MAY

THE ARGOSY

15 CTS.

Rosalind and the Forty Thieves

by

Captain S.S. Harrington

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

About Wrinkles

If the skin be kept soft and smooth, wrinkles may be staved off almost indefinitely. But the question is—How is it possible to achieve this?

The Natural Way of Preventing Wrinkles is to use

Pears' Soap

The soap that was invented 125 years ago for this special purpose, and has never been equalled for its exquisite emollient and skin-vivifying properties.

Its action is at once protective and preservative, maintaining the skin in a healthy condition and retaining its youthful freshness.

The Great English Complexion Soap

Matchless for the Complexion

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST

Dancing is delightful to the music of the Victrola

Every one enjoys dancing to music of such splendid volume, such clearness and perfect rhythm—and the Victrola plays as long as any one wants to dance.

The Victrola brings to you all kinds of music and entertainment, superbly rendered by the world's greatest artists who make records exclusively for the Victor.

Any Victor dealer will gladly play the latest dance music or any other music you wish to hear. There are Victors and Victrolas in great variety of styles from $10 to $500.

Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J., U. S. A.
Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors

New Victor Records demonstrated at all dealers on the 28th of each month

THE ARGOSY

CONTENTS FOR MAY, 1914

A FULL BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

NINE SHORT STORIES

ISSUED MONTHLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer
Single Copies, 15c. By the Year, $1.50

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is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Rates in The Munsey Magazines

	Line Rate
The Munsey	$2.00
The Cavalier (Weekly)	.60
The Argosy	1.30
Railroad Man's Magazine	.80
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EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY NOW BEING ALLOTTED FOR Little Giant Lift and Force Pump. Only thing of its kind; it has free field wherever there's plumbing. Removes all stoppages in pipes, saves plumbers' bills, prevents noxious gases. Everyone wants it, everyone can afford it, everyone can operate it. As strong in business world as among homes. Selling at top speed. 50,000 already in use. I can grant you absolute monopoly and fix you for life, if you are the right man. Address at once, J. E. Kennedy, Dept. A. C., 30 East 42nd Street, New York City.

AGENTS, SIGNMEN—Make $5-$10 daily handling our Metallic Letters, best, cheapest. Independence; your own business. No experience required; we show how. Sample, instructions free. New York Sign Letter Co., Arbuckle Bldg., Brooklyn, N. Y.

IF $50.00 A WEEK SURE INTERESTS YOU, send us your name on a postal today. Besides, we give you a free suit of the swellest clothes you ever wore. Samples and full particulars by return mail if you write today. We pay all express charges. Paragon Tailoring Co., Dept. 502, Chicago.

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EVERY DAY WE FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT to pick real good salesmen. Still we offer the most profitable deal of the season. Where are all the money-makers? We're waiting. Specialties Supply Co., 106 Fulton Street, New York City.

AGENTS—RED HOT SUMMER SELLER.—Concentrated soft drinks—orangeade, grape, raspberry, etc. 7 kinds. Small package—enormous demand. Whirlwind sales—astonishing profits. Get it quick, while it's new. Write to-day for full particulars. American Products Co., 3004 Sycamore St., Cincinnati, Ohio.

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AGENTS: Snappiest Household Line on Earth. Red hot sellers, steady repeaters. Over 150 different articles. Goods guaranteed. 100% profit. Write quick—hurry. E. M. Feltman, Sales Manager, 6708 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

A TWO-MINUTE DEMONSTRATION Makes Every Call a Sale, with large profits. Positively biggest agents bonanza out. Free sample and particulars. G. V. Sales Company, 10 Spruce Street, New York.

AGENTS—$300.00 EVERY MONTH SELLING our wonderful 7-Piece Kitchen Set. Send for sworn statement of $12.00 daily profit. Outfit Free to workers. 1200 other fast sellers. Thomas Mfg. Co., 207 Third Street, Dayton, Ohio.

WE PAY YOU WELL TO BE A "NATIONAL" AGENT. Snappy goods; easy sales; big profits. Be quick for territory. Our Big Capital Backs You. Wm. J. Dick, Mgr., Dept. J-6, No. 20 Lake Street, Chicago.

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$50.00 A WEEK UP. ALL THE FREE CLOTHES You Want to Wear simply to advertise us. Write today for self-measuring blanks, style chart, big book of samples, etc. Send no money. A postal card brings all. We pay expressage on everything. American Woolen Mills Co., Dept. 502, Chicago.

AGENTS—Crescent Orangeade Powder makes finest drink imaginable by just adding cold water and sugar. Many make $10 to $50 a day selling this delicious drink by the glass at Picnics, Ball Games, Dances, Fairs, Etc. Over 4c profit on every glass—85c on every dollar. Also Big Money selling the powder to families, restaurants, stores, etc. Send a dime for enough for one gallon with catalogue, postpaid. Morrissey & Co., 4117-20 Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS, WOULD YOU TAKE A STEADY JOB where you can clear $29 to $39 weekly to start and work up to yearly profits of $3,000 or more? No experience required. Great crew managers' proposition. We manufacture. Middlemen profits saved. Get posted on our 1914 exclusive territory, business-building, selling plans. Act quick. E. M. Davis, Pres., R-22 Davis Blk., Chicago.

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AGENTS—GREATEST VALUE EVER OFFERED. With every sale of Duncan's Polish Mops a $1.00 can Cedar Polish absolutely free. Ninety cents profit on each sale. Ten to fifteen sales daily easy. Duncan Brothers, 2617-18 Grand Avenue, Chicago.

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PORTRAIT AGENTS—CRAYONS, BROMIDES, CONVEX PORTRAITS. Rejects credited. Sheet Pictures. Best line of Frames. 30 days' time. Write for Catalog. B. G. Clarke, Dept. C, 357 W. 63rd Street, Chicago, Ill.

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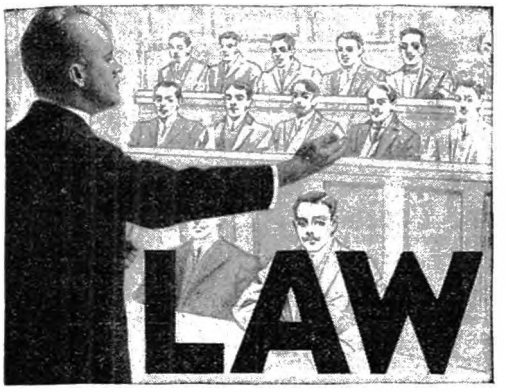

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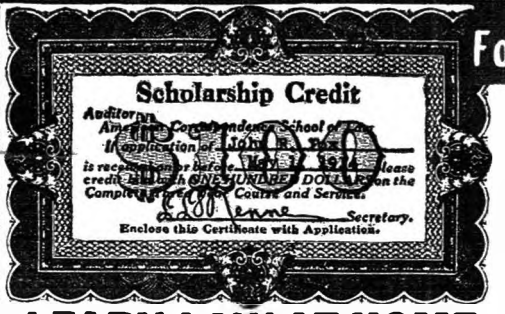

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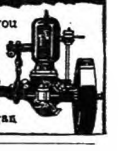

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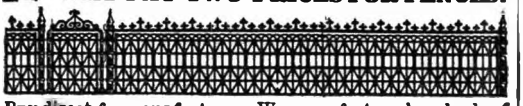

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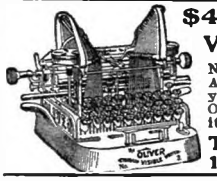

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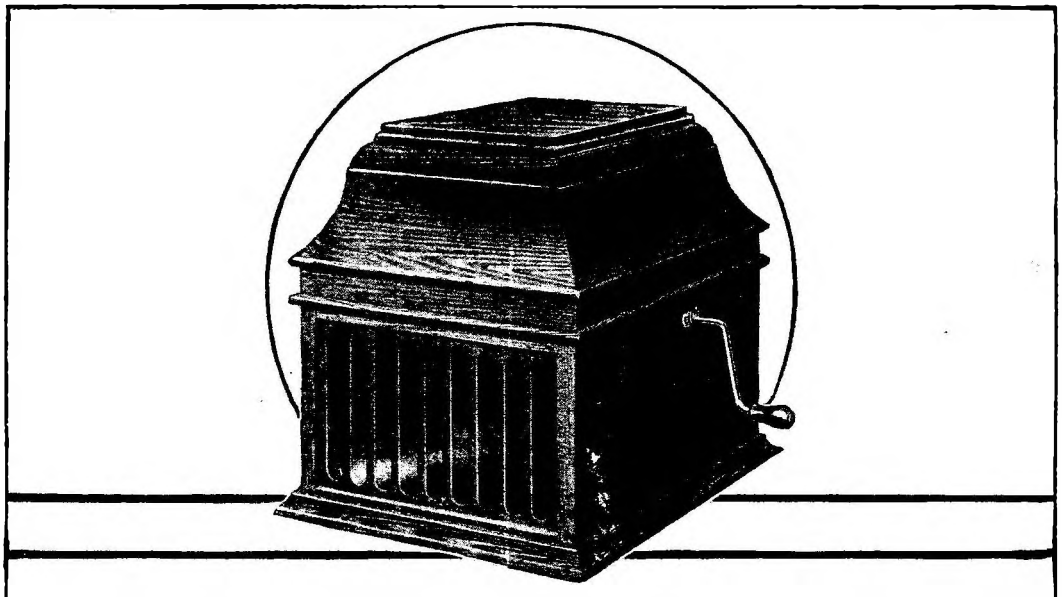

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXXVI MAY, 1914. No. 2

Rosalind and the Forty Thieves

by Captain S. S. Harrington

Author of "Breaking into West Point."

