man. "Going right back again to see the handsome cadet that looks like me and has better manners. Well, go on, but I can't see why I should butt in."

"Oh, you needn't go, we can get along without you, I'm sure. Harriet suggested that I ask Freddy Tate to go with us, but I thought you might perhaps enjoy the trip. Of course if it wouldn't give *you* pleasure, we wouldn't have you go."

"Freddy Tate! That ass?" snorted Lampton. "By Jove, Muriel, you and your friends seem to have a mighty queer taste in men."

"I've been told that before by others," said the girl witheringly.

"I am accustomed and hardened to your sarcasm," retorted the man. "Now, look here! I have no sort of a desire to go to that tin soldier football game—I shall be bored. But I'll tell you plainly that I hate to have you seen going about with that Tate chap, and I'll go with you if you wish it. Perhaps you or Harriet would prefer Tate—in which case—er—of course—"

"Oh, please go home before I'm quite worn out with you," cried Muriel March. "I'd be angry with you for your impertinence, if I did not know what a silly old thing you are. Go home now and try to calm your fevered spirits. Then, if you'll try to behave like a good dog Saturday, you can come and take us to the football game."

II.

SATURDAY afternoon was fading into dusk as two girls and a man stood under the trees bordering the West Point parade-ground, waiting with the crowd of visitors for the famous evening parade of the fortunate cadets.

Princeton had won the football game, and West Point would not have scored had it not been for the brilliant plays of Frothingham, the cadet-captain and half-back.

"Oh, I think Mr. Frothingham is simply gorgeous," exclaimed Muriel March, with girlish ardor.

"Why, he's an absolute wonder," agreed her friend, Harriet Sibley. "Just think what a perfect fizzle the game would have been for the army if he hadn't pulled them out just in the nick of time. And he's *such* a fine-looking chap. Don't you think he's simply great, Mr. Lampton?"

"Bully," said Lampton, in the tone and manner of a man who praises his friend's baby, although he has the average bachelor's aversion to infants.

"And you'll simply love him when you meet him," went on Miss Sibley. "He's so modest and gallant and charming."

"I—I—er—am very glad of the chance to meet him," observed Lampton quite laboriously.

Then the trumpets began to make music, the band took its position on the parade-ground, and the companies fell in and marched out, one by one.

It was a rare sight—the marshaling of the battalion of statuesque young warriors but the two girls had eyes for one participant only.

"There he is!"

"No, that's not Mr. Frothingham. I think he is in that next company."

"Oh, no! That isn't half as good-looking a man."

"You saw him in the game, Harry. Don't you think that is he? That officer of the first company?"

So went the prattle, while other bystanders smiled and exchanged amused glances.

"All cadets look alike to me," remarked Lampton, with a bored shrug. "I don't know much about it, but I should think men would hate to dress in corsets and lingerie like that, and be trained around like circus horses."

Muriel March laughed shrewdly.

"I never saw an ordinary man yet," she observed dryly, "who was not frightfully jealous of soldiers. Any man will be as proud as a peacock in a uniform, but he can't bear the sight of another man in it."

The parade was over, the crowd scattered and melted away toward the hill leading down to the railroad station.

Cadet Frothingham raced across the lawn in front of the barracks and intercepted the party of three.

He was easily the handsomest chap in the corps, and his bright, excitement-flushed face fairly beamed over his gray and gold and white as he shook hands all around and cried out boyishly:

"By Jove, but it was mighty nice of you girls to come up to this old place. I saw you over on the bleachers and it put new life into me for the game. You don't know what inspiration you gave me!"

Lampton was introduced.

"How do you do?" he said simply with a manner of polite reserve.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Lampton!" cried Frothingham, wringing the civilian's hand. "My word, but it was bully of you to come up here with the girls! I'm awfully glad to meet a friend of Miss March and Miss Sibley. I suppose you're one of the fortunate chaps that can stay in town all the while and see the girls any time and all the time. That's what I'd call luck!"

Harry Lampton found it hard to respond to so much spontaneous enthusiasm. He

murmured a few lukewarm commonplaces and stammered an embarrassed agreement to everything the young soldier said.

The girls were enchanted with the naive graciousness of the resplendent hero, but they exchanged covert glances of disapprobation over the limping utterances of their escort.

"Well—it's tough luck—I'm nothing better than a prisoner here—got to get ready for mess call," complained the cadet. "Now please remember that you girls promised to come up for the hops."

"As if we'd forget," protested Muriel. "But when will you come down to New York, Mr. Frothingham?"

"Oh, that's another tough piece of luck!" groaned the young soldier. "You know I can't run down, even for an hour, before Christmas; but, by Jove, you know, I shall count the days till then."

So they regretfully took leave of the attractive warrior—that is, two of them took leave of him with regret; and the three wended their way down the hill to the waiting train.

"We'd better hurry," suggested Lampton gruffly. "I wouldn't want to miss that train. Think of having to wait an hour for another in this place!"

III.

THE fall passed, and when Christmas holidays arrived Cadet Frothingham came down for a flying visit to New York.

It was bad enough for Lampton merely to hear of the arrival of this vaunted idealization of himself, but when, on the commanding suggestion of Muriel March, he was obliged to show the courtesies of the city, his club, etc., to the cadet he found it difficult to treat the chap with common courtesy.

Soldiers are accomplished lovers—it seems a part of the profession. An ordinary mufti-man, of commoner clay, feels the same ardent affection, devotion, and all that sort of thing, but keeps his emotions decently to himself, reserving his protestations for the one ear in all the world.

Not so the soldier; he pins his divine passion upon his breast like a medal, sits at the lady's feet with melancholy sighs and fiery glances of idolatry, and not only allows, but invites, all the world to see and sympathize with him.

Frothingham must have known that Lampton had some tacit sort of a claim upon Miss March—everybody knew it; but it seemed to make little or no difference to him. He paid her assiduous court and made no bones of it in the presence of Mr. Lampton and the world at large.

The cadet's visit was a short one, but the period proved one of torture and anguish for Lampton. Every time he called at the March house he found the cadet there before him, and he invariably had to leave, for common decency's sake, with "the young bounder" still in the field and apparently enjoying the unqualified favor of the lady in the case.

"Why does a West Point cadet enjoy privileges denied to common mortals?" inquired Lampton, at a rare moment when he caught Muriel alone. "If I should spend the evening here and 'sit out' all comers, staring them out of countenance, I'd be put down without judge or jury as a common lout without manners or breeding."

"Jealous!" pronounced Muriel gaily. "You are simply grouchy, Harry. You don't seem to appreciate that Mr. Frothingham doesn't get leave of absence once in a dozen blue moons. You can come here any night, but he—poor boy—won't get another chance before he graduates, and if you knew how badly he feels about it, you'd be sorry for him. Of course I can't quite see how he can feel so badly about not seeing *me*, but he does!"

So Harry Lampton's "grouch" continued unabated. One night he set his firm jaw and resolved to "sit out" the cadet, but the cadet had a similar jaw, so they stayed until the girl had to send them both home, and they left together, hating each other cordially.

They walked down-town in company and smoked—not a pipe of peace—but just cigarettes, which they puffed viciously.

"Fine, hearty old chap; Muriel's father—isn't he?" said the cadet.

"'Muriel!'" thought Lampton angrily, "and the scoundrel's only known her a couple of months!"

Aloud, he replied frigidly: "Yes, Mr. March is a very fine man. He's one of my best and oldest friends."

"Somewhat of a wad of money the old chap's got, I understand," went on the cadet.

Harry Lampton gritted his teeth fiercely and hated the man for a cad.

"I don't know anything about the family finances," he said with suppressed sarcasm.

And then, as his bitterness surged toward the surface: "I—I—er—believe army men are habitually interested in the financial rating of the ladies of their acquaintance, are they not?"

The cadet smiled coolly, and kept his temper like a finished man of the world.

"Perhaps," he admitted dryly. "I've always understood that impecunious lawyers had the same weakness, Mr. Lampton."

"What do you mean?" cried Lampton, stopping and facing the cadet.

"Why, dear me, nothing at all—any more than you meant, I suppose, my dear Mr. Lampton."

Harry almost bit his cigarette in two, but he shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm going to take a car here," he managed to say. "Good night."

And as he turned away the cadet uttered a dry chuckle, barely audible, and Lampton clenched his fists and hurried on, holding himself together with an heroic effort.

IV.

THE spring came, and with it the graduation exercises at the military academy. Muriel March and Harriet Sibley attended the exercises, but Lampton did not accompany them.

"Oh, what do you think?" said Muriel, when Harry was calling, a little while afterward. "Lieutenant Frothingham has been assigned to the Ninth Infantry, and he's going to be stationed at Fort Barton, right here in this State."

"H-m—is that so?" murmured Lampton.

"It will be so nice for him," ran on Muriel. "Of course, an officer can get off quite often, and he's delighted, because he was awfully afraid he'd get stuck off in some poky old place in the West—or they might have sent him away off to the Philippines—just think!"

"Yes, that would have been tragic," allowed Lampton.

There was a long silence, and the girl felt the tension in the man's manner.

"I can't stand this any longer, Muriel," he said at last. "I've got to know now how and where I stand. You have played with me, and kept me guessing for a longer time than any man with a scrap of pride would stand for. If you love this man Frothingham, I think it's only fair that I should know it. If you love me, why, by the same token, he should know it. That's all!"

The girl laughed uncomfortably, and seemed disposed to say something facetious, but a look in Lampton's eyes restrained her, and she grew very grave.

"I suppose you're right, Harry," she said hoarsely. "You *have* waited a long time. I don't know what to say to you. I want to be honest."

"Don't spare my feelings," interposed Lampton. "Tell me the truth. You know what it will mean to me, but it's got to come."

"I—I can't say anything definite," sighed the girl. "Really, Harry, I don't know, in my heart, whether I care enough for Lieutenant Frothingham to marry him. I'll tell you, as an old friend, that he has asked me. I don't know my own mind yet. But you see what a position I'm in.

"I do care a great deal for you, Harry—you know that. But I'm beginning to feel that the regard is more platonic than—anything else. Can't we let it go at that for a while? Marriage is a tremendous step for a girl, Harry, and I—I want to be sure, you know. You're such a gentleman—you'll understand."

"Thank you," said the man, almost sobbing. "I do understand. I — I suppose now that—well— Oh, yes, I understand it all, Muriel. Good night."

He took her hand coldly as he prepared to depart, but when he looked into her regretful eyes his feeling overcame his reason.

"Oh, Muriel, I can't let it go at this!" he cried wretchedly. "You can't—you must not be allowed to throw yourself away on that cad!"

"Harry Lampton! How do you dare—" began the girl heatedly.

"What does it matter now—what I dare?" he groaned. "You are the victim of brass buttons and the romantic atmosphere of West Point! But you ought to be told what the man is! He's a fortune-hunter—practically self-confessed. He's an adventurer—a penniless, grasping fortune-hunter—and he loves your money better than he loves you!"

"Please go now," said Muriel, very pale, and trembling with anger. "I thought we might always be friends, Harry, but you've

done the last thing that a gentleman ever does. You've given me proof that *you* are the cad, and I don't believe a word you say."

V.

EVERY one knew that Harry Lampton would take it very hard. Some serious, honest men can throw off such things and start anew, but he had something of the poet's temperament, and the blow was crushing to him.