(A FULL BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE.)

CHAPTER I.

A $100,000 SECRET.

CAPTAIN ESSEX glanced up at the sound of the buzzer, and pressed one of a row of push-buttons along the edge of his desk.

In response the door of his office—a little box high up in one of New York's sky-scrapers—swung open to admit the trim, erect figure of a young subaltern in uniform, and immediately closed again with a snap.

It was a peculiarity of that door to open and close only in this guarded fashion, and as a further precaution a sentinel was posted in the corridor just outside; for Captain Essex as an officer of the Coast Artillery was on secret and confidential detail.

No question existed, however, as to the admission of the subaltern. He was there on official business.

"The colonel's compliments, sir." He saluted, and laid a bulky envelope on the desk. "And he returns with his approval the drawings and preliminary draft you submitted to him. He also directs me to inform you that, if possible, he wishes the complete report finished and in shape to be transmitted to the Secretary of War by to-morrow."

Essex saluted perfunctorily in return. "My compliments to the colonel," he replied, "and tell him I shall deliver the report in person before ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

Then relaxing from the formality of military etiquette, he pushed a box of cigarettes across the desk, and smilingly waved his visitor to a chair.

The lieutenant gazed at him with frank admiration. "And so you've really got it, Jimmy?" for the man across from him was "Jimmy" Essex to every one in the service from the Chief of Staff down to the rawest "shave-til" just out of the Academy. "You've got it at last, eh?"

And although "it" meant in this case honor, preferment, everything for which an army officer strives, there was no hint of lurking envy in his tone, only a ring of sincere congratulation.

"Yes." Essex laid his hand lightly on the envelope in front of him. "The lanyard goes into the discard now, along with muzzle-loading and cast-iron jackets and all the other outworn junk. Nothing more to it than operating a kodak in fact. You press the button, and the 'juice' does the rest."

"And never fails, eh?" asked the other not without a trace of justifiable skepticism; for, as every artilleryman knows, electric firing devices are many, but "onsartin."

"Three months' practical test at Sandy Hook, and never a miss," retorted Essex. "It works, I tell you, Baird—works with everything from black powder up to Dunnite, and from a one-pounder to those big mortars down at Wadsworth."

"Some spark, you must get?"

"Sure. But it's simple as A B C—all in the arrangement of your resistance coils. Suppose, for instance, you have a battery of ten pieces, two twelve-inch mortars, four eight-inch guns, and the rest of varying smaller caliber, then all you have to do—"

"Yes?" The lieutenant leaned forward eagerly.

"Is to hitch on my device, sit back behind a row of buttons, and—'fire when you are ready, Gridley,'" finished Essex with a teasing smile. "Thought you were going to catch me that time, didn't you, old man?"

His eyes twinkled at the other's manifest discomfiture. "No, Baird; I haven't been going around for the past year with a padlock on my tongue to give up as easy as that. If you'll believe me, I wear a muzzle to keep from talking in my sleep."

He laughed good-humoredly, and stretched his arms above his head.

"Lord, I could write a book," he dropped into reminiscent vein, "over the experiences I have had in the last twelve months, with all the schemes that have been tried to get information out of me.

"I've been dogged and shadowed and cajoled and wheedled by every sort of foreign agent you can think of, and by a lot more that you wouldn't believe were on that lay, if I told you of them.

"My rooms have been ransacked more than a dozen times, I've been held up twice on the street, have been made love to by women whose names are double-starred in the social register, been called into conference in the private offices of a big financier, and have even had a minister of the gospel seek to worm his way into my confidence, all for the purpose of trying to get a hint as to the nature of my device.

"By jove, I've grown so wary nowadays, that if he were to touch on the subject with me, I'd almost suspect the president himself of being some kind of a Russian, or Jap, or French, or German 'gum-shoe' artist.

"Seriously, though," his eyes narrowed, "you have no conception, Baird, of the traps that are laid for my feet, or how all-fired careful I have to be. Yet it's not to be wondered at, perhaps, when one considers that a certain government I could mention stands ready to pay $100,000 for the delivery of the secret."

Young Baird's glance turned toward the envelope on the desk with a new respect.

"By glory, that's a whole lot of money, isn't it?" he commented.

"A whole lot, my boy, a whole lot; especially when one realizes that the only reward he'll get from Uncle Sam is the advance of a few numbers, or

at the best a promotion. A commercial house would make it worth while for any employee who doped out a process or invention that all its rivals were crazy to get hold of."

Essex spoke with a touch of feeling, which the other did not find it hard to comprehend; since it was well known in the service that the only thing which prevented Jimmy from marrying was a shortness of finances.

With a widowed mother to support, and the assumption of certain heavy obligations incurred by his dead father and which he had taken on himself to pay off as a matter of honor, he could not well ask any girl to share the meager remainder of his captain's pay; assuredly not a girl brought up like Allison Marbury.

True, when the crash came at the time of the elder Essex's death, and Jimmy finding himself practically penniless and even worse than penniless had offered to release her, Allison had insisted that their engagement must stand; but both of them realized that, except for the inconceivable something which we all of us hope, Micawber like, may turn up, it must be years in the slow routine of army advancement before he could possibly hope to claim her.

Of late, too, the strain had seemed to wear especially hard upon the young officer. Perhaps it was merely that he saw no solution to his problem; perhaps it was the effect of the bribes which in one form or another were being constantly dangled before him for the possession of his secret; but more than once recently he had given way to some such petulant outburst as that which he now made to Baird, and had even confided to certain of his intimates that unless he was able before long to figure out some plan for making a killing, he was going to shake the army, and take a fresh start along some other line.

However, he was not one ordinarily to wear his troubles on his sleeve, or make a bid for sympathy; and as he saw Baird's gaze bent on him a trifle commiseratingly, he drew himself quickly together.

"After all, though, what's the use of grumbling?" He shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose, no matter what a man's work is, he'd always find something to kick at. I guess, too," he broke off, tearing open the envelope, "I'll have to ask you to beat it, old man. You know, the colonel isn't one to be kept waiting, and if I'm to have this ready for him on time, I've got to get a hustle on myself."

"Sure. I understand." Baird dragged himself out of his chair, and hooked together the fastenings of his military cape. "On my way, then, Jimmy," with a wave of the hand. "Good luck to you."

The door opened for him at the pressure of Essex's finger on the controlling button, and slammed again behind his retreating figure.

But for all his declaration of industry, the captain did not immediately begin his task. Instead, he sat scowling moodily at the sheaf of diagrams and memoranda which he drew from the wrapper, his mind busy the while not with the report before him, but calculating the various uses to which he would put $100,000—if he had it.

And it was in the same abstracted spirit that he finally rang for a stenographer, and settled himself to work. From the notes in front of him, and with his perfect mastery of the subject, he dictated smoothly and accurately; but it was for the most part mechanical, his thoughts far away from the business in hand.

Indeed, it was only at some question of the stenographer's that he suddenly realized that he was going beyond the limit of his dictation to that operator; for as a measure of safety, and in order to prevent any one person from obtaining the guarded secret, he had arranged to give out his report in five sections to as many different men.

Frowning, therefore, at the inadvertence of which he had been guilty, he hurriedly called a halt, and dismissed the first of the relay, telling the fellow to lose no time in sending in his successor.

Then, while he waited, he rose from his desk and stepped over to the window to gaze out still in that absorbed fashion over the roof tops and the off-lying panorama of the harbor ruffling in the April sunshine, with the green shores of Staten Island in the distance.

A big ocean liner outward bound caught his view, as it moved majestically down the upper bay toward the narrows, and suggested among other things the sort of luxurious wedding trip that one might take on $100,000 —if one had it.

But as he followed the liner's stately progress on its way to sea, his glance encountered the flag fluttering above the old, round fortress over on Governor's Island, and abruptly his demeanor changed. The gleam of shifty speculation vanished from his eye, and he straightened up almost into the attitude of a salute.

Then, either because the symbol recalled him to a sense of duty, or some intuition warned him of lurking danger, he turned alertly about toward his desk—turned, and caught out of the corner of his eye a glimpse of a slender, masked figure and a stealthy hand just reaching out toward the papers constituting the report.

There was no time to grapple with the intruder, or reach for a weapon. Even as Essex turned, a blow from a revolver-butt caught him just above the temple, and with a single gasping cry for the sentinel, he sank under it.

Three minutes later the stenographer, unable to gain admission to the office, raised an alarm, and the door was broken open to find Captain Essex stretched unconscious on the floor, and the papers which contained all that was to be known about his firing device, missing.

Nor was the most searching investigation able to elicit any clue to the identity of the thief, or his method of effecting his entrance into the office.

The sentry in the corridor had seen no one pass in or out except Lieutenant Baird and the stenographer who took the first section of the report; and Essex himself admitted that he had closed the door as usual after the departure of the latter.

Moreover, the push-button mechanism was found to be in perfect working order, as was shown also by the inability of the second stenographer to get in.

Since the only proof that there had been any robber lay in Essex's unsupported word and the bruise on the side of his head which could easily have been inflicted by himself, it presently began to be whispered about that "Jimmy" was under suspicion of having turned the trick on his own account, considerable color being lent to the theory by the discovery that the young artillery officer had recently been dabbling in the market to his distinct financial disadvantage.

No confirmation came to these stories from any one in authority, nor was any direct action taken; but as the gossip spread, Essex found himself looked at more and more askance by his brother officers. He began to realize, too, that he was under rigid surveillance, shadowed constantly wherever he went, and in whatever he did.

CHAPTER II.

THE MOVING SHUTTLE.

ABOUT a week or ten days after Captain Essex's disastrous adventure, there dropped into Washington from a Baltimore train, a young man.

From all indications he was a stranger to the Capital, yet his name was destined to crowd even an important Presidential message off the front page of the newspapers.

Not that he gave any manifestation of courting publicity. He was quietly dressed in a plain, dark suit with a rather long, light overcoat and a soft Fedora hat drawn well down over his boyish, somewhat delicate face.

Nor was his manner at all calculated to attract attention. He spoke to no one beyond giving a slight shake of the hand to the red-capped porter who offered to carry his suit-case, nor did he loiter about the station; but following the line of departing passengers, lost no time in bundling himself and his grip into a taxicab out at the front, and driving away to his hotel.

His unobtrusive advent, nevertheless, did not fail of notice; for as he passed out through the crowd two young men lounging near the entrance of the station, and who, for all their appearance of smug respectability, bore about them a certain sinister suggestion which would have led any experienced "dick" to class them at once as "dips," gave a quick start, and glancing from the stranger to one another telegraphed a message with their eyes.

Furtively the two slid out into his wake, worming their way so dexterously through the press that they were close enough behind him to hear and note the direction given to the taxi driver.

Immediately they boarded the next vehicle in line with instructions to follow at any hazard, and arriving in front of the porticoed entrance of the Millward, watched breathlessly, while the slim, boyish figure passed inside and proceeded up to the desk.

"Well, what do you know about that?" muttered one of them. "Hitting a 'drum' like the Millward, and never so much as batting an eye over it."

"Class. Class," the other retorted with an admiring shake of the head. "It's always 'class' with that guy."

Then, while the first speaker hurried around to the ladies' entrance to engage the attention of the hotel detective, his companion slid in through the rotunda ostensibly on his way to the bar, but pausing long enough as he passed the desk to make an apparently cursory inspection of the register; and later, when the two joined on a corner outside, gave accurate and detailed report of what he had noted.

"He's down under the monaker of 'L. Hodge from Balto,'" whispered the "dip," "and they've got him stabled in Room 514."

The other nodded. "Wait here to lamp him if he comes out," he enjoined, "and I'll chase across the street to the drug store, and slip over the phone to 'Keno.'"

A minute or two later he was back full of instructions. "We're to stay on the job until somebody comes along and gives us the high sign to beat it," he explained. "And in the meantime, if this guy should come out, we're to trail him, Keno says, and we don't want to let him lose us, neither. This here is somep'n that the chief himself is directly int'rested in, so Keno tips me, and we can't none of us afford to make no mistake."

"The chief, eh?" repeated his comrade, not without an involuntary touch of awe. "What's he after?"

"Search me. All I know is, he sends word to Keno to have this party located for him; and that's why such strict orders was gave to all of us to pick him up and report the minute that any of us sighted him."

The other was silent a moment as though turning over something in his mind. "Dan," he finally queried hesitatingly, "do you suppose that Keno knows who the chief really is?"

"Keno?" retorted Dan witheringly. "No; nor ones that's a whole lot higher up in the gang than Keno don't, neither. There ain't nobody what knows who the chief is, I tell you. Whatever he's got to say, he says it over the wires through half a dozen different people, and whenever there's a split to be made, his'n is shipped to

him by express and called for by a messenger kid.

"No, sir; take it from me, bo, the only way any of them knows him is as the Chief, or 'Nadie,' which is some kind of Dago language, so Keno tells me, for 'Nobody.'

"And what's more," he went on impressively, "no one never will get hep to who he is.

"There's a lad that don't take no chances, you get me? All he does is ring up 'Keno,' or some stiff like that, on the phone, and then set back and give his orders. 'Keno,' he says, 'there's a good box to be cracked out at such-and-such a number on Q Street. Please attend to it.' Or, 'Keno,' he says, 'Lady Valjean will have her diamond necklace in a leather poke with her when she goes to the ball at the Russian Ambassador's to-night.

"'Please have a couple of your best dips on hand to snatch it from her when she gets out of her carriage.'

"That's you and me, maybe, bo, and we hang around there in the cold and wet, taking every risk of a collar; and then the best we get out of it is a fourth cut at the sparks, with Keno taking the other fourth, and this Chief Nadie getting a clean half. Pretty soft business for him, eh?"

"I should worry," assented the other with feeling. "All the same, Danny, don't you lay no big money but what he'll get landed some day, and landed right, too. I've heard it said that even the wisest of them will always run up against somebody just a little bit wiser; and it begins to look to me like this newspaper guy Ortle on the *Appeal* is getting pretty close to the chief's number.

"He sure doped out that job down on the Avenue the other night just the way it happened, and if the bulls had paid any attention to what he told 'em, they'd have got the whole bunch that was in on it. He says he'll never rest, you know, until he's got Nadie himself behind the bars."

"Yes; and I can see Ortle's finish, all right." His comrade gave an expressive hunch of the shoulders. "Bill Tuttle used to say the same thing. You don't remember about Bill, I guess; that was before you hit the burg. Well, Bill Tuttle was a fly cop down at headquarters, and he got this bug into his head, too, that he was going to catch Nadie. And I'll not deny that for a time it looked as if he had the chief headed for the jumps. But all of a sudden one day somebody gets a call on the telephone, and, a low voice drawls at the other end: 'This man Tuttle is beginning to annoy me. Croak him.' That was all—I'm giving it to you straight; but the next morning Bill Tuttle was found out Anacostia way with his throat slit from ear to ear. So I say, that if this Ortle thinks—"

"Sh! Sh!" The other gave him a warning nudge. "That's Ortle now."

He indicated with a slant of his eyes a man in evening dress and wearing an Inverness coat, who had halted a few feet away to greet an acquaintance.

"Hello, major," the crooks heard him hail the fat army officer whom he had brought to a pause. "Where are you rushing to at such a rate?"

"Er— Oh, is that you, Ortle?" the major wheezed confusedly. "Where am I going? Why—er—"

He mumbled something about an appointment with his lawyer to which he was already late; and would have dashed on. But the newspaperman fastened a detaining hand on his lapel.

"Appointment with your lawyer, eh?" He bent a quizzical glance upon the other through his gold-rimmed eyeglasses. "Oh, it's all right, then? I was afraid you might be headed for that stag dinner that Belknap is pulling off here at the hotel to-night."

"Afraid?" the major stammered with a little touch of apprehension. "What's wrong, I'd like to know, with a gentleman entertaining a few of his friends, if he sees fit to?"

"Ah, so you were going there after all? Naughty, naughty!" Ortle shook

a reproving finger. "You know what's wrong as well as I do, major."

"Well, things promise to be a little lively, I am told," the major admitted sheepishly. "But what of it?"

"Nothing," the other grinned, "except that the affair is going to be raided by the police. I was tipped off to it not ten minutes ago."

"Raided?" the major gasped tremulously. "But—bless my soul, man! —we can't permit that. My friend, Colonel Hone, is up there now, and to be mixed up in a scandal of this kind would simply ruin him. He's entirely innocent in the matter, too; he hasn't an idea of what's on foot, I swear to you. Here, let me go, Ortle. I've got to get up there and warn him."

But the newspaperman only clutched him more firmly by the lapel. "Nothing doing, I'm afraid, major."

He shook his head. "The cops have got a cordon around that dining-room that a mouse could hardly get through. They're merely waiting for the big stunt to make their rush and gather in the whole bunch."

The major turned almost apoplectic. "But I must do something," he protested. "Why, Colonel Hone — although it's not generally known yet— is certain of the next appointment as Superintendent at West Point, and this would be nothing short of a deathblow to his hopes. Then, think of what it would mean to Mrs. Hone, too. She—"

"Mrs. Hone?" interrupted Ortle sharply. "By Jove! Isn't that she now?" peeping down the street toward the ladies' entrance to the hotel, out of which a veiled and unattended woman had just emerged. "What the dickens can she be doing here alone and at this time of night?"

He released his hold upon the major, and took a quick step in that direction, only to turn back as the woman hurriedly entered a cab waiting at the curb, and was whisked away.

"I'm a fool," he muttered as he rejoined his companion. "It can't be anything more than some trick of resemblance suggested to me by your mention of her name. However, as you were saying, major, for her sake, if for nothing else, we can't allow the colonel to be caught in this mess."

He fell silent a moment, reflectively stroking his chin. "It would be idle, as I tell you, to attempt to get in to him," he vouchsafed at last; "but I think I can manage to smuggle in a note, if you will give me one, and then possibly he may be able to slip out through the waiters' doorway, or down the fire escape. At least we can try it. Come"—he linked his arm through the major's and drew him toward the hotel —"we have not a minute to waste if we are to save him."

Hardly had the two disappeared within the entrance before a quietly dressed man sauntered down the street and followed them into the Millward, where he registered, and after a little parley with the clerk was assigned to Room 513 immediately adjoining the apartment taken by the stranger from Baltimore.

He did not even glance toward the loitering "dips" as he passed them on the street corner; but just as he came abreast of them he lifted his hand to his hat, drew it down over his brow, and tapped three times lightly on the brim with his forefinger.