He went to the South for a few weeks, abandoning his law practise without a thought. When he came back, his friends sought him out and strove to persuade him to enter into his work and his customary recreations, but he shunned his office, and finally gave it up, on the plea of ill health.

He lounged around his club, but would have little to do with his associates there. He became moody and silent, and no one could draw him out of the slough of despond into which he had thrown himself.

Muriel March announced her engagement to Lieutenant Frothingham in due course. She felt very badly about Lampton, but she had committed herself, and her engagement to his rival was probably hastened by the circumstances.

Lampton resigned from his club after that. He could not see or talk to his friends, and they were powerless to help him.

He did not leave town, but stayed on and walked gloomily about the streets with lowered head. He was pale and thin, and looked like the shadow of his former self.

People shook their heads over his growing carelessness in dress. He became almost shabby, and seemed to have lost all pride.

Lampton was not wealthy, and he could not live without labor, so his situation became somewhat serious. He took a position as secretary to a judge for a while, but he could apply himself to nothing, and was soon back on the streets again, his load of melancholy doubled.

One bright morning he walked, or shuffled, along the paths in Union Square. Flowers were flourishing in the trim beds and the balm of spring-time was in the air, but it brought no good to the man.

Suddenly he almost bumped into a signboard, gaily colored and setting forth the allurements of the army as a vocation. A man in a natty khaki uniform presided over it watchfully.

"Take care!" he cried good-naturedly. "Don't knock over my shingle."

Lampton paused and idly read the advertisement, looking at the pictures with dull, indifferent eyes.

"Ever been in the service?" asked the soldier, noting the well-knit frame of the rusty-appearing lounger.

Lampton shook his head.

The soldier proceeded to size him up critically.

"Why not try a turn at it, me friend, if you're down on your luck?" he ventured.

Lampton made no response.

The man put a friendly hand on his shoulder, and spoke in an intimate, wheedling tone. He recited his formula of the emoluments and manifold advantages of the service with professional enthusiasm.

"I guess I know all about it," murmured Lampton dully.

"It's a mighty fine thing for a feller that's 'in wrong' and down at the heels," summed up the soldier encouragingly.

Lampton raised his head and met the recruiting agent's eyes.

"I know all about it," he said desperately; "it's hell—that's what it is! But hell is all I'm looking for now, and you can have me if I'm fit."

"That's the talk!" cried the soldier jubilantly. "You look a bit sick, me friend; but you're fit, all right. You stay here by me a few minutes. The sergeant'll be along, and he'll be proud to meet you."

A few days later, when Lampton had been through the physical examination and other formalities, the recruiting officer said to him:

"You're not a common one, Mr. Lampton. I can tell a thing or two about men without judging their dress and present appearance. I guess your stock is pretty low at present, but you're a gentleman, all right, and I want to treat you straight. I've fixed up a pretty fair berth for you—you'll be comfortable—I'm going to send you up to Fort Barton—the Ninth Infantry."

Lampton started and turned pale.

"No—no—not that—" he blurted out, then caught himself.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said with pathetic humility; "I was—I was thinking of something else. Thank you for your consideration, sir."

The officer looked at him searchingly.

"Would you rather go somewhere else?"

he asked kindly. "Any reason why you don't want to go to Fort Barton?"

"No," answered Lampton firmly; "that's all right, sir; I didn't mean anything by what I said. Thank you, sir."

And he walked out of the office with his face still white and his muscles twitching convulsively.

VI.

ADJUTANT FROTHINGHAM was inspecting the men at guard-mounting in Fort Barton.

He paused in front of a private of "B" Company.

"What's the matter with this man?" he asked the sergeant-major. "He's positively slovenly. What does his first sergeant mean by sending him like this?"

The sergeant-major shook his head and smiled.

"Are you a recruit?" demanded the adjutant.

"Yes, sir," answered Private Lampton, of "B" Company.

The adjutant looked up sharply with a nervous start, and as his eyes met those of the private he flushed ruddily.

"I'll make a note of it, sir," said the sergeant-major.

"No, never mind this time." The adjutant spoke in an odd tone. "The man's just landed here, I guess."

It was a few days later that the first sergeant of "B" ordered Private Lampton to report for fatigue duty at Lieutenant Frothingham's quarters.

"Can't I do something else, sergeant?" he pleaded desperately. "I don't care what the job is. Only don't send me there."

"Sufferin' snakes!" howled the first sergeant. "Have I lived to be told me business by a greenhorn? Git along with you, you white-livered snipe, an' report to Lieutenant Frothingham, before I send you to the guard-house for insubordination!"

Lampton had serious thoughts of desertion. Imprisonment or far worse punishment seemed preferable to the ordeal in store for him.

But he set his jaws—he had learned to do that a score of times a day now—and walked up to the adjutant's quarters.

"Sir, Private Lampton, Company 'B,' reports for fatigue duty," he said chokingly, standing at attention and saluting his old rival, the former cadet.

Frothingham started and flushed as he had at the guard-mounting. It was a moment before he could collect himself enough to speak.

"Well," he said at last, "there's quite a bit to be done here. The place needs a thorough cleaning, and those rugs had better be taken out on the grass and beaten."

"Very good, sir," murmured Lampton.

"See here, Lampton!" cried the officer, turning upon him with startling suddenness. "By Jove, this won't do. There's no use dodging the facts. I can't have you doing a lackey's work for me, Lampton. It isn't decent. You're a gentleman—there's no getting away from that. Muriel would never forgive me."

"Please leave all that out, sir," said Lampton dully. "I've got nothing more to do with the past. Shall I begin now, sir?"

"No! You sha'n't begin at all!" cried the officer. "Go back to your quarters and tell your sergeant I don't want you today."

"Very good, sir," and Lampton turned toward the door.

"Lampton, I wish you'd shake hands," said Frothingham impulsively. "This is all foolishness, you know. There should be nothing between you and me of officer and private."

Lampton turned toward him coldly.

"Thank you, Frothingham," he said, "but I wish you'd forget my identity. I want to be known only as Private Lampton. I've erased the things that happened before this, and I don't want any reminders."

"I suppose you'd like to know that Muriel is well," went on the officer.

"I am glad to hear that," said Lampton.

"I suppose you know we're to be married in the fall?" continued Frothingham. "If you want, Lampton, I'll try to have you transferred to some other post before Muriel comes out here."

Lampton's face was very white again.

"Thank you," he said in a mere whisper. "That would be one of the kindest things you ever did."

And then he walked out of the room hurriedly, without saluting.

VII.

IT was summer, and Lieutenant Frothingham was away from the fort on leave.

There was a quiet murmur of gossip in the post about the lieutenant. The enlisted men got it from the servants in the officers' houses and passed it from mouth to mouth with grim relish, for Frothingham did not enjoy the favor of the ranks.

"A little too much of the swelled head," said the men.

It seemed that Frothingham was secretly under observation by his superiors. A little too much "crooking of the elbow," a little too much card-playing—and not quite enough attention to duties and study. In the new order of things diligent study is vitally necessary to an officer's progress, and it was very plain to all that Frothingham was barely skinning through his periodical examinations.

Twice he had been reprimanded for overstaying leave. The offense was slight—he had been but a day or two late in each case; and it was known that he was a lover and an engaged man, so the reprimands had been light and tempered with sentimental consideration. But he was under the eyes of the post now, and it behooved him to be careful.

"The quistion is," remarked Corporal Clancy to the little circle in "B" Company quarters, "the quistion is: did the lootenant oversthay his l'ave of absince ter enj'y the comp'ny uv his gurrl, or was 'e galavantin' around promisc'us like? Personly *an'* privately, me min, I t'ink it was *the* latter."

"Monahan seen 'im hittin' the high places over in Rochester th' last time he was gone," said Private Simpkins. "Yer can't tell me a man as boozes an' sports aroun' like he does, sets much store by his fyansee. I was engaged to a woman once, an' I signed the pledge, *I* did."

"What do you think about it, old frosty face?" asked a man of Lampton.

Lampton curbed himself.

"I don't take the trouble to think," he answered quietly. "It's none of my business."

"An' th' nixt quistion is," announced the sententious Clancy: "what b'y wuz ut—if one o' th' b'ys it wuz—as did the burglin' business th' ither night?"

"We'll soon find out, I reckon," said Simpkins. "A feller can't bust into three off'cers' houses an' walk off with the joolry an' truck 'thout gettin' caught pretty quick. An' the off'cers say they know as how it was one o' the men."

So the talk went on, and Lampton groaned wearily.

For the third time Frothingham overstayed his leave, and the buzzing in the camp was no longer confined to the enlisted quarters.

The commanding officer was seriously disturbed. It was Sunday morning, and the lieutenant should have reported for duty on Saturday night.

"We must make due allowance," said the commanding officer to some of his fellows. "Frothingham may be unavoidably delayed, or ill; but he has the guard-mounting to-morrow morning, and if he doesn't show up to-night, well—it will begin to look bad for him."

Lampton was standing near the group of officers and could not help overhearing the conversation. He presently went on his way, thinking deeply.

What did it all matter to him, anyway? What if Frothingham were disgraced? What—what would Muriel do and say?

Lampton lighted a pipe and walked briskly around the parade-ground, dropping a word here and there to the post children who were romping about.

The day passed, and Lieutenant Frothingham came not. The post hummed with the gossip of the case.

Lampton had a struggle with himself during the evening—a struggle with his old self, and the old self won.

He got permission to go outside the post, went to a telegraph office, and wired Miss Muriel March in New York, asking her if Lieutenant Frothingham had left that city.

He signed the name "Robinson" to the telegram, and waited at the office for an answer. It came about ten o'clock, at which time Lampton should have been back in quarters. And it said that Frothingham left New York two days before date.

The night train came in, but no officer alighted from it. There was another train at 10 A. M. on the next day, but that would be too late for guard-mounting. Frothingham was disgraced!

Lampton felt the pleasures of revenge tugging at his heart, but his old self was still strangely assertive. There seemed to be nothing an enlisted man could do to help the delinquent officer, but Lampton saw a disturbing picture of a weeping girl and his brain worked desperately.

Suddenly he seemed to hear a girlish voice:

"*You look awfully nice in a uniform and without a mustache, Harry,*" the voice seemed to say.

A sob choked the soldier, and he sat down by the roadside and buried his face in his hands.

VIII.

LIEUTENANT FROTHINGHAM'S quarters were in an old brick building on the opposite side of the parade-ground from the married officers' houses.

An iron balcony ran along the front of the house, and the windows of the upper rooms gave upon it.

About midnight a man stole across the parade-ground swiftly and silently as the sentry turned to walk in a direction away from the houses.

The man melted into the deep shadows for a while, but presently he might have been seen climbing laboriously up the supports of the iron balcony. Once upon the latter, he attacked the window with a penknife and the catch yielded.

He stepped into the room, drew down the window-shades carefully, and lighted a lamp, lowering it to a dim glow.

There were clothes in the closet and toilet articles on the dresser. The man walked over to a mirror and looked at his face in the faint light.

"*You've got too good a mouth to be covered up with a bristly mustache,*" said the girlish voice from out of the past.

The man's mustache was now long and drooping, and as he considered himself in the mirror it did not seem that the odd resemblance once remarked upon had really endured.

However, he found soap, a brush, and a razor, and in ten minutes he was smooth-shaven for the first time in more than ten years. He looked in the mirror, holding the lamp close to his face.

The resemblance was there again. The face that returned his gaze might have been that of a twin brother of Lieutenant Frothingham. There were lines in it, to be sure, and a deeper, sadder look about the eyes; but with luck and nerve the game might be played as he had planned it out, sitting by the roadside.

From the closet he took an olive drab uniform, boots, leggings, and other trappings. They fitted a thought too roomily; but then a man may lose flesh during a leave of absence.

He buckled the puttees around his thin legs, and picked up the saber to adjust it to the belt.

Suddenly the window-shade fluttered ominously. The man started—frightened. The casement flew open violently, and Captain Osborne of "B" Company stepped into the room.

Lampton wilted. The game had seemed so simple, but now it was all over.

"So we have the burglar at last," said the officer. "I watched you climb that balcony, my man, from my bedroom window. I came over and waited for you to come out. As you didn't seem in a hurry to do so, I decided to come in out of the cold night air. But tell me — why this masquerade?"

Lampton went over to the lamp and turned up the flame.

"You've made a mistake, Captain Osborne," he said in an affected hoarse whisper.

He knew it was useless to attempt an imitation of Frothingham's voice, so he pretended to have a severe cold.

Osborne looked thunderstruck.

"Great Scott! Is it you, Frothingham?" he cried. "When did you come? What's the matter with you? You look like a ghost. You've lost half your weight. By gad, I don't believe it's Frothingham! What's all this shaving business here? Who are you, anyway?"

Lampton held up his hand to check the violent stream of questions and exclamations.

"I'm Private Lampton," he said simply. "You're a personal friend of Frothingham, I believe, Captain Osborne. Now, let me tell you: I have broken in here to save Frothingham from disgrace. If you keep quiet, I may get away with the guard-mounting business, and it will be up to you meanwhile to go out on a still hunt for Frothingham."

"Heavens! What are you talking about?" cried the captain.

"Frothingham left New York two days ago," said Lampton. "If you can locate him, do so; and get him here before my fake is discovered."

"What are you doing this thing for—money?" demanded the officer.

"No. Because I hate Frothingham more than any one else in the world," replied the soldier.

"But I can't see that," protested the captain.

"I'll tell you," said Lampton. "Frothingham and I were said to resemble each other a long time ago. I knew him when he was at the Point. The reason I'm living this dog's life to-day is because Frothingham took a girl away from me—and with her my life and hope and everything. Now, for that girl's sake—and to show myself that I'm still a man—I'm trying to save Frothingham's skin."

The captain looked almost incredulous for a moment — then he came across the room and grasped the masquerader's hand.

"I'm proud to know you, Mr. Lampton," he said heartily. "And now to business. What shall I do?"

"I think I would get hold of some of his Rochester friends if I were you," suggested Lampton. "But you ought to know more about his associates and haunts than I do."

"I'll do all I can," said the captain. "Good luck to you, Mr. Lampton, and God bless you."

IX.

As the trumpet was sounding the calls for guard-mounting, some officers sauntered along the driveway and looked over the parade-ground with curiosity.

The band had marched out, and presently an adjutant and a sergeant-major walked out, side by side, toward their stations.

"By gad, it's Frothingham!" cried the commanding officer.

The ceremony progressed, and the disguised Lampton gave orders for the first time in his life.

Over in the "B" Company quarters Private Lampton was reported absent without leave, and the word was passed that the melancholy, silent man had deserted at last.

Toward noon an excited officer raced across the lawns to the adjutant's office.

"I've got him, Lampton, over in my house. Now, come on and we'll have this farce over before suspicion gets in the wind."

Frothingham sat sheepishly in an inner room of the captain's house. Lampton was startled when he saw him. The delinquent officer showed unmistakable signs of a debauch, and, with the dark rings under his eyes and a drawn look about the mouth, he looked more than ever like his impersonator.

"I've heard about it all, Lampton," said the fellow. "But what's the use of talking? Nothing I could say would make your action any finer. You're a gentleman, and Osborne here tells me I never was one. I guess he's half right. But we understand each other, Lampton. You never would have done this for me. You did it for Muriel!"

"Yes," admitted Lampton.

"Well, I am glad it's that way," said Frothingham. "We don't like each other, Lampton, and we've never made any bones about it. I should really hate to feel personally in your debt. That you have saved my precious neck for Muriel's sake is a fine thing. Some time, Lampton, I shall tell Muriel about it, and—"

Captain Osborne stepped forward suddenly.

"You'll tell her all about it now, Frothingham," he said with cutting sharpness.

"What do you mean?" cried Frothingham angrily.

"I mean that your friends are tired of shouldering your escapades," went on the captain severely. "One offense after another we have cloaked over for you. You know, and Lampton and I know, that you are deceiving your future wife already, and the time for silence is past.

"If you are penitent and want to make good at last, go and tell the girl what a life you've been leading, and that you'll mend your ways. Then tell her what the man she threw over for you has done for you at the risk of his own liberty and comfort. Tell her all of these things frankly, Frothingham, and prove to me that you've done so, or I shall write to the lady myself and omit nothing."

Frothingham sat with his head down, clasping and unclasping his twitching fingers.

"I must go, Captain Osborne," said Lampton uncomfortably. "If you don't mind getting my own uniform for me. I must report back to quarters."

"I'm sorry, Lampton," said the captain, "but you will be under arrest, you know, for being absent at roll-call. I suppose Frothingham feels that he can do nothing

to explain your absence. I'm sorry, but I'll try to fix things for you. The penalty will not be severe."

Harry Lampton was still doing time for absence without leave when a letter came to him from New York. It ran as follows:

DEAR HARRY:

I am too ill to write very much. Captain Osborne, whom father knows well, has written me all about you and Lieutenant Frothingham, and the latter has refused to make any explanation. Captain Osborne says he can obtain a furlough for you, if you wish to come to New York.

Perhaps you won't care to come after all that has happened, but I would like to talk with you once more. We have all seen such bitter trouble, Harry, since you went away, and there is so—so much to explain. I am asking you to come to me.

MURIEL.

"SEEING NELLIE HOME."

BY MATTHEW WHITE, Jr.

An American's Very Bad Quarter of An Hour in a London Taxi.

"QUITE like a bridal party, isn't it?" Arthur Mack blushed as he stepped into the cab beside the young lady who had just seated herself there.

It was Cecil Montford who made the remark. Mack had been spending the late afternoon and evening at the Montfords' pretty home on the outskirts of London, where he had met Cecil's sister-in-law, now seated beside him in the "fly," as all cabs that ply on country roads are called in England, possibly, as Arthur told himself, because they never move faster than a walk.

This was his first trip to Europe. He had come for his firm on business. Cecil Montford was connected with the house in London; he and Mack made acquaintance through several months of correspondence; and, now that they had met in the flesh, had struck up quite a friendship, the outcome of which was this visit to the Montfords in Craneboro.

Mrs. Montford's sister Nellie happened to come out from town the same afternoon, and arrived while they were taking tea on the lawn. She was introduced simply as "my sister." This, the name Nellie, and the fact that she was pretty and vivacious, was all Mack knew of her up to the moment when they were rushed down to the fly and a mass of roses Nellie was taking back to town bundled in after them.

"Now, it isn't at all necessary that you see me home, Mr. Mack," she told him as the train on the Underground pulled into Charing Cross Station. "You know, our long English twilights make it light in June until nearly ten."

"Certainly, I shall. We can get a taxi here, leave you, and I can then go on to my hotel."

Mack, conscious that his American accent was frequently a cause of mysticism to the London cabbies, permitted his companion to give the directions, and they were soon whizzing along at the speed-law fracturing speed, which appears to be the usual thing in the West End. Arthur saw that the accident was bound to happen only an instant before it took place, too late to do anything, even if there had been anything he could do.

The head of a hansom horse had suddenly loomed up at his right, and the next second crashed into the side of the taxi with tremendous impact. Mack felt the wheels on his side lift from the ground, and with the tilt of the vehicle he was thrown violently against Cecil's sister-in-law.

When the stars ceased to twinkle in his eyes he found himself jammed against the girl's unconscious form, while the taxi-driver lay inert on the pavement where he had been pitched. Mack himself had not been hurt, he was almost ashamed to discover. His landing against his companion had saved him from that.

Of course a crowd had collected, and the only usual feature absent from such happenings was the vituperation between the two drivers. The chauffeur being temporarily dead to the world, the objurgations

of the hansom-plier were bereft of their real significance.

Poor Mack, frightened out of his wits lest serious harm had befallen the girl he was seeing home, called out into the crowd: "Is there a doctor here?"

A bearded man stepped forward and, after a brief examination, reported that nothing more vital than severe shock to the nervous system had been sustained.

"Get her home as quickly as possible," he added, "where she can lie quiet. There is a taxi yonder you can get. Your own man will not be himself, either, for a little while yet."

"Oh, thank you. You are very kind. But, you see, I—"

Mack got thus far and stopped short. How could he tell this stranger that he didn't know where the girl lived, did not even know her last name? What a horrible dilemma!

The doctor stood there, waiting for him to continue; the women in the crowd were pushing up closer, beginning to scent a new sensation.

Could he, would he dare take the girl on to his own hotel? No, that would never do. He recalled how very prudish he had always believed the English to be. The Montfords would never forgive him, and what would "Nellie" think when she came to and discovered where she was?

Oh, if he had only paid some attention to the directions she had given the chauffeur!

Here was a policeman to interrupt the embarrassment, possibly with worse cause for dismay.

"What is your name?" he demanded of Mack.

The American told.

"And the lady?" went on the "bobby," pencil poised. "Her name, if you please."

"Nellie," feebly whispered poor Mack.

"Nellie what?"

"I don't know."

"Very good, sir," broke in the "cop," evidently disbelieving. "Where does she live, then?"

"I don't know that," stammered Mack.

"This is a rum go," muttered the policeman, half to himself, while that portion of the crowd that was not thronging about the still unconscious chauffeur began to chaff Mack audibly in such terms as, "He's a villain, he is!" "Han Hamerican, hain't he? Bah?"

"Can't we send her to a hospital?" poor Arthur finally inquired; but this was greeted with such jeers over his eagerness to be rid of the girl that he withdrew the notion and substituted the suggestion that he telegraph for "Nellie's" address to Cecil Montford at Craneboro.

"Never heard of the place," sharply retorted the policeman, whereupon Arthur added the name of the railway station from which it was a mile and a half drive into the country.

"'E might get the wire about this time to-morrow," thereupon replied the "bobby," adding: "But look sharp, and do something if you don't want me to run 'er into the station-house. Yer know ye can't be blocking the traffic like this."

Mack took a sudden resolve. Anything was better than being the pivot of this circling mob of "rubber-necks."

"Get me another taxi," he said to the officer, "and help me carry the lady over to it."

The exchange was quickly made, and Arthur told the chauffeur to take them first in any direction till they had left the open-mouthed gapers behind. "Nellie" lay still unconscious, and poor Mack felt like a heartless brute as he recalled the doctor's admonition to get her home quickly. His present intention was to keep driving about in the air, which might revive her sufficiently so that she could tell him where she lived.