And they, recognizing the "high sign," knew that their vigil was over, and promptly disappeared, all unconscious that in the last brief hour there had flitted before their eyes the threads of a dozen different emotions—love, hate, passion, greed, devotion, revenge —as Fate's flying shuttle wove them into the warp which was to form the story of Captain Essex and his stolen report.

CHAPTER III.

IN ROOM 514.

ALTHOUGH Ortle put aside the suspicion, or claimed to in the presence of Major Peters, the veiled woman he

had seen leaving the Millward was really none other than Mrs. Hone, the beautiful, young wife of the colonel of engineers, and an unquestioned leader of the exclusive army set at the capital.

More than that, she had just been paying a surreptitious visit, her presence unannounced in the hotel, to the room occupied by the young man who had registered as "L. Hodge of Baltimore."

It was remembered afterward, that shortly after the arrival of Mr. Hodge a woman called up on the telephone to inquire if he were staying at the hotel, and on being answered in the affirmative, was given connection with his room, and held a brief conversation with him over the wire.

Some effort was made, too, to trace the identity of the person making this call; but when it was learned that the inquiry had come from an ordinary nickel-in-the-slot pay station, the attempt was of course abandoned.

It was, however, as may be surmised, Mrs. Hone, and some fifteen or twenty minutes later she slipped quietly into the hotel, and avoiding the elevator passed unobserved up the stairway to Room 514.

As a measure of explanation, if not of excuse for so flagrant an indiscretion on the part of a woman of her character and social standing, it should be stated that previous to her marriage with Colonel Hone three years before she also had been a Baltimorean, the elder of the two beautiful Marbury sisters, asknowledged belles of the Monumental City.

The natural inference, therefore, would be that this clandestine meeting was the sequel to some earlier attachment, some girlhood love affair from which she either could not, or would not cut herself off.

Nor was there anything in the greeting between the two to discountenance such an assumption. As she entered the room, throwing back her veil and disclosing her pale, agitated face, Hodge took her in his arms and kissing her tenderly sought to soothe her manifest misgivings.

"There, there." He patted her on the shoulder. "You needn't have the slightest cause to worry. Everything is going to come out all right; you'll see."

But the woman refused to be won over by his assurances. Clasping him close, she broke into an almost hysterical protest, pleading with him wildly to abandon the enterprise upon which he was engaged, and exhorting him by a name which bore no resemblance to Hodge, nor could by any possibility be twisted into a word commencing with "L."

He stopped her abruptly at that, and raised a deprecating hand. "Louis, please," he said with quick warning. "You must remember that, in hotels more even than elsewhere, the walls have ears; and it would spoil everything, if any one were to overhear you speaking to me by my own name."

"Spoil everything!" Mrs. Hone distressfully wrung her hands. "Then you are still determined to carry out this mad undertaking? Will nothing that I can say move you? If you have no regard for your own safety, no fear in pitting yourself against these desperate men, then for my sake listen to reason. I shall not know one easy moment while you are at it. Have you not heard what this cut-throat gang did to that detective who dared to oppose them? And although the whole city was aroused over that brutal and cowardly murder, no means have yet been found to bring the perpetrators to justice. Where the entire resources of the police have failed, then, how can you possibly hope to succeed?"

"How?" Hodge thrust his hands into his pockets, walking back and forth across the room. "Because accident has given me a peculiar weapon which enables me to penetrate at once to the inmost circles of this criminal band.

"My face is an 'open sesame' to their councils which none of them will dream of questioning, and will even

serve to silence any suspicion that might be excited by the blunders I may make.

"I have an advantage of the officers, too, in that, while they are seeking to apprehend and punish these men, my sole object is to recover the stolen report and clear Jim Essex of even a breath against his integrity. I'd risk a good deal bigger danger than faces me to do that; and so I reckon would you, honey, if you were in my place."

"But are you relying wholly on this masquerade to see you through," quavered Mrs. Hone, "on your resemblance to—?"

"Not entirely." He fumbled a moment with the fastenings of a holster underneath his coat, and with a touch of swagger brought to light a small automatic revolver.

Mrs. Hone repressed a slight scream at the sight of the pistol. "Can you use it?" she asked dubiously.

"If I have to." Hodge a bit awkwardly returned the weapon to its sheath. "I carry it only by way of precaution, though; my trump card, as I say, is my appearance, and I flatter myself that it will pass muster with the sharpest-eyed 'gun' among them."

He paused as he spoke to regard himself complacently in a long mirror set in the back of his bath-room door.

"But come now, Mabel, dearest," he stepped over to take the young woman in his arms once more, "you must be going. Indeed, you would better have minded me and stayed away, as I told you over the 'phone. We can't tell what sort of a watch is being held over me; and heaven only knows the complications that might ensue if your visit here was discovered. I certainly don't want to drag you into the affair."

"But promise me at least that you'll do nothing awfully rash," tearfully urged Mrs. Hone; "and you must arrange some way, too, to let me hear from you."

"Surely." Hodge nodded. "I'll drop you a note or telephone you every day. And above all, don't let your imagination get to working over-time, dear heart, picturing all sorts of horrible things happening to me. I have a fancy that it all isn't apt to be much more exciting really, than going down to a shop and ordering a bottle of pickles.

"Now kiss me good-bye, darling, and let me fix your veil down lower over your face; you've got it all hiked up on one side. Then you really must run along."

They embraced fondly, and the offending veil being arranged with a few deft touches so as to meet Hodge's critical approval, Mrs. Hone still murmuring admonitions and appeals to be careful, finally took her departure.

Left to his own devices, Hodge, Narcissus-like, resumed the admiring contemplation of himself in the mirror, posing and attitudizing, strutting up and down before it, laughing, scowling, and bowing to his reflection, and in short rehearsing a hundred different postures and expressions.

For almost an hour he kept this up. Indeed, he was still at it, when suddenly he chanced to observe in the glass that the door of his room had opened noiselessly to admit a man with a black mask over his face.

With a gasp Hodge turned clumsily reaching for his gun, but before he could draw, the intruder had him covered.

"None of that!" the man ordered sharply. "Up with your hands there, you white-livered rat, and if you make another funny move, I'll bore you as full of holes as a colander. Don't get any idea in your head that I'm afraid to do it, either," he jeered. "This gat of mine is fitted with a silencer, and since it would be to-morrow morning before you were found, I'd have all the chance in the world to make my get-away."

Then, holding his victim with arms elevated at the point of his threatening muzzle, he leisurely turned the bolt on the door, and crossed the room.

The gun which Hodge had attempted to draw he jerked away, holster and all, and holding it in the palm of his hand, looked down at it contemptuously.

"That's a nice toy for a so-called first class crook to pack," he scoffed. "Why, it's the sort of thing a lady might hang on her chatelaine."

He slid the weapon into his pocket after a moment with a disdainful snort, and shifted his regard instead to the man in front of him. Hodge saw a pair of cold, gray eyes scrutinizing him narrowly through the holes in the mask.

"So, you're the celebrated Angel-Face Kid, eh?" In spite of his perturbation, Hodge made a mental note of the fact that the fellow was evidently attempting to disguise his voice. "Well, I am Nadie."

He paused as if expecting the other to give some manifestation of terror at the statement; but the young man simply continued to stare at him.

As a matter of fact, Hodge was so frightened that he was cool. He was cudgeling his brains for some plan to checkmate his victorious adversary.

It was idle to dream of matching his slender strength in physical encounter with so stalwart an adversary; but perhaps he could elude the man by a sudden dash for the door, or in some other fashion manage to outwit the fellow.

Even in his surge of panic, he resolutely put away from him any idea of calling for help, deterred partly by the grim menace of the unwavering revolver, but more by the fact that to do so would, as he put it to himself, "dump the apple-cart."

If he was to attain the object for which he had enlisted, it must be by mastering or cajoling this redoubtable Nadie, not by driving him away.

Drawing himself together, therefore, and seeking to control the flutter in his voice, he made shift to answer. "You surprise me," he said. He was feeling his way, and this was about as non-committal a remark as he could think of on the spur of the moment.

"I surprise you, eh?" The other derisively mimicked his light treble. "Don't you feel honored, too? As you know, this is the first time that I have ever taken occasion to deal with a subordinate in person. And," he added significantly, "after I get through with you, I don't think the necessity for such a step will soon occur again. Sit down."

He slipped his revolver into his pocket as he spoke, and waved the young man to a chair. "You and I are going to have a little talk."

Hodge was distinctly puzzled. With his discovery of the masked man in his room, the thought had naturally flashed to his mind that his imposture had been detected, and that he was about to be called to account; but apparently he was accepted without question as the *bona fide* "Angel-Face Kid," the genteel scamp he was attempting to personate.

On the strength of this counterfeit, Hodge had hoped to gain access to the master crook, or at least to some of his chief lieutenants; for he had information that within this sinister band lay the possession of Captain Essex's stolen report.

But why, he could not help wondering, had Nadie taken the trouble to seek him out, and especially why did he come in such evidently hostile humor?

He did not have to wait long to find out. "Yes," his visitor repeated, "this is the first time that I have dealt with any one in the organization in person. But then," he went on, and his voice grew hard as flint, "it is also the first time that any one has attempted to betray me."

As if shaken by a gust of anger, he abruptly dropped his coldly judicial tone and broke into the vernacular.

"Why, you baby-faced shrimp!" he snarled. "You didn't really think that you could double-cross me, and get away with it, did you? And the nerve

of you, too. Coming right here to Washington to stick your head in the lion's mouth.