However, there seemed little likelihood of this, when the driver finally looked back and inquired: "Where to now, sir?"

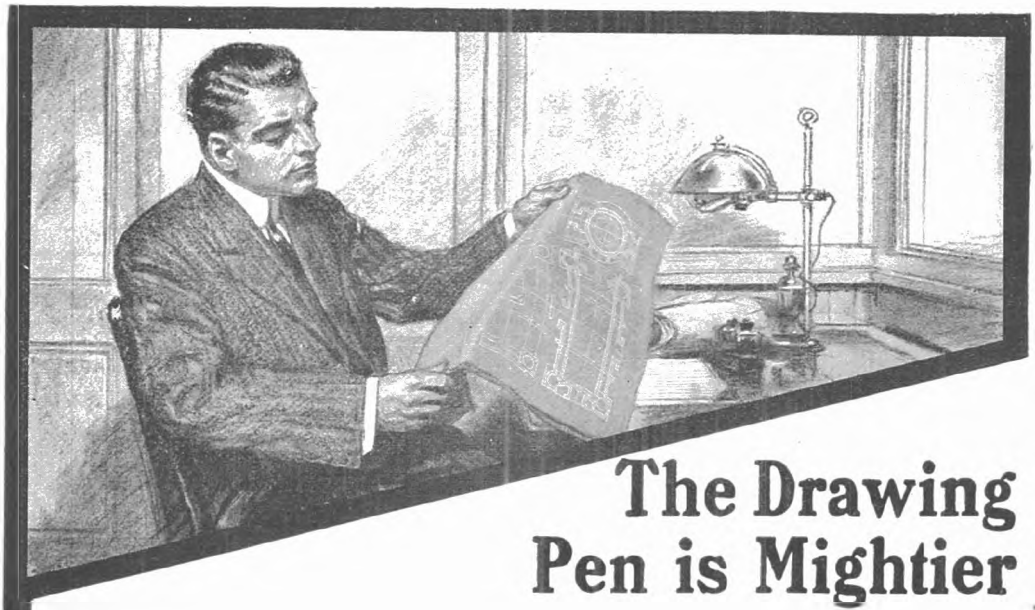
"Back to Russell Square," Mack replied on the spur of the moment. "I must see if that other chauffeur has recovered yet."

What he really meant to do was to find out from him, if possible, what directions had been given him; but when they reached the spot there was no trace of the recent accident, and nobody about could tell whether the hurt driver had been taken to the hospital or not.

It was the supreme moment!

Mack was at his wits' end as the machine stood there by the curb, waiting for him to announce where to drive. Suddenly the girl beside him opened her eyes and looked around her.

"Oh," she said, "wasn't it fortunate the accident happened right at my very door? I am all right now. Thank you so much, Mr. Mack, for bringing me home."



The Drawing Pen is Mightier

IT'S so easy to enjoy yourself. Never were there so many different forms of amusement as there are to-day. But the fact cannot be denied, if you want to fatten your own pay-envelope and succeed in life, you ***must*** draw the line somewhere.

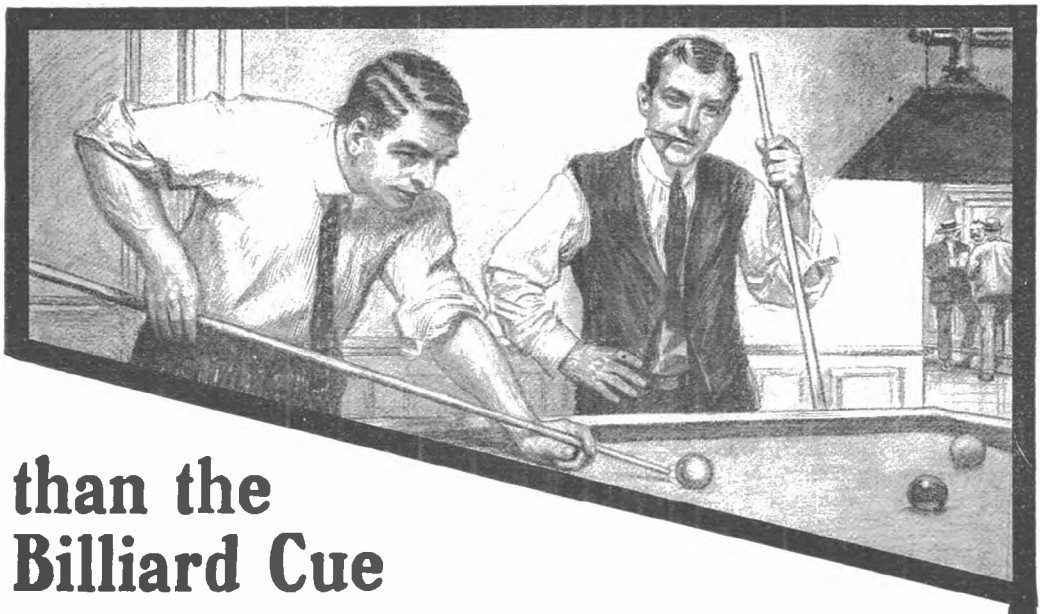
Yes—there ***is*** a way for you— a way that has been blazed and followed by exactly such men as yourself. These men had all the inborn love of a good time, and ***still*** have it. But they came to realize, before it was too late, that much of their pleasure time could be spent to far better advantage.

And this was the result:—

Joe Stieren advanced himself from machine-wood worker to foreman; Jonathan Thomas was promoted from miner to Assistant Mine Inspector; Ralph Davis changed from elevator man to electrician; Charles V. Cosby moved up from paymaster's clerk to superintendent of construction; Tom Walsh from proofreader to draftsman; Bert Spark's salary jumped from $50 a month to $1000 a year. John Wing's salary doubled itself in less than two years—and so on, without end. These names are picked at random from the list of thousands of successful students of the International Correspondence Schools—men who were helped in their spare time to win success in their chosen line of work. Now—

What are you going to do about it?

It's a pretty poor sort of chap who hasn't the ambition to find out how he ***can*** be helped—especially when finding out costs



than the Billiard Cue

nothing. What are ***you*** going to do about it? Have ***you*** enough ambition to mark the attached coupon to learn of the special way by which you can have ***your*** position bettered?

Marking the coupon costs nothing, and is in no way binding. On the contrary, it brings you advice and information telling how you can qualify through I. C. S. help for splendid positions in the ***occupation of your own choice,*** without leaving home or stopping work. So long as you can read and write, it is absolutely immaterial who you are, what you do, where you live, what your salary, where you got your schooling, or what your age—

The I. C. S. has a way for you

Prove your ability by marking the coupon NOW.

Now—Don't you think it well worth your while to get in line for the really good things of life when the way is so easy? Over three hundred I. C. S. students every month VOLUNTARILY report salary increases and promotions won wholly through this I. C. S. help—331 were heard from during October.

So long as you can furnish the ambition, the I. C. S. can furnish the training—and in such an easy way that the cost will not be a burden to you.

You've ***got*** to wake up ***some*** time and look this matter squarely in the face. Wake up NOW—before it is too late.

Mark and mail the coupon to-day. Then the I.C.S. will step in and show you beyond any question of doubt how you can be helped.

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Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position, trade or profession before which I have marked X.

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Plumbing, Steam Fitting	Languages— Spanish, French, German, Italian
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Stationary Engineer	Industrial Designing
Telephone Expert	Commercial Illustrating
Mechanical Engineer	Window Trimming
Mechan'l Draftsman	Show Card Writing
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Electric Lighting Supt.	Stenographer
Electric Wireman	Bookkeeper

Name_____

Present Occupation_____

Street and No._____

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C.3.R

Foster Made $19,484.83 Last Year From His Million Egg Farm

Five years ago Joel M. Foster, a young city man, decided to go into the poultry business. He was looking for a suitable occupation, he was vigorous and energetic, and believed that there was a fortune to be made raising chickens. He had no experience. He bought and stocked a little farm near a big city, but for a time he had only failures. His poultry house burned with all its contents, and he had to begin anew. The next year rats destroyed half his flock, but he surmounted these and other difficulties, always thinking, planning and experimenting. Today he is at the head of the largest EGG PRODUCING plant in the world, with 20,000 laying hens, and will market this year between two and three million eggs.

Last year Mr. Foster made $19,484.83 from his Million Egg Farm. Most of it was from commercial eggs; $6000 was income from sales of "Day-Old Chix;" the rest from miscellaneous products of the great Rancocas Farm.

Read The Whole Amazing Story In "The Million Egg Farm."

We have induced Mr. Foster to tell his experience for the benefit of poultrymen everywhere. The beauty of his system is that the principles can be applied just as well to the farmer's flock or the suburban lot as to the still larger plant of the man who wants to go into egg raising as a profession. The book tells you how to start and be successful with a few or many hens. It explains the Rancocas Unit, into which his gigantic flock is divided. It gives estimates and advice for the beginner with a little flock. It tells how Foster began with a $300 investment and 100 hens, and how you can begin. It gives all the Rancocas formulas for mating, hatching and feeding—the result of his experience. It gives the egg production day by day—proof that his formulas are successful.

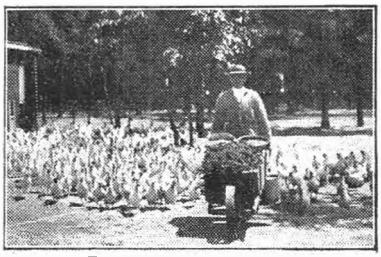
Gathering the Eggs in the Early Afternoon

All Figures Are Certified

To satisfy ourselves that the figures were correct we employed the well-known firm of Lybrand, Ross Brothers and Montgomery, certified public accountants, to make an exhaustive two weeks' examination of the books and records of the Rancocas Farm. The result of their findings is given in the book. Nothing has been held back. The failures as well as the successes are set forth. We believe no other poultryman has ever thus laid open his business secrets and experiences to the world.

How to Get The Book

Fill out the coupon in the lower corner, and mail at once with $1.00—a money order or a Dollar Bill. This pays for a four-year subscription to the foremost farm and home monthly in the world, the FARM JOURNAL, together with a copy of "The Million Egg Farm" postpaid.



Feeding A Rancocas Unit

What Farm Journal Is

Farm Journal is made for everyone in town or country who raises poultry, eggs, fruit, vegetables, milk, butter, honey, as well as horses, sheep, grain and cattle. It has the largest circulation of any farm paper in the world, over 750,000 copies. It is devoted to housekeeping, dressmaking, recipes, and bright, fresh reading for boys and girls. It is brief, crisp, condensed and PRACTICAL. No long-winded essays. "Cream, not Skim-milk" is its motto. It is now running a series of articles called "Back to the Soil," true stories of experiences of city people who have changed to country life. They are helpful and intensely interesting. Farm Journal never prints a medical or trashy advertisement, and its columns are an absolutely reliable guide in buying. Most of its subscribers pay five to ten years ahead. It is a special favorite with women. Everyone who has a garden, yard, flower bed or even a kitchen ought to have this bright, cheery, useful home paper. Farm Journal takes pride in being "Unlike Any Other Paper."

Farm Journal a Paper for City Folk, Too

You do not have to be a dweller on farms to enjoy Farm Journal. If you have a little patch of real ground which you want to put to some better, more useful purpose than a grass plot, Farm Journal will give you the help you need, and if you feel the call to the country and would like to own a few hens and enjoy poultry raising, Farm Journal and the Million Egg book are indispensable. Farm Journal four years and the Million Egg book for $1.00 is the greatest subscription bargain of the year, but we don't want you to subscribe for Farm Journal solely to get the book, we want you to join the three-quarters of a million army for the Farm Journal itself; you will find it the wisest, most helpful, cheerful, and entertaining of counsellors and friends. Send coupon to-day.

FARM JOURNAL 138 Clifton St. Philadelphia, Pa.

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Here is my dollar. I want Farm Journal for four years and "The Million Egg Farm."

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Here is the way through

OUR **"Deferred Tuition Scholarship"** supplies the way and removes the last barrier between the progressive, ambitious young man and the higher position and salary to which he aspires.

Read every word of this offer. We mean it, and there is a fine chance for you if you improve it.

This country is full of energetic, capable men whose days are spent in work which is not suited to their natural talents. Thousands of these men realize that all that stands between them and good positions with big pay is their lack of special training in some one thing. They lack the time and the means to stop work and take a course of training, and so they go on year after year, always getting farther away from what they most want. We are going to help these men. We are going to lend them the cost of the training they need and let them make their own terms about repaying us.

This is the greatest offer ever made to men who have "got it in them to rise." We have studied the matter very carefully, and are fully prepared to help everyone who comes to us in earnest.

If you are one of these capable, ambitious fellows, willing to study for an hour every evening after working hours, willing to stick to it with the kind of persistence that wins, and without which nothing worth while is ever won; then you are on the right track.

Check the coupon, mail it to us, and we will explain fully our **"Deferred Tuition"** plan, how we will lend you the cost of the tuition, and allow you to pay us back when the increase in your yearly income equals the amount of the loan.

No Promotion—No Pay—that's what our **"Deferred Tuition"** scholarship means.

Ask for the little book, "Profitable Worldly Wisdom." It will be sent to you free and will help you.

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Please send me your Bulletin and advise me how I can qualify for the position marked "X." Argosy, 1-'11

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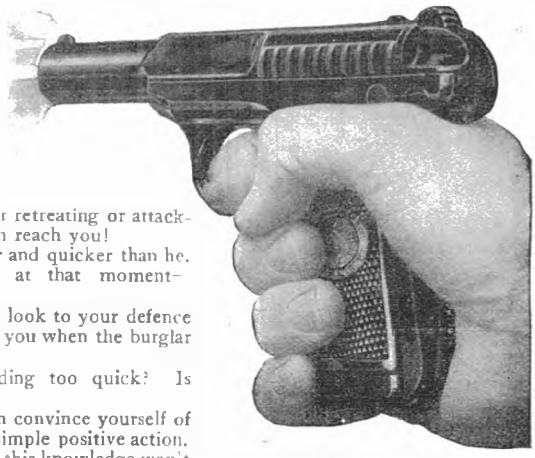
When the Burglar Sees You



THE burglar acts immediately. He is either retreating or attacking. Don't let him attack. Don't let him reach you!

Be ready. Be armed *ten times stronger* and quicker than he. Have overwhelming odds on your side at that moment—be armed with a Savage Automatic protector.

You should count on being attacked, and look to your defence *now*. Ask yourself if any arm is too modern for you when the burglar is attacking.

Are 10 shots any too many? Is self-loading too quick? Is instinctive aiming too easy?

Go to the dealer's to-day and by examination convince yourself of the Savage's absolute safety, its natural aim, its simple positive action. If you wait until after the burglar has visited you, this knowledge won't be worth so much.

"Bat" Masterson, famous western ex-sheriff, wrote "The Tenderfoot's Turn." It's a fascinating book about famous bad men and crack shots. Send us your dealer's name, and we'll send you a copy free.

YOU SHOULD SEE THE FAMOUS SAVAGE RIFLES

Your dealer will show you the new Savage .22 calibre repeating rifle, 1909 model. Price $10 Also the Featherweight Takedown at $25. Send to-day for free rifle book. Savage Arms Co., 861 Savage Ave., Utica, N. Y.

THE XMAS GIFT FOR A PROPERTY OWNER

10 Shots Quick

THE NEW SAVAGE AUTOMATIC

We Will Start You In The Paint Manufacturing Business

Make From $3,000 to $10,000 a Year Profit and Begin Now

"The manufacture of paint is one of the world's most profitable industries". You can't realize how true that statement is until you look about you and see the immense amount of paint used—everywhere—on everything. We start you on the road to success by making it possible for you to make any kind of paint on the market—not only that, but you can sell it for much less and still make a greater profit than the largest paint manufacturing companies. If you want to become a prosperous manufacturer, if you want to go into the best paying business open today—pleasant, honorable, profitable—requiring very small investment,

This Is Your Opportunity

Send for our booklet **"Own a FAC-TRE of your Own"**—it tells you how you can be a paint manufacturer right in your own town, and the reason why the manufacture of paint is **the best business on earth** and your chance to make a greater income. Absolutely no experience in making paint is necessary. We furnish you the machinery, formulas and everything needed to successfully manufacture and put up paints. **Write today for Free Book.**

FAC-TRE Paint Equipment Company,
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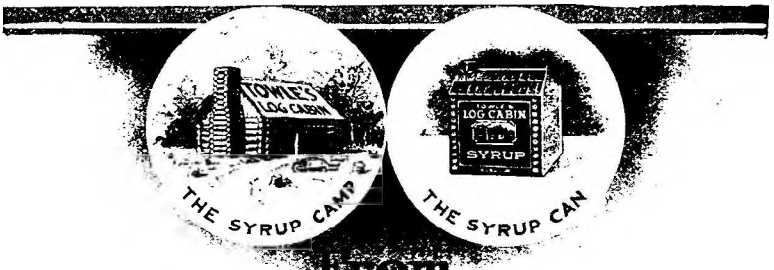
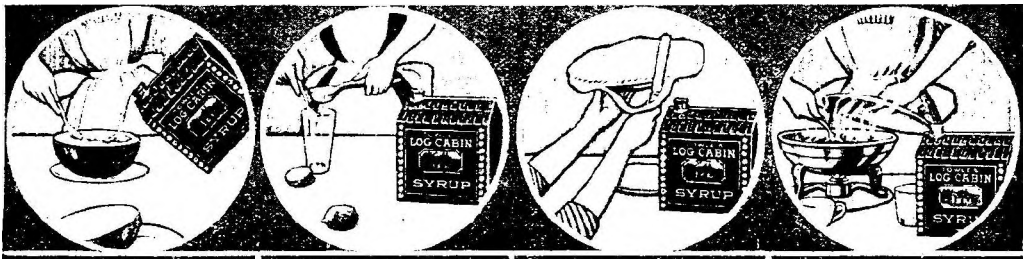


From Camp to Table



Syrup in Cooking

Better and More Palatable than Sugar

Towle's Log Cabin Syrup

Full Measure

Aside from being **good** on griddle cakes, waffles, etc., gives a delicious New Flavor to all cooking that is most delightful.

You will be surprised to know of the many ways Towle's Log Cabin can be used. We have prepared an attractive book "From Camp to Table" which tells how to make the dishes illustrated and contains thirty-three prize recipes.

Every housewife should have it. You will delight your family with the many new delicacies you can make. **Send for it. It's FREE.**

How often have you or the family expressed a desire for something new,—something different? So positive are we that Towle's Log Cabin Syrup will satisfy this craving that if your grocer hasn't got it, it will pay you to go to one who has.

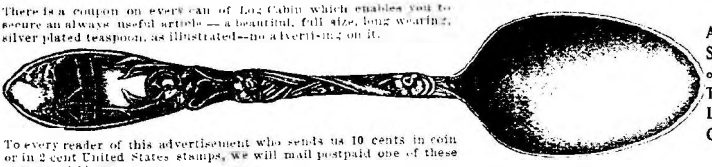
Towle's Log Cabin Syrup

Is the Pioneer Maple Syrup of

Full Measure—Full Quality—Full Flavor

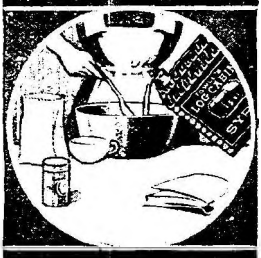
It is the only Maple Syrup used extensively, and known favorably all over the world. Wherever Syrup is used, the names "Towle" and "Log Cabin" are recognized as synonymous with the very highest quality in syrup.

There is a coupon on every can of Log Cabin which enables you to secure an always useful article — a beautiful, full size, long wearing, silver plated teaspoon, as illustrated—no advertising on it.



A Souvenir of Towle's Log Cabin

To every reader of this advertisement who sends us 10 cents in coin or in 2 cent United States stamps, we will mail postpaid one of these spoons. Address—



The Towle Maple Products Co., St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.

Refineries and Offices:

St. Johnsbury, Vt.
In the Virgin Maple Sugar Forests.

St. Paul, Minn.
In the Center of North America.

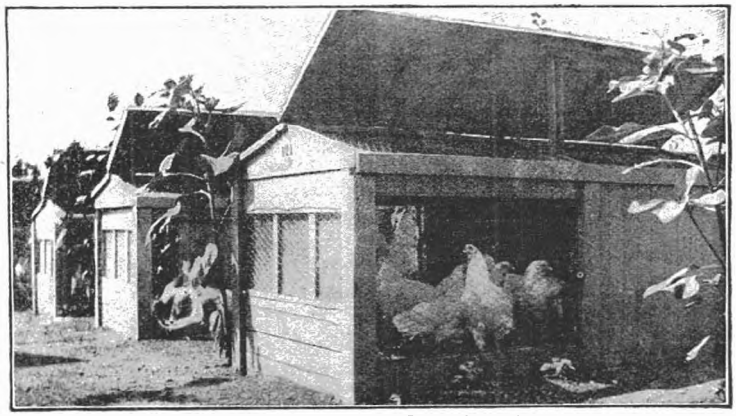
San Francisco, Cal.
Pacific Coast Headquarters.

A LIVING FROM POULTRY

$1,500.00 from 60 Hens in Ten Months on a City Lot 40 Feet Square

TO the average poultryman that would seem impossible, and when we tell you that we have actually done a $1500 poultry business with 60 hens on a corner in the city garden 40 feet wide by 40 feet long, we are simply stating facts. It would not be possible to get such returns by any one of the systems of poultry keeping recommended and practiced by the American people, still it can be accomplished by the

PHILO SYSTEM



Note the condition of these three months old pullets. These pullets and their ancestors for seven generations have never been allowed to run outside the coops.

THE PHILO SYSTEM IS UNLIKE ALL OTHER WAYS OF KEEPING POULTRY

and in many respects just the reverse, accomplishing things in poultry work that have always been considered impossible, and getting unheard-of results that are hard to believe without seeing.

THE NEW SYSTEM COVERS ALL BRANCHES OF THE WORK NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS

from selecting the breeders to marketing the product. It tells how to get eggs that will hatch, how to hatch nearly every egg and how to raise nearly all the chicks hatched. It gives complete plans in detail how to make everything necessary to run the business and at less than half the cost required to handle the poultry business in any other manner.