"I suppose you banked on that old gag about boldness winning, eh? Well, this is one time where it goes to the bad, for you did just exactly what I expected. I knew you'd find trouble in marketing your goods, and at the end would drop in here; so I told the boys to look out for you.

"But now, as you see, the game's up, and you'll have to come across."

He extended his hand as he spoke, and Hodge, noting the slenderness of the wrist, was confirmed in a previous suspicion that the man's figure, like his voice, was disguised, its burly aspect consisting chiefly of padding.

With shrewd observation, he had already set down the fact that Nadie did not remove his heavy suède gloves as due either to some noticeable scar on his hands or else to a desire to avoid leaving tell-tale finger-prints.

"Come across, I say," the fellow repeated impatiently. "The other matters between us we'll take up later. But first I want that firing-device report, and no more fooling about it."

Hodge should perhaps have been prepared for it from what had gone before; but as a matter of fact the demand came to him as a complete surprise.

Suddenly he realized that he had been duped and deceived into his present hazardous position. Not from Nadie was the stolen secret to be retrieved; for Nadie was manifestly as eager to secure it as he himself.

The startled play of expression across his face was evidently misunderstood by the gang leader, however.

"Cut it out, I tell you," he snapped. "Cut it out. I can see you're trying to frame up some foxy stall on me; but it's no use. I'm going to have those papers, do you understand me, and the sooner you hand them over the better it'll be for you."

"But I haven't got them." Hodge's voice rose shrill in denial. "I—"

He halted, terrified into speechlessness; for with an exasperated oath Nadie had whipped out a keen-edged dirk and was waving it menacingly in front of his face.

"Come across, you white-lipped cur," he threatened, "or I'll make Bill Tuttle's finish as mild as an old maid's tea-party besides what yours will be. I'll slice you into mincemeat, do you hear? I'll carve you up quivering, and never touch a vital spot until I am ready to leave you as an example for all future sneaks and traitors."

Sick with fear, Hodge watched fascinated the glitter of the knife-blade as it flashed to and fro to punctuate these blood-curdling promises.

But when—whether by a misstroke or of deliberate purpose—the sharp point finally slashed across his chest, inflicting a cut of little consequence, but from which the blood gushed out to make a wide, crimson stain upon his soft, white shirt front, he aroused in a frenzy of desperation to fling himself on his tormentor, screaming at the top of his voice.

Nadie easily withstood the puerile attack, dropping his knife to clutch at the other's throat and stifle those hysterical calls for help; but as he bore his slight opponent, mastered and half-swooning, back into the chair, some suspicion gained in the struggle caused him to reach out quickly and jerk open Hodge's neck-band, revealing underneath a white and rounded bosom.

"Holy Hannibal!" The Master Crook recoiled aghast. "It's a woman!"

CHAPTER IV.

EXIT, "MR. HODGE."

For a moment Nadie stood hesitating, staring down at the limp, shrinking figure in that mockery of natty male attire; then without a word he turned to the door and, satisfying himself by a brief reconnaissance that no

one was in sight, he slipped quickly out into the corridor, stuffing his mask into his pocket as he went.

Like a flash the girl was up and after him to shoot the bolt on his retreat, and tugging with nervous energy she also shoved a heavy table up against the door to serve as a further barrier against his possible return.

Then tottering back to her chair she subsided almost in a collapse, sobbing weakly between her fright and relief, and starting up to shudder in new alarm every time that the window rattled, a piece of furniture creaked, or the muffled step of a passing guest sounded outside in the corridor.

Gradually, however, she regained control of her nerves to some extent and, recalling the knife slash she had received in her recent terrifying experience, rose and passed into the bathroom, to make an examination of her injury.

It was of minor importance—hardly more than a scratch low down on the side of the neck—and after she had bathed it and applied a little cold cream which she took from her bag, she felt no discomfort from it whatever.

But a small vein had evidently been severed—for all around the rent where the sharp point had sheared through her shirt and undershirt and waistcoat were stiff and soaked with blood.

She gazed down uncertainly at the havoc which had been wrought in her brave apparel; then reaching a swift decision, began rummaging in her suitcase until she had brought to light from under a pile of purely masculine belongings a complete feminine outfit of shirtwaist and dark skirt with a short jacket to match.

Hurriedly she made the exchange, not having to lose any time in puzzling out the uses of various mystifying straps and buckles as in donning the habiliments of the other sex; but when, her toilette finished, she set a jaunty, soft hat atop her close-cropped curls and was tying around it the folds of a voluminous, blue veil, she paused to give a disapproving shake of the head at her reflection in the mirror, and involuntarily her lips quivered like those of a disappointed child's.

How different was the wan, dejected "Mary Ann" that looked back at her out of the glass from the debonair figure she had last beheld there, when she was schooling herself to an assumption of the masculine gait and graces.

Yet great as was the change in her outward aspect, it did not exceed that of her altered mood. Then she had been alert, buoyant, tingling with a sense of adventure; while now, back to her hampering skirts once more, there was in her heart only disillusionment and the bitter realization of defeat.

Her masquerade had led her nowhere, her stratagem had failed. There was nothing left her except to go back to the prosaic routine of her sheltered existence, and abandon the recovery of Captain Essex's report and the capture of its thieves to the hackneyed methods of the police.

But even as she yielded dolefully to this conviction, there came to her a sudden suggestion gathered from her recent harrowing ordeal, but which in her panic had failed to impress her with any especial significance.

Yet from Nadie's involuntary disclosures it was obvious that, although his had been the mind to conceive the daring robbery, the booty was not now and never had been in his hands.

Her wild-goose chase to Washington in quest of it had been the result of wilful and deliberate misrepresentation; and in view of this fact, no less than from the gang-leader's maledictions, she doubted not that the actual custody of the report was with her disingenuous informant—none other, in short, than that "Angel-Face Kid" whom she had tried to impersonate.

The assurance plainly angered her, yet at the same time it brought the light of a fresh inspiration to her eye, a set of renewed determination to her lips.

Without waiting for anything, or even stopping to pick up the discarded garments strewn about the room, she sprang impulsively to the door, and, pushing aside the table placed against it only far enough to let her slip through, dashed out into the hall.

Along the dim corridor she flitted, and choosing, like Mrs. Hone, the staircase as her means of descent, sped swiftly down it to the ladies' entrance and so out to the street.

Unlike Mrs. Hone, however, she did not entirely escape observation within the hotel. A night watchman making his rounds chanced to remark her precipitate exit from the room and had his suspicions aroused thereat; but, hesitating to accost her on account of her eminently respectable appearance, reported the matter instead to the house detective; and he, learning upon inquiry that 514 was occupied by a single gentleman, set off, scandalized, to remonstrate with the evidently dissolute Hodge.

But by the time the investigation reached this acute stage the fugitive was well away from the premises.

At that late hour—a neighboring church clock pealed out two deep-toned strokes as she came out of the hotel—there were no cabs standing along that side of the Millward; so, rather than try the front with the chance of encountering some band of midnight revelers, she turned down the quiet street to her right, and at a corner two or three blocks further along succeeded in picking up a disreputable-looking "night-hawk" drawn by a shambling old horse.

The driver, a grizzled negro in a top-hat which might have descended from Daniel Webster, looked distinctly surprised at the address she gave him—it was not often that fares for the fashionable Connecticut Avenue section came his way, especially in the guise of lorn young women meandering about the streets at 2 A.M.—but, upon her assurance that she had made no mistake, he took her in.

Under promise of a substantial tip he urged his spavined crowbait along to such good advantage that they were not more than ten minutes in reaching their destination, the handsome residence of Colonel Hone on one of the side streets just off of Dupont Circle.

Springing out almost before the rickety old vehicle came to a halt, its passenger raced up the steps and sounded the bell with an energy which brought hurried if disheveled response under the apprehension that fire was the very least calamity which could warrant such a vehement arousing of an august butler from his dreams.

Mrs. Hone herself, a hastily snatched up dressing robe wrapped around her, had come to the head of the staircase, and now at the sound of her belated visitor's voice rushed down to seize the returned prodigal in a fluttering embrace.

"Allison! Sister!" she exclaimed. "What has happened? Tell me what brings you out here at such a time of night?"

"Presently, dear." The other put aside her anxious inquiries. "Presently I'll tell you everything. But first please send Wilkins out to pay off the cabman and dismiss him; and let me get to the telephone. I want to send a long distance call."

She disengaged herself from her sister's arms as she spoke to hurry off up-stairs; and when Mabel, having issued the necessary orders to the butler, followed her a moment later, she found the girl already seated before the instrument in her boudoir, scolding at "Central" for her slowness.

"But surely you didn't come all the way out here merely to telephone, when you could just as well have done it at the hotel?"

Mrs. Hone, delayed in the gratification of her curiosity, spoke with a slight touch of asperity.

"I couldn't, though; that is, not without risk of being overheard.

and— Hello!" she broke off. "Is that you at last, long distance? Now, rush this through, please, as it's very important," and she gave a Baltimóre number.

"But that is home," cried Mabel. "You are not going to tell papa, are you?"

"No." The girl swung around, still holding the receiver to her ear. "It is Frank I want."

"Frank?" repeated her sister. "At home? Does papa know he is there?"

"Nobody knows except old Julius and myself. Oh, I've got a lot of things to tell you, my dear, that I didn't have time to explain when you were at the hotel."