TWO-POUND BROILERS IN EIGHT WEEKS

are raised in a space of less than a square foot to the broiler, and the broilers are of the very best quality, bringing here 3 cents a pound above the highest market price.

OUR SIX-MONTH-OLD PULLETS ARE LAYING AT THE RATE OF 24 EGGS EACH PER MONTH

in a space of two square feet for each bird. No green cut bone of any description is fed, and the food used is inexpensive as compared with food others are using.

Our new book, **THE PHILO SYSTEM OF POULTRY KEEPING**, gives full particulars regarding these wonderful discoveries, with simple, easy-to-understand directions that are right to the point, and 15 pages of illustrations showing all branches of the work from start to finish.

DON'T LET THE CHICKS DIE IN THE SHELL

One of the secrets of success is to save all the chickens that are fully developed at hatching time, whether they can crack the shell or not. It is a simple trick, and believed to be the secret of the ancient Egyptians and Chinese which enabled them to sell the chicks at 10 cents a dozen.

CHICKEN FEED AT FIFTEEN CENTS A BUSHEL

Our book tells how to make the best green food with but little trouble and have a good supply any day in the year, winter or summer. It is just as impossible to get a large egg yield without green food as it is to keep a cow without hay or fodder.

OUR NEW BROODER SAVES 2 CENTS ON EACH CHICKEN

No lamp required. No danger of chilling, over-heating or burning up the chickens as with brooders using lamps or any kind of fire. They also keep the lice off the chickens automatically or kill any that may be on them when placed in the brooder. Our book gives full plans and the right to make and use them. One can easily be made in an hour at a cost of 25 to 50 cents.

TESTIMONIALS

MY DEAR MR. PHILO:— Valley Falls, N. Y., Oct. 1, 1910.

After another year's work with your System of Poultry Keeping (making three years in all) I am thoroughly convinced of its practicability. I raised all my chicks in your Brooder-Coops containing your Fireless Brooders, and kept them there until they were nearly matured, decreasing the number in each coop, however, as they grew in size. Those who have visited my plant have been unanimous in their praise of my birds raised by this System.

Sincerely yours, (Rev.) E. B. Templer.

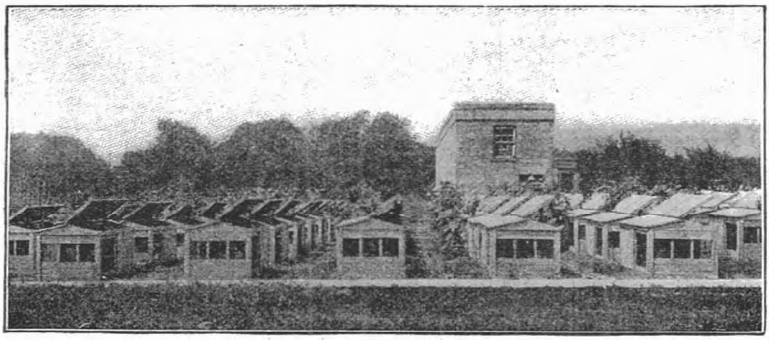
MR. E. R. PHILO, Elmira, N. Y. Elmira, N. Y., Oct. 30, 1909.

Dear Sir:—No doubt you will be interested to learn of our success in keeping poultry by the Philo System. Our first year's work is now nearly completed. It has given us an income of over $500.00 from six pedigree hens and one cockerel. Had we understood the work as well as we now do after a year's experience, we could easily have made over $1000.00 from the six hens. In addition to the profits from the sale of pedigree chicks we have cleared over $950.00, running our Hatchery plant, consisting of 66 Cycle Hatchers. We are pleased with the results, and expect to do better the coming year. With best wishes, we are Very truly yours, (Mrs.) C. P. Goodrich.

MR. E. R. PHILO, Elmira, N. Y. South Britain, Conn., April 19, 1909.

Dear Sir:—I have followed your System as close as I could; the result is a complete success. If there can be any improvement on nature, your brooder is it. The first experience I had with your System was last December. I hatched 17 chicks under two hens, put them as soon as hatched in one of your brooders out of doors, and at the age of three months I sold them at 35c. a pound. They then averaged 2¼ lbs. each, and the man I sold them to said they were the finest he ever saw, and he wants all I can spare this season.

Yours truly, A. E. Nelson.



Photograph Showing a Portion of the Philo National Poultry Institute Poultry Plant. Where There Are Now Over 5,000 Pedigree White Orpingtons on Less Than a Half Acre of Land.

SPECIAL OFFER

Send $1.00 for one year's subscription to the Poultry Review, a monthly magazine devoted to progressive methods of poultry keeping, and we will include, without charge, a copy of the latest revised edition of the Philo System Book.

E. R. PHILO, Publisher
2631 Lake St., Elmira, N. Y.

C18

G.J.B.

C12

C 13

C14

DAGGETT & RAMSDELL'S
Perfect Cold Cream

Has been used constantly for years by our sweethearts, sisters and mothers to enhance and protect their beauty. It supplies exactly what is needed to keep the skin soft and fair and retard the telltale wrinkles of time. It prevents chaps and roughness. It cleanses hygienically after motoring, shopping, traveling or dusting. It is a delightful soothing healing emollient for all skin troubles. It is "Perfect" for massage. It is known the world over as "The Kind that Keeps." We guarantee that it will NOT make hair grow. Tubes 10c, 25c, 50c; Jars 35c, 50c, 85c and $1.50 everywhere.

TRIAL TUBE and instructive book on the care of the skin, entitled, "Beware the Finger of Time."

Address Dept. G. **MAILED FREE**

Daggett & Ramsdell New York
D. & R. Building, 314 West 14th St.

$13,245 IN 110 DAYS
$30,000 in 9 Months

R. V. Zimmerman

Amount of orders from R. V. Zimmerman, Ind., *farmer* (*address upon request*), for our

NEW INVENTION

Sectional View

First experience as an agent. M. Stoneman, Nebr., *artist* (*address upon request*). *Spare time* orders total

OVER $15,000.00

One order exceeds $6,000. "Best thing ever sold. Not one complaint from 2,000 customers." C. A. Korslad, Minn. (*address upon request*),

Orders $2,212 Worth in Two Weeks

Hundreds enjoying similar prosperity. Agents breaking all records actually getting rich. **Let us refer you to 10 more whose total orders exceed $51,000**; to hundreds like O. Schleicher, Ohio (**minister**), whose first 12 hours work sold 30 outfits (profit $81.90). A. Wilson, Ky., who ordered **$4.000** worth and **sold 102 in 14 days** (profit $278.40). J. Hart, Texas, **$5,000** worth and **sold 16 in 3 hours** (profit $43.68). Reese, Pa. (**carpenter**), solicited 60 people—sold 55. Reader, these results possible for **you**, at home or travelling, as **exclusive agent for Allen's Wonderful Bath Apparatus.** New, powerful, irresistible. Truly wonderful! **Gives every home a modern bathroom for only $6.50.** Abolishes tubs, bowls, buckets, wash rags, sponges. Supplies hot or cold water in any room. **No plumbing, no water works, self-heating,** makes bathing **5 minute** operation. Easily carried from room to room. Child operates easily. Means no more cold rooms, drudgery, lugging water, filling tubs, emptying, cleaning, putting away. No wonder **agents without previous experience make small fortunes, buy homes, have an automobile, bank account.** Average 8 orders to every 10 families. Fascinating, dignified, exciting work. to active agents. **Don't hesitate—**

Free Sample, Credit, Liberal Terms business supplies capital. Investigate by all means. Address postal today for full details—decide afterwards.

ALLEN MFG. CO., 3161 Allen Bldg., TOLEDO, O.

Fighting
the Trust!!

The Smashing Anti-Trust Fight Now On!

Trust Prices Eclipsed at Last!

An absolutely *first-class* **high-grade** watch at a price within the reach of the people—The Burlington Special Anti-Trust Watch.

The World's Masterpiece of watch manufacture—**the Burlington Special—now sold** direct to the public at its *rock-bottom, anti-trust* price (and besides without middlemen's profits.

We do not care what it costs—we *will* uphold our independent line and so we are making the most sweeping, baffling offer ever made on watches.

Some trusts are legal and some are not. **We do not say that the watch trust is illegal**; but we do say that the **methods** of the giant factories in making "contracts" with dealers **to uphold double prices** on watches is very **unfair**—unfair to **us** and unfair to **you.** Hence our **direct** offer on the Burlington at the **very same** price the **Wholesale** Jeweler must pay.

This is *your* opportunity—**NOW**—while this great Anti-trust offer lasts—get the best watch made anywhere at one-third the price of other high-grade watches. Furthermore, in order to fight the Trust most effectually, we even allow terms of **$2.50 a month** on our finest watch—easiest possible payments at the rock-bottom price, the identical price the **Wholesale** jeweler must pay.

Watch Book on request

Now do not miss this opportunity. At least we want you to know about WATCHES and WATCH PRICES. Write Today.

Be posted

Send a postal or letter or simply mail coupon without sending a letter and get the free book.

BURLINGTON WATCH CO.
Dept. 1071
19th and Marshall Blvd. CHICAGO

Burlington Watch Co., Dept. 1071 19th and Marshall Blvd., CHICAGO

Please send me *without obligation* and prepaid your free book on watches and copy of your $1,000.00 challenge—with full explanations of your $2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name.....

Address.....

No Letter Necessary Coupon will do

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention THE ARGOSY.

C16

C17

Cuts Butter Bills Nearly Half

Wonderful cost saving Machine FOR FAMILY USE

You can make **two pounds** from **one pound** of **butter** and a pint of sweet milk; tastes sweeter and is just as healthful as the butter you used in making.

Mak-Mor Butter Machine

Recipe: Place one pint of sweet milk and one pound of butter in the machine, turn the handle two minutes and take out two pounds of what you will say is about the best butter you have ever tasted.

$3.00 Complete

East of Rocky Mountains. One week trial allowed.

Money back if not satisfactory

Extra POUND costs 4c

The price of a pint of milk.

NOTE:—You can do even better if you want to make your own butter to your taste. Put one quart sour cream into the MAK MOR MACHINE and a short stir will yield almost 1 lb. of butter. Work out the buttermilk and then stir in 1 pt. of sweet milk—result 2 lbs.

Cost—1 Qt. sour cream, 25c
1 Pt. sweet milk 4c
29c for 2 lbs. or 14½c per lb

Butter will be 50c this winter. Think what this machine will save you right now.

The glass receptacle holding the butter and milk is detachable and can be used as graduated standard quart and cup measure.

WRITE DEPT. A FOR BOOKLET—VALUABLE TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD.

Mak-Mor Sales Co., No. 4 South St., New York, N. Y.

Live Agents Write Us for Exclusive Territory

$65.75

PROFIT IN FOUR HOURS

T. A. WHITE, ILL., writes: "Sold 15 in 4 hours." "profit $65.75). Make an effort to secure a ency. Opportunity now offered a few men or men. W. J. MORGAN, PA., writes: "Sold 7 in 9 days," (profit $318.75). F. E. POOLE, MASS., "six first day" (profit $25.50). Success possible because every housekeeper needs—wants—must have a NEW HOME VACUUM CLEANER. Show 10 families, sell 8. Millions of homes to be supplied. Powerful suction draws dust, dirt, grime and germs from carpets, rugs or mattings. No sweeping or dusting. No taking up and beating carpets. One person operates. Women have wished and longed for this. Customers delighted. MRS. GOODELL, ILL., writes: "It certainly is wonderful; am so pleased. I cannot do it justice." HENRY RUBINS, N. Y.: "It is the greatest machine ever invented for the home." We will start you making money. Act quick. Free sample to active agents.

$8.50

Not sold in stores.

R. Armstrong Mfg. Co., 1379 Alms Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

"DON'T SHOUT"

"I hear you. I can hear now as well as anybody. 'How?' Oh, something new—THE MORLEY PHONE. I've a pair in my ears now, but they are invisible. I would not know I had them in, myself, only that I hear all right."

The **Morley Phone** for the

DEAF

makes low sounds and whispers plainly heard. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless. Anyone can adjust it. Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 700, Perry Bldg., Phila.

MORE MONEY

is being made by those who invest in town lots at the beginning of Western Canada's future industrial and commercial centers, than in any other way. It is estimated that

ONE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS

was made in the year ending July 1, 1910, by those who had the foresight and courage to make such investments.

IT IS ALL GOOD, CLEAN MONEY, TOO

You can invest as little as $10 a month and get your share of it. Let us tell you about Fort George, the last great metropolis of North America, and other opportunities for investment in lands, business openings, etc., in British Columbia.

COMMERCIAL CLUB OF FORT GEORGE

PUBLICITY BUREAU, 613-S BOWER BLDG., VANCOUVER, B.C.

AGENTS 100% PROFIT

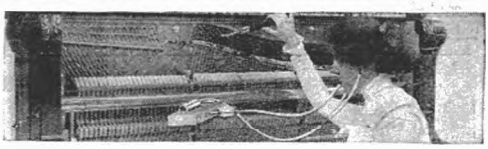
Most perfect and valuable Combination of tools ever invented. Sells at sight to Farmers, Plumbers, Machinists, Automobile Owners, in stores and the home. Made of Drop Forged high grade carbon steel. One agent in Essex County, N. Y., after a 6 days' canvass ordered 100 tools. His profit $100.00. Big snap for agents. Sample free to workers.

T. THOMAS MFG. CO., 2709 Wayne St., Dayton, Ohio

Best Birds, Best Eggs, Lowest Prices

All leading varieties pure-bred Chickens, Ducks, Geese and Turkeys. Largest Poultry Farm in the world. Fowls Northern-raised, healthy and vigorous. Fowls, Eggs and Incubators at lowest prices. Send for our big 132-page book, "Poultry For Profit," full of pictures. It tells you how to raise poultry and run Incubators successfully. Send 10 cents for the book, to cover postage.

J. W. MILLER COMPANY, Box 228, Freeport, Ill.



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We guarantee to teach you to play by mail and will give you a **Beautiful Cornet** or any Band Instrument absolutely **FREE**. You pay weekly as lessons are taken. **Instrument is sent with first lesson.** Write to-day for our booklet and wonderful tuition offer

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Stand acid test and expert examination. We guarantee them. **See them first—then pay. Special Offer**—14k Tiffany ring 1 ct. $5.98. Gents ring 1 ct. $6.98. 14k Stud 1 ct. $4.86. Sent C.O.D. for inspection. **Catalog FREE**, shows full line. Patent ring gauge included, 10c. The

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Music Lessons Free

IN

Your Own Home

Special arrangements have been made with the famous U. S. School of Music to organize a Music Club to be composed of readers of this magazine.

These lessons, for either Piano, Organ, Violin, Guitar, Banjo, Cornet, Mandolin, Cello or Sight Singing, will be given free to any reader of The Argosy.

This school has brought to life thousands of dead musical instruments all over the land, and is today one of the greatest blessings in musical life. As a member of this club you will have placed at your disposal every advantage of a full scholarship and tuition in this well-known institution. Every one having a love for music should take advantage of our generous offer at once.

It matters not whether you are a beginner or an advanced pupil, the lessons will be made suitable to your need.

You will get one lesson weekly, and your only expense during the time you take the lessons will be the cost of postage and the music you use, which is small.

Hundreds of our pupils write: "Wish I had known of this club before." "Everything is so thorough and complete." "The lessons are marvels of simplicity, and my 11-year-old boy has not had the least trouble to learn." One minister writes: "As each succeeding lesson comes I am more and more fully persuaded I made no mistake in becoming your pupil."

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MAIL TODAY DIRECT TO

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Box 1, 225 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Please send free tuition offer and further information, as I wish to learn the instrument before which I have marked X.

Piano	Violin	Mandolin	Cornet	Cello
Organ	Guitar	Banjo	Sight Singing	

Name.....

Street and No.....

City..... State.....

Musical Instruments supplied when needed. Cash or credit.

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Do You Want to Earn More?

Earn $25 to $100 a Week

Study advertising by mail with this school and you can positively increase your earning power. Ad-writers receive from $25 to $100 a week.

If you want to KNOW more—if your desire is to LEARN more—if you want to improve your worldly and financial position, either as employee or employer, write us today and you will receive our beautiful prospectus—it is Free.

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YOU CAN WRITE A SHORT STORY. Beginners learn thoroughly under our perfect method; many sell their stories before completing the course. We help those who want to sell their stories. Write for particulars. School of Short-Story Writing, Dept. 141, Page Building, Chicago

BE AN ILLUSTRATOR by mail how to draw for magazines and newspapers. Send for Catalog.

Learn to draw. We will teach you

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LEARN JEWELERS' ENGRAVING

A high salaried and easily learned trade, taught thoroughly by mail. We will teach the beginner better engraving than he can gain in years of rigid apprenticeship. We will also improve the skill of any engraver. Send for our catalog. **The Engraving School, 141 Page Bldg., Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.**

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The greatest profession in the world is now being taught practically and scientifically, by **US.**

If you are interested, send for full detail of our "part payment after you are employed" plan.

Only a certain number taken on this condition. Write **NOW.**

THE SALESMAN'S SCHOOL, 141 PAGE BLDG., CHICAGO

I Was Deaf 25 Years

NOW I HEAR WHISPERS

G. P. WAY

with this artificial EAR DRUM in my ears. I never feel them—they are perfectly comfortable, and no one sees them. I will tell you the true story, how I got deaf, and how I made myself hear.

Medicated Ear Drum Pat. July 15, 1903

ARTIFICIAL EAR DRUM COMPANY

Address GEO. P. WAY, Manager

38 ADELAIDE STREET, DETROIT, MICH.

MAKE MONEY

writing Song Poems and musical compositions. Success means fame and cash. No experience necessary. $10,000 recently paid for a popular song. Send us your work, or write for FREE PARTICULARS. We want original song poems, with or without music.

H. KIRKUS DUGDALE CO.

Desk 250 Washington, D. C.

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MINED FROM THE EARTH

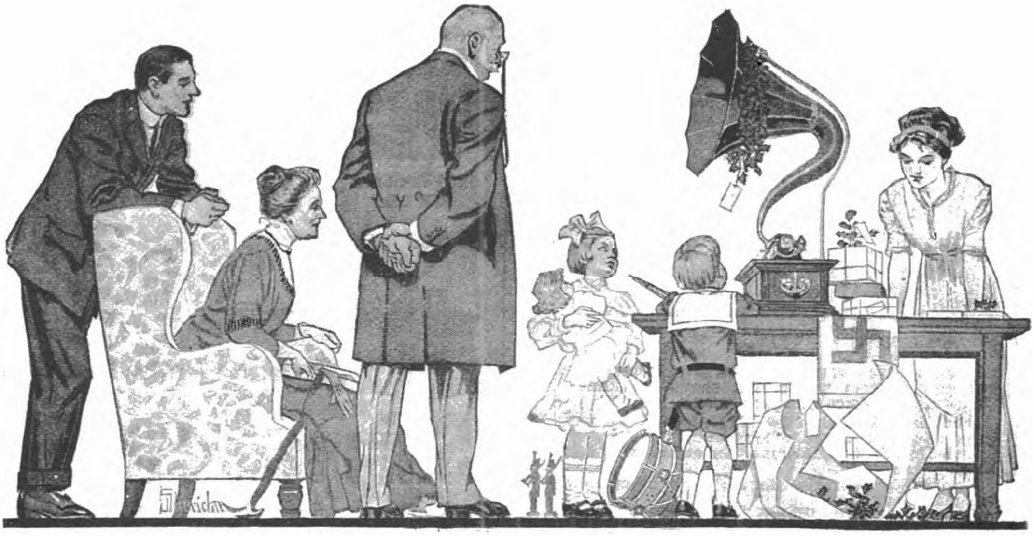
"THEY BAFFLE DETECTION"

Mounted in Solid Gold Rings—Any Style

All the sparkle, beauty and brilliancy of the genuine, at 1-20 the cost. Stand acid, fire, alkali and filing tests, and expert examination. Guaranteed 25 years. SENT C. O. D. for examination. CHARGES PREPAID. Write for free illustrated catalogue. Special price list, and ring measure.

THE RAJAH MINES CO.

220 Bowles Bldg. Detroit, Mich.



This year make your Christmas Instrument an

EDISON PHONOGRAPH

Make it an EDISON because—

1st—The Edison Phonograph has just the right volume of sound for the home. It is not loud enough to be heard next door or loud enough to echo to the farthest corner of the dealer's salesroom, but in your home its sweet, modulated tones will entertain you and your family in a way that never grows tiresome.

2d—The Edison Phonograph has a Sapphire Reproducing Point that does not scratch, does not wear out and never needs changing, and which travels in the grooves of the sensitive Edison cylinder Records, bringing out the sweet tone for which the Edison is famous.

3d—The Edison is the instrument that plays Amberol Records —records playing twice as long as ordinary records and giving you all of all the world's best music.

4th—The Edison Phonograph permits of home record making —a most fascinating form of entertainment. It will record what you or your friends say, sing or play and then instantly reproduce it as clearly and accurately as it reproduces the Records of Edison artists.

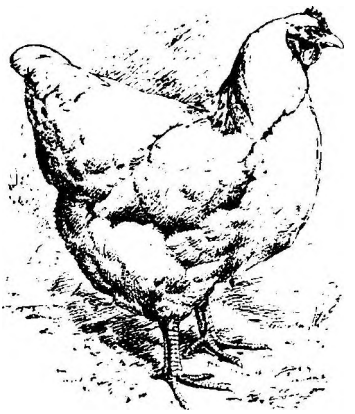
These are a few of the Edison advantages. You want them in the instrument you buy. So go to a dealer's—there are Edison dealers everywhere —and insist on hearing an Edison—the instrument that has been perfected and is manufactured by Thomas A. Edison.

Edison Standard Records	$ .35
Edison Amberol Records (play twice as long)	.50
Edison Grand Opera Records	$ .75 to 2.00

There is an Edison Phonograph at a price to suit everybody's means, from the Gem at **$15.00** to the Amberola at **$200.00**. Ask your dealer for complete catalogs of Edison Phonographs and Records, or write us.

NATIONAL PHONOGRAPH COMPANY, 35 LAKESIDE AVENUE, ORANGE, N. J.