Then, while she waited for the answer to her call, and Mabel, round-eyed, sat listening with her kimono tucked about her feet, she related how their scapegrace brother, Allison's twin, whom their father had forbidden the house years before, and whom they had all supposed in South America, had suddenly turned up the previous day, seeking, as he said, a haven from the police.

Nobody knew his real name or connections, he told Allison, so long had he been out of the country, and consequently his old home was the safest place that he could find to lie low in until the chase for him had died down.

Then, when yielding to sympathy, Allison granted his appeal for an asylum, he commenced like all criminals to wax boastful.

He was an adept in his line, he told her, of such high standing in the underworld, that Nadie, who would have none but master craftsmen associated with him, had offered special inducements to have him return to America and take a place in the organization.

He had only been back two weeks, but had already engineered one of the biggest hauls yet made by the gang.

Dilating upon this, and upon the necessity for him to seek seclusion until the first hue and cry was over, he divulged to her amazement that it was the theft of the firing device report to which he referred.

So long had it been since he had held any communication with his family, or taken the trouble to inquire regarding them, that he prattled away quite unconscious he was confiding in the *fiancée* of his victim.

Nor did she, after a first involuntary start, betray her overwhelming interest; for already the daring project was taking shape in her mind to avail herself of his disclosures and their striking personal resemblance for her lover's benefit.

Warily she pressed him for further details; but could get little more out of him except that the papers were now in Washington and in Nadie's hands pending negotiations for their sale to the representative of a certain foreign power.

This, as she had since discovered, was as much a pleasing fiction as his declaration that it was from the police he was hiding, when he was really trying to elude the vengeance of the band for holding out the spoils with the idea of disposing of them himself.

At the time, though, she accepted his story in full faith, and levying on his belongings for what she required, set forth on her rash enterprise, leaving word for him that she had been unexpectedly called out of town, and that old Julius, the negro butler who had been with them since childhood, would look after his comfort during her absence.

The only person to whom she had given even a hint of her purpose was Mrs. Hone, and not even to her did she reveal that the brother was at their old home, merely contenting herself with the statement that she had met him, and that it was upon intelligence gained from him she was acting.

This she had communicated to Mabel in a hasty special-delivery letter mailed before her departure from Baltimore, asking the latter to send her some money by messenger-boy to the

Millward under the pseudonym she had decided to use, and also enjoining her not to breathe a word of the matter even to her husband.

"You haven't, have you?" She shot a searching glance at the other.

"Of course not," Mabel bridled. "Indeed, I haven't had the chance. Ethelbert sent me word this afternoon that he had to go over to Fort Myer for a conference, and that I was not to worry if he did not show up before breakfast. Luckily for you, he has been as good as his word; for I don't know how we could keep from explaining things to him, with all this racket and hubbub of your arrival. Certainly, we will have to fix up some very plausible story to account for your presence here in the morning."

"No need of that," retorted Allison, "as I shall not be here. I am calling up Frank now to tell him that he must under no circumstances slip away down the bay on an oyster boat, as he hinted he might do if a pal of his could make the necessary arrangements, but must stay close by the house until my return. Then," with a decisive nod, "I am going to take the first train back to Baltimore and get that report if I have to wring it from him by force."

Mrs. Hone started to put a further question; but the telephone connection being effected at that moment, the girl stayed her with a gesture for silence, and turned to the instrument.

The minute she waited for an answer seemed like an hour.

Old Julius answered the call, and with some difficulty she finally beat it into his sleepy comprehension who it was on the wire, and what it was she desired.

"You say you want me to call Misteh Frank to de phone," repeated the butler. "But, sho', Miss Ally, chile, I can't do dat. He done skin out dis ebenin' jes' sho'tly afteh yo' all went away, an' he tole me when he lef' dat he reckon he wouldn' be back no mo'. He wuz gwine down de bay, he said, to ketch a freighter, an' make his getaway."

CHAPTER V.

IN THE MORNING.

From her previous experience with the "Angel-Face Kid," Allison should perhaps have recognized that as a rule the statements of that shifty youth, like dreams, went by contraries.

Indeed, it was a pretty safe bet that if he announced any specific course or intention, he could be counted on to do the diametrically opposite thing.

So, when he told old Julius that he was bound for blue water and a refuge in "furrin parts," he went out instead and caught an interurban car to Laurel, the half-way point between Washington and Baltimore, just over the District of Columbia line, and there sought to hide himself among the crowd of touts and track-followers gathered for the opening of a race meeting.

Not but what there was a certain method in his madness. Happening by accident to discover after Allison's departure the inroads which had been made upon his wardrobe, he set it down, for all his shrewdness, not to the true cause, but to a visit from a sneak-thief; and unable to figure out how the pillage had been effected, drew conclusion that the prowler must have been some expert agent of Nadie's sent there only to spy him out, but who once inside the house had been incapable of resisting the temptation of the well-filled "keester," and the chance to do a stroke of business on the side.

"Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all"; and thus the "Angel-Face Kid," believing himself smoked out, lost no time in streaking to another covert, for the well-advised "gun," like a careful general, always plans his line of retreat in advance.

Indeed, it was in anticipation of just such an emergency that he had told

Allison of that mythical pal who might arrange for his "get-away" on an oyster boat, and the corresponding fiction that he imparted to Julius on leaving was from the same motive; since, anxious to cover up his trail, he was unwilling that even these friendly spirits should be in position to betray him by an unguarded word.

So plausible seemed the story of his hurried flitting on the freighter, moreover, and so in accord with all that she had learned of his actual predicament since her arrival in Washington, that Allison never for a moment doubted its truth.

Somewhere out on the high seas, as she believed, was now the missing report of Captain Essex, on its way to be hawked about through the devious channels of foreign information systems, and eventually knocked down to the highest bidder.

Gone, it was; gone beyond hope of recovery; since, even were she to give what she knew to the authorities, had not the angel-faced one boasted that, once free of American soil he could afford to laugh at reprisals?

Without definite proofs, too, would not her rather fantastic story be scouted as an effort to lift the weight of suspicion growing ever heavier upon her lover?

If her brother had admitted so much to her, it would be asked, why had he not also explained to her the puzzling riddle of the method by which access had been gained to the army officer's guarded office; and on that point, as already indicated, the secretive "Kid" had sedulously kept his own counsel.

No; as she saw it, to confide now in the police would be merely to rattle the bones of a forgotten family skeleton to no purpose.

It would, too, be a confession of bungling on her own part. Essex might not say anything to upbraid her, but he would undoubtedly blame her in his heart. His complete exoneration had been fairly within her grasp; yet she had let it slip between her fingers.

Sick with chagrin, her last hope vanishing at the word from old Julius, she dropped the receiver back on its hook and, burying her face in her hands, gave way to a fit of passionate weeping.

The hysterical outburst was so unusual, so unlike Allison's ordinary calm poise, that Mabel sprang to her side in alarm and threw her arms about the heaving shoulders of the distraught girl.

"You are overwrought!" she cried. "You have been attempting too much!"

"Attempting!" wailed the girl tragically. "That is just it. I have been attempting, and have accomplished nothing. And, oh, Mab, if you only knew what I have been through tonight!"

She gripped her sister convulsively by the arms. "Can you imagine what it is to have a dagger flashed to and fro before your eyes, to feel it score your flesh, to expect every moment that— Oh," she broke off shuddering, "I did not know that I had it in me to be such a weak-spirited coward. The mere memory of the dancing, snaky glitter of that knife sends me cold with fear, turns me weak and spineless as a rag."

Then, between incoherent paroxysms of weeping, she sobbed out the story of her night's adventure, while Mabel listened, horrified, to the recital.

At last, though, when the experience had been fully gone over and both were able to discuss it more calmly, Mrs. Hone suddenly awoke to an aspect of the case which struck her as meriting attention.

"But your clothes?" she asked. "The trousers and things? What have you done with them?"

"I left them at the hotel," indifferently. "My one thought was to get away. Anyhow, it's of no consequence now. Whoever finds them is welcome to them."

A slight, perturbed frown wrinkled Mrs. Hone's brow. "I think we had better try to get them back," she said a trifle dubiously. "They might be traced up to you in some way; one never knows just where an inquiry into that sort of thing will lead to. And you certainly don't want any notoriety on top of all the rest of this."

Allison shrugged her shoulders. She was so utterly done up, both in body and mind, that for the moment nothing seemed of very much importance to her.

"Oh, well, if you think so," she assented. "I can't very easily go to the hotel myself to claim them; but we can probably arrange to have them sent, or something of the kind. However, no need to bother about that tonight. I have taken the room until this evening, you know, and, luckily, paid for it in advance."

"I'll tell you," decided Mabel; "thinking it over, it seems to me very much better on every account to take Ethelbert into our confidence—partly, at least—and let him look after the matter. Trust me, my dear, to know just how much to tell him."

Accordingly, the next morning, long before she usually even dreamed of opening her eyes, Mrs. Hone slipped from under the covers and, donning a becoming morning-gown of the soft topaz shade which the colonel especially admired, with a Frenchy little cap on her pretty blond head, descended to the breakfast-room, where she knew her husband sat at his bacon and eggs.

She had heard him come in about half an hour before, repair to his own room, and then, after a strenuous session with the shower-bath, dress for the day and pass down-stairs again; and she had so timed her own appearance on the scene as to be on hand to serve him his coffee in the way that he particularly liked it.

Colonel Hone was so absorbed in his morning paper that, until she spoke to him, he did not observe her entrance; then he looked up quickly with a start of surprise—one might almost say of trepidation.

It must be confessed, too, for all that he was carefully groomed and freshly shaved, he looked a bit seedy and worse for wear this morning.

He had pouches under his eyes and haggard lines about his mouth, and the greeting that he extended to his wife seemed just a shade effusive and overdone. While he was complimenting her on her appearance and felicitating himself on having her at breakfast with him, his glance, she saw, had surreptitiously returned to the newspaper laid beside his plate.

"Allison came last night," she informed him as she slipped into her place and unfolded her napkin.

The colonel made no answer. His eyes were glued upon the printed page before him.

"Allison came last night," repeated Mrs. Hone. But still he paid no heed. "Ethelbert, are you deaf?" She spoke up sharply. "I have told you three times that Allison came last night."

Her husband roused apologetically. By this time he had reached the end of the article over which he had been poring so intently, and there was something like an expression of relief in his face.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," he said. "I am afraid I was wool-gathering for the moment. You say that Allison came last night, eh? That's very nice, but a little unexpected, isn't it? What brought her over?"

Mrs. Hone hesitated. Some saving intuition impelled her to sidestep the opening for which she had been maneuvering. "What was it you found so interesting in the paper?" she asked instead, reverting to the first thing which popped into her mind.

The colonel flushed and shot her an uneasy glance. "In the paper?" he stammered. "Why—er—nothing. I was just reading a rather sensational thing that happened at the Millward last night. Like to look at it?"

He creased the paper carefully down the middle, and handed it over to her, with the article to which he referred uppermost; but she, with a woman's contrariety, turned it over and glanced at the other side first.

"What do you mean?" Her eye roved over the head-lines for a minute. "Oh, yes: I see. 'Lurid Stag Dinner Raided by the Police.'"

"No, no," the colonel protested hastily. "That doesn't amount to anything. You're looking at the wrong column altogether. What I was speaking of was the murder mystery."

"Murder mystery?" Finally she turned the paper over and, as she did so, only refrained with difficulty from an audible gasp: for there, staring up at her, was a big black head-line: "What Has Become of Louis Hodge?"

The look which she flashed at her husband was almost as apprehensive as the one that he had given her a few minutes before; but, finding him placidly intent upon his meal, now that he had steered her off of dangerous ground, she returned hurriedly to the article, and thereafter for a season was quite as preoccupied as he had previously been.

"But I don't see anything in all this to make such a fuss about," she carped when she had rapidly skimmed through the two or three columns devoted to the affair.

"As far as I can make out, there were only some blood-stained clothes and a knife found in the room. If any one was murdered, what has become of him?"

"Ah, but don't you see," patiently explained the colonel, "that is just where the mystery comes in. The indications all point to a murderous affray there in the hotel, with this young woman who was seen leaving the room as the probable assassin; yet not a trace can be found anywhere of the victim.

"The police are hampered, moreover, by an utter absence of any information relating to the antecedents of this young man, Hodge. He registered from Baltimore; but apparently nothing is known of him over there, although, as the clerk at the Millward says, his address and manner indicated that he was a person of some consequence.

"However"—he gave a short, ironic laugh—"it probably will not long remain a mystery. I see that your friend Ortle promises to tackle the affair to-morrow and offer a solution."

With a disparity of twenty years between himself and his blooming young wife, it was perhaps not unnatural that the colonel should be somewhat jealously inclined toward any younger man who especially affected her society; but in the case of Ortle it must be confessed that he had some grounds for objection.

The newspaperman, although something of a social lion, was hardly the type that one wanted to see installed as "tame cat" at his own hearthstone, and to just that position was Ortle fast approximating in the Hone household.

Mabel, however, discreetly ignored his petulant fling. She could see, for one thing, that the colonel was a bit on edge this morning for some reason, and, in addition, she had plenty to occupy her own thoughts without engaging in a connubial discussion.

"Ah," she said indifferently, "that will be interesting. What does he take up in his column to-day?" turning over the page as she spoke to seek the daily criminological study which Ortle had made such a feature of the *Appeal*.

"The Essex affair," growled the colonel with evident disapproval. "He tries to prove 'Jimmy's' absolute innocence. I'll have to admit, too," grudgingly, "that in spots his hypothesis isn't half bad; fantastic, of course, but clever.

"Still, if he really wanted to help Essex, he had better have kept hands off. That sort of loose conjecture and

theory will only serve to prejudice the boy with an Army Board, and it begins to look very much now as though that would be the outcome."

"Oh, don't tell me that." Mabel glanced up, her mind diverted for the moment from her own worries. "Poor Jim."

"Yes." The colonel shook his head. "Things have gotten to such a stage now that he will practically be forced to demand an inquiry, unless, indeed, the Department decides to go ahead on its own initiative; and in either event the results are bound to tell against him if he can offer no more convincing story than the one he has told so far. By the way, did Allison intimate that there was anything new in the situation?"

"Why, no." Mabel had the grace to color slightly. "She came quite late, you know, and as she is still sleeping this morning, I have really had but little opportunity to talk to her. Poor girl; we must be very tender with her, Ethelbert," she pleaded. "She feels this thing, I am sure, much more deeply than she shows. Indeed, I have an idea that it was a craving for sympathy and affection, more than anything else, that brought her to see me at this time."

"Of course, of course." Her husband nodded. "See if you can't divert her, my dear, and get her mind off Essex and his troubles. As a matter of fact" — he frowned slightly — "she should have cut loose from him long ago. Far be it from me to knock any fellow when he is down; but it does seem a shame that a lovely, charming girl like Allison should be tied up to any one so persistently ill-starred as 'Jimmy' seems to be."

Then, with a glance at his watch, he hastily swallowed his coffee and rose from the table, muttering that he was already due over at the barracks.

Mabel followed him out in the hall to give him a dutiful kiss of farewell, and stood in the doorway watching his spare, erect figure, lithe and well preserved for all his forty-seven years, as he descended the steps and entered his waiting car.

Once she seemed half inclined to call him back; but at that instant he turned to lift his hat to her and wave his hand, and at the stiff, military gesture and sight of his martinetlike face her impulse died.

It would do no good to confide in him now, she thought; would, indeed, only provoke him, since, as she knew, the honor of his position was almost a fetish with him, and nothing could well be more distasteful than to have the breath of possible scandal or notoriety touch him ever so slightly.

Besides, he could do nothing, the way things had turned out. The telltale evidence left behind by Allison in her flight had already been found, and with the public interest whetted as it was in the mysterious Hodge, the police and newspapers could not possibly be called off without giving out the entire story.

No; on the whole, it was much better that she and Allison keep their own counsel, running what small risk there might be of having the escapade traced up to them, and trusting that the general interest, with nothing fresh to feed upon, would soon die of inanition.

Indeed, now in the broad light of day, the apprehensions of discovery which had so assailed her the night before seemed silly and overstrained.

Certainly there had been nothing in the newspaper account to arouse uneasiness; according to it, the authorities were all at sea, utterly without a clue leading in any direction.

Involuntarily her face cleared and her lips almost broke into a smile as she glanced out along the street toward the parked enclosure of the Circle, greening now with the spring and bordered by crocuses and tulips.

Certainly it was a morning to dispel all glumness and evil misgivings— April in her freshest and most jocund mood. The sun was shining, the sky

was blue, the voices and light laughter of playing children came to her ears.

A blue-uniformed messenger-boy came slouching around the corner and scuffed leisurely down the sunlit street. About to turn and go inside, she halted as she saw him pause before the house and gaze up inquiringly at the number.

Then, with hand extended, she waited until he had climbed the steps and handed over to her a note which he took from his cap.

One glance at the superscription, and she hastily tore open the envelope. Inside she read:

> DEAR MRS. HONE:
>
> I am coming to you for tea this afternoon, and I am hoping that you will grant me a few moments alone with you after the others have gone, as I have something to talk over with you of singular importance both to you and myself. I trust to you to see that we have opportunity for an undisturbed interview; even your sister had better not be informed of my staying.
>
> Faithfully,
> WILLIAM ORTLE.

Unusual and almost insolent though the request, it must be confessed that the feeling it aroused in Mrs. Hone was dismay rather than resentment.

Especially was her blanching gaze riveted upon the final sentence: "Even your sister had better not be informed of my staying."

Indeed, did not that furnish the key to the whole missive—for how could Ortle be acquainted with Allison's presence in Washington unless he either knew or divined the method of her arrival?

It seemed impossible that he could have deciphered so much in so short a time from the meager evidence furnished by the hotel room and its contents; but, for all the scoffing of the police, she had seen his perspicacity proven correct in too many cases to doubt his almost uncanny powers.

What other meaning, in fact, could be read into the whole tone and matter of his note than that he had reached the true solution of the Hodge mystery? And why did he want to see her unless it was to bargain for his silence?

Her face clouded, and a slight shudder shook her frame. As a young society matron, she had rather taken pride in having the gifted, sought-after newspaperman so plainly attached to her chariot-wheels.

She had even found a certain fascination in his personality. But she shrank, her entire nature in revolt, against finding herself in his power.

All the brightness and beauty of the morning gone for her, she turned and, twisting his note into shreds between her fingers, went back into the house.

CHAPTER VI.

"FRANKENSTEIN."