With the Edison Business Phonograph you don't hold up any one else's work while your dictation is going on.



If you want to succeed with poultry as the CURTISS brothers have succeeded, subscribe NOW and get the new

CURTISS POULTRY BOOK

which tells how Roy Curtiss, a New York farmer's boy, starting about twenty years ago, with a few neglected hens, has built up at NIAGARA FARM the **LARGEST PRACTICAL POULTRY PLANT IN THE WORLD,** with sales of

OVER $100,000 A YEAR

Roy agreed that if his father (a grain merchant and farmer) would furnish the feed he (Roy) would take all care of the flock and supply eggs and chickens for the farm table, and all that were left over were to belong to him. In two years Roy was using so much feed that his father had to cry quits, but the boy kept right on. He would start at two o'clock A.M. for Niagara Falls, 13 miles away, with poultry and eggs to sell. His brother joined him, and the business grew and grew. They took the farm and paid off the mortgage. They built and added to their plant, learning slowly how to avoid losses and make the greatest profits.

But they had no guidance, and had to learn by their own mistakes. If **they** had had such a guide as the **CURTISS POULTRY BOOK** it would have saved them thousands of dollars and years of lost time.

This capital book was written right at Niagara Farm by the veteran poultryman, **MICHAEL K. BOYER.** Mr. Boyer had the Curtiss brothers right at his elbow with their records and data. He says he never saw a general poultry plant so well managed at every point. No "putting on style," no fancy buildings, no ornaments, but straight, solid **business.** Everything is planned for months ahead. Every day shipments go off, every day money comes in. You could hardly believe how little they lose. Their percentage of fertile eggs, of live, strong chickens hatched, of day-old chicks shipped, without loss, to Kansas or Florida, is really wonderful.

And this book gives all their methods of managing incubators, handling eggs, feeding chickens and ducks, killing, dressing, packing, and marketing, their formulas for mixing feed at different ages. And all these have been tested and improved by years of experience, resulting in the most profitable general poultry plant in the world. Whether you raise chickens, ducks, or eggs, whether you keep forty fowls or forty thousand, you will find here help that you can get in no other way.

Profusely illustrated, with many fine engravings, from actual photographs taken from life.

Have you use for such a book? Then read the offer below.

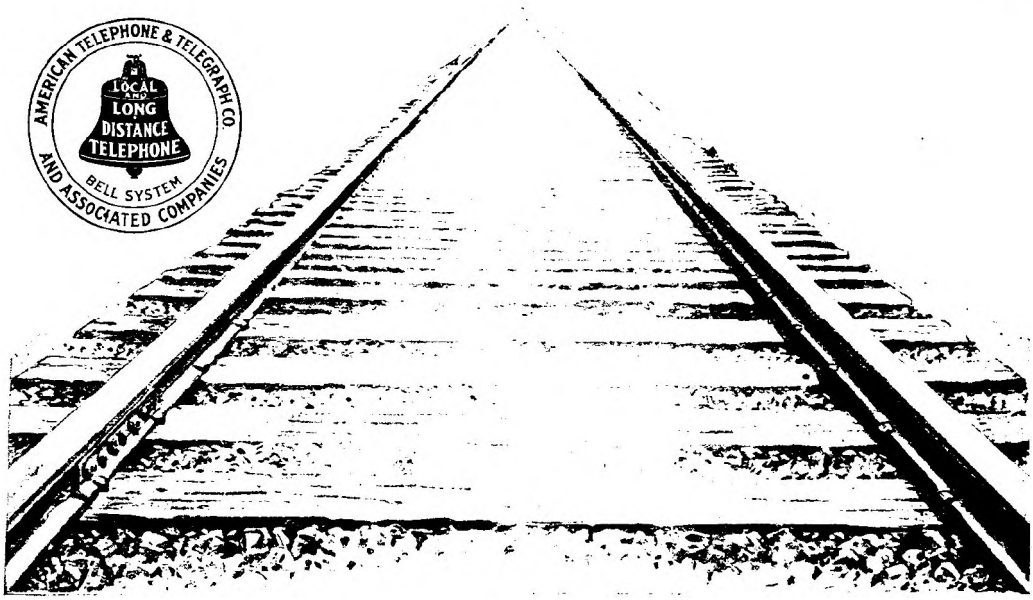
The **CURTISS POULTRY BOOK** is sold in combination with the Farm Journal, Philadelphia, Pa.

The **FARM JOURNAL** is the standard paper for everyone who lives in or near the country, or ever has, or ever expects to. A particularly fine poultry department, more valuable than most poultry papers. 33 years old. 750,000 subscribers and more. Goes everywhere. Clean, clever, cheerful, amusing, intensely practical. Cut to fit everybody, young or old, village, suburbs, or rural routes. Unlike any other paper, and always has been.

AMERICAN POULTRY ADVOCATE, the great New York State paper published at Syracuse, and full of good reading matter, is always welcomed by the subscriber. Now in its 18th year. It is conceded to be one of the best poultry papers published in the United States. Well edited by recognized authorities on the subject of practical poultry raising. Has a circulation of 45,000 copies per month.

Special Offer For $1.00 (cash, money order or check) we will send postpaid the **Curtiss Poultry Book** and the **Farm Journal** for two years, and **American Poultry Advocate** two years, all for $1.00 if order is sent at once to

AMERICAN POULTRY ADVOCATE, 44 Hodgkins Block, Syracuse, N. Y.



"The Clear Track"

Two men a thousand miles apart talk to each other by telephone without leaving their desks.

Two wires of copper form the track over which the talk travels from point to point throughout a continent.

Moving along one railroad track at the same time are scores of trains carrying thousands of passengers. The telephone track must be clear from end to end to carry the voice of one customer.

The Bell system has more than ten million miles of wire and reaches over five million telephones. This system is operated by a force of one hundred thousand people and makes seven billion connections a year—twenty million "clear tracks" a day for the local and long distance communication of the American people.

The efficiency of the Bell system depends upon "One System, One Policy, Universal Service."

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

Children Are Blessed With a Sweet Tooth

So are you and you should encourage it, for the system demands *sugar* more than *meats*. Of the three nutritive elements which support life—sugar, protein and fat—*sugar* is the most important. You can't eat too much of it in its *correct* form.

It is the *native sugar* in good *ribbon cane syrup* that gives it its wonderful food value—the *whole* substance is *wholesome* sugar.

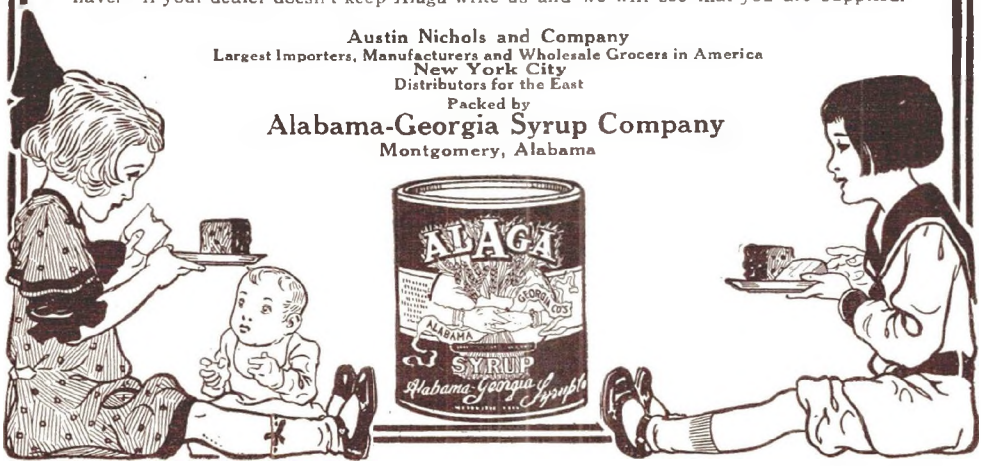
The "sweetness" of many syrups sold to the public is a little sugar or saccharine matter *added* to an insipid by-product "filler"—*tasteless* until the sugar is added. Such syrup, by itself, or made into cake and candy, has about as much food value as *shavings*.

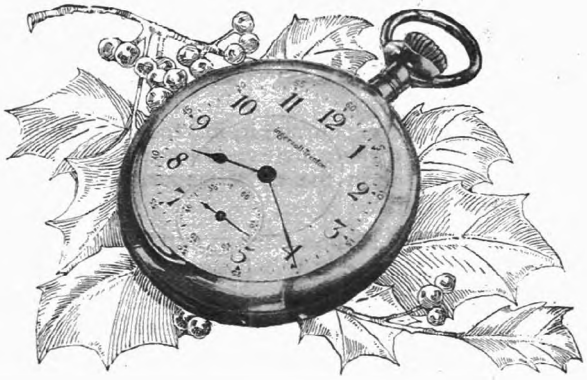
ALAGA
SYRUP

is the finest example of a succulent Georgia *ribbon cane* syrup, made by the old plantation "open kettle" process, put into cans direct from the evaporator *while hot*—thus insuring the permanency of its *natural* sweet flavor and inimitable taste. It's the good *old-fashioned* taste you remember in your grandmother's pantry—the most welcome food children can have. If your dealer doesn't keep *Alaga* write us and we will see that you are supplied.

Austin Nichols and Company
Largest Importers, Manufacturers and Wholesale Grocers in America
New York City
Distributors for the East

Packed by
Alabama-Georgia Syrup Company
Montgomery, Alabama





For a Man's Christmas

Is there anything that so delights a man's heart as a fine watch—one that permits him to speak the time with authority? It is refined and beautiful, as a gift should be, and besides is his most personal and useful possession. For years he carries it wherever he goes.

But his satisfaction depends upon its being an exact timer. Among watches there is one, though *moderate* priced, which has come to be conspicuous for its *close timing*—accurate as only high-priced watches have been.

A Superior Watch

Ingersoll-Trenton

7 and 15 Jewel Models

$5 to $15

No handsomer watch has ever been made. It will keep time for a generation. Your home jeweler can sell you an Ingersoll-Trenton and he will stand behind it. It is sold at our advertised prices by all who handle it and our price ticket is on each watch.

The I-T is sold exclusively by *responsible retail jewelers*, because fine watches should not be bought by mail nor from those who do not understand them and their adjustments. Over 9,000 good jewelers now handle it.

Go to your own jeweler's and examine it before buying any watch. If, by chance, he hasn't the I-T, we will gladly send the name of one nearby who has. Our booklet, "How to Judge a Watch," is the best explanation of a watch ever written, and is free on request. The $5 Ingersoll-Trenton has 7 genuine jewels and is in a solid nickel case.

The $15 Ingersoll-Trenton has 15 jewels and is in an I-T 25 year guaranteed gold-filled case of the highest quality.

Equally accurate models in a variety of I-T cases at $7, $8, $9, $10 and $12.

Robt. H. Ingersoll & Bro. **46 Frankel Bldg., New York**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Fairy Soap not only agrees with the tenderest skin, but improves any complexion. It is made from edible products—the kind seldom used in soaps. It is white—*undyed*—because it has no impurities or cheap ingredients to hide under the mask of coloring matter. Fairy Soap not only cleans, but *cleanses*.
The handy, floating, oval cake—price but 5c.
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"Have You a little 'Fairy' in Your Home?"

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