AFTER the light laughter and chatter had died away, and the last of Mrs. Hone's guests at the serving of five-o'clock tea that afternoon had departed, leaving her to the contemplation of her empty reception-room, she dropped wearily into a damask chair and, resting her head on her arm, relaxed the stiff, society smile into which she had set her features for the past hour.

Seen thus in repose, her face showed in its pallor and the wide, frightened gaze of her dark eyes the strain under which she had been laboring.

So might look a child who was nerving itself to go up-stairs in the dark; for there was a distinctly infantile suggestion in the soft, rounded contour of Mabel's cheek and the delicate, rose-leaf curve of her mouth, drooping now into a pathetic little quiver.

She sat staring straight ahead of her, her tiny hands clenching and unclenching under the stress of her emotions as she thought of the ordeal ahead of her; but with the entrance of the soft-footed butler who came to remove the fragile Dresden cups and shining silver service, she roused from her reverie.

"I shall be at home to no one for the

next half-hour, Wilkins," she said, and repeated: "To no one—you understand?"

"Very good, madame." The man bowed and, absolutely expressionless, went on with his task; but out of the corner of his eye he watched her as she rose and swiftly crossed the hall, and when she turned into the music-room he gave ever so slight a shake of the head.

Ortle, who was seated at the piano, running his fingers softly over the keys, glanced up as she entered and smiled with a touch of amusement. He could see that she was on guard.

"You don't mind if I go on playing while we talk, do you?" he asked. "Whether or not mine is a savage breast, music certainly has the power to soothe and humanize me; and I want to be very human and very sympathetic to-day, Mrs. Hone." His voice dropped almost to a whisper. "I want to be your friend."

He faced about to the instrument again, and after some preliminary improvisation drifted into Handel's exquisite "Largo," playing it through with effective technique and no little feeling.

And as the haunting strains stole through the room Mabel, despite herself, found her antagonistic mood softening. She had made no answer to his whimsical request, but had stood rigid and unbending with her hand on the back of a chair.

As the music continued, though, and she yielded insensibly to its spell, she seated herself, making a charming picture as she sat there in the firelight; for, notwithstanding the sunny promise of the morning, the afternoon had turned out chill, and a fire of logs had been kindled on the wide, open hearth.

Ortle, seemingly absorbed in his playing, noted appreciatively every detail as the warm, flickering glow brought out glints of gold in her fair hair and gave a touch of color to her pensive, childlike profile.

It was reflected in the soft sheen of her gown of amber-colored charmeuse, it sparkled from the circlet of topazes linked about her throat, and gleamed from the jeweled buckles of her dainty satin slippers where they rested on the great tiger-skin rug before the blaze.

The effect of gleam and sparkle and leaping glow gave Ortle a suggestion, and suddenly lifting his hands from the keys, he whirled about toward her on the piano-stool.

"Mrs. Hone," he said, "you are playing with fire. Tell me what you know about this man Hodge?"

Taken thus unexpectedly, she crumpled up like a rose-leaf caught in a sudden gust of sleet. The defiant hauteur with which she had planned to meet his accusations failed her. Her color came and went, her eyes dilated, her voice fluttered nervously in her throat.

"I—I don't know what you mean," she stammered weakly.

Ortle leaned forward, his two hands resting on his knees. Mabel's gaze noted a peculiar, cross-shaped scar just above his right thumb about halfway to his slender wrist, and fastened as if fascinated upon it.

"Mrs. Hone," he said, "I have told you that I wanted to be your friend. Now I am going to prove it to you.

"A woman is being sought for by the police as the assassin of Louis Hodge—a woman who came secretly to the Millward to see him, who made her way to his room without letting her presence in the hotel be known or being announced from the desk, and who was seen to leave the apartment hurriedly just before the discovery of the bloody clothing and the other evidences of a crime.

"You, as I happen to know, were at the Millward last night. You went to Hodge's room. With my own eyes I saw you leave the hotel, and if you want proof of the statement, I can tell you exactly how you were gowned and the number of the taxicab in which you left."

She shrank back as if he had struck

a blow. In imagination she saw the points he had made all spread out in that column of his on the morrow and the inevitable conclusion drawn with all the convincing quality of which he was such a master.

She saw herself pilloried before all her world as a murderess, and possibly dragged off to prison—she who had queened it over the smartest and most exclusive coterie in Washington.

She foresaw, too, the writhing fury of her husband, the defection of friends, the floods of gossip, the nation-wide blaze of newspaper comment. Verily, her universe was going down in shipwreck about her ears. Oh, why, why had Allison indulged in that madcap enterprise?

And then of a sudden she realized the absurdity of her nervous tremors. As often in moments of great stress, an irrelevant reflection served to clarify her atmosphere.

Like an inspiration there came to her the memory of that ridiculous old story of Artemus Ward's of the prisoner who, after spending forty years in a dungeon cell, decided to escape, and opening the window, walked away.

Was she not really in similar position? she asked herself. Here she had been torturing herself all day with fears and bugaboos, and had allowed this man to bully and terrify her, when all the time the way lay straight before her utterly to confound him.

With a sense that her feet were once more on solid ground, she turned almost triumphantly to face her tormentor.

"I thank you for your warning, Mr. Ortle," she said with quiet irony. "It is meant in a friendly spirit, I am sure. But, really, I am quite uninterested. If any such insinuations, or even accusations are made against me as those you suggest, I shall be fully prepared to meet them—with the simple truth."

"The simple truth." He shook his head a trifle pityingly. "That is a wonderful weapon to those who can use it with clean hands and in absolute sincerity.

"But half-truths will never avail. Granted your innocence of any crime, are you yet willing to face the facts in this case—a clandestine visit to a young man's room at night and all that came before and after it?

"Are you willing to have those facts dragged to light and bandied about on malicious tongues, to have the finger of suspicion pointed at you, possibly to undergo the humiliation of an arrest and trial, even though you gained a vindication at the end?"

"But they would not dare," she panted. "Do you mean to tell me that an absolutely innocent person can be subjected to such persecution?"

"More than one innocent person has gone to the gallows," he rejoined; "and that, too, on an even weaker chain of circumstances than that which has been forged about you. Remember, also," he added slowly, "that the only corroboration you can offer to your story is the by no means unbiased testimony of your sister."

If he was trying to confirm some theory he had formed by goading her into an admission, he succeeded.

"You are wrong," she cried shrilly. "Wrong, I tell you. Allison can prove in five minutes — prove absolutely, do you understand?—that the whole elaborate structure you are trying to build up is but a mere house of cards."

"Perhaps she might"—he leaned forward impressively—"if it were not for one circumstance. Suppose, for instance, an allegation were made that the vanished Hodge was in reality the 'Angel-Face Kid,' and photographs and police descriptions from Buenos Aires were brought forward to support it? Could you produce your brother to refute this identification?"

It was as though a gulf had suddenly opened before her feet, and for the first time she saw the full extent of her perilous predicament.

Her wits, sharpened by terror, quickly filled in the picture to which his suggestion had given outline. On such a foundation, the police could only too easily build up some theory of family disagreement as the motive for the seeming crime, and riddle the veracious explanation of herself and Allison as a mere frame-up on the part of two resourceful women. And with their scapegrace brother off heaven-knows-where, and seeking concealment into the bargain, how were they ever to disprove the ingenious hypothesis?

Of course she exaggerated the danger of her position, bad as it actually was.

The most she had to fear, in fact, was scandal and unpleasant notoriety; but what did she, an unsophisticated woman of society, know of the necessity to prove a *corpus delicti,* or of the other technicalities of criminal procedure which would serve to protect her?

Under the spell of Ortle's presentment, the prison cell, the court-room, even the electric chair itself seemed a very imminent menace.

Allison's impulsive masquerade and mad flight from the hotel had created a Frankenstein which was rising to overwhelm them.

"Can you lay hands on your brother, if you need him?" Ortle repeated his question; and as she hopelessly shook her head, he drew back with a little frown, one would almost have said, of disappointment.

But Mabel was in no condition to observe *nuances* of expression. Almost distracted by her fears, she sprang to her feet, and began excitedly pacing the floor.

Ortle rose from the piano stool, and took a step toward her. "Remember, Mrs. Hone," he said quietly, "I told you that I wanted to be your friend. I still want to help you."

"Help me?" She broke into a mirthless laugh. "You?"

That the man loved her was no secret to Mabel; it seldom is to the woman who inspires such a feeling. Yet in her vanity and love of admiration, she had permitted him to dance attendance on her, and had flirted and coquetted with him, thinking it all no more than pastime. Now, however, she realized that, here, too, she had been playing with fire.

Ortle, though, plainly misunderstood the fierce self-condemnation in her scornful tone, the gesture of revulsion with which she turned from him. He thought she doubted his ability.

"I can do more, perhaps, than you imagine," he said not boastfully, but as a simple statement of fact. "The cops pretend to jeer at my expositions of crime, but secretly they regard them almost as inspired gospels.

"Believe me, I have but to twist up the facts a bit, or rather my interpretation of them, and you can go your way feeling as secure as though none of this had ever happened. Here is my comment on the case for to-morrow's *Appeal.*"

He took a sheaf of manuscript from his pocket. "If you care to glance it over you will see that I have made out a rather plausible argument, pointing entirely away from you or your sister as factors in the affair."

She did not offer to take the paper, but hesitating only a moment, turned and faced him with a level glance.

For all that the publication of such an article meant to her, she did not waver. Even a butterfly of fashion will sometimes show unexpected depths of strength.

"You mean, I suppose," she said steadily, "that you will publish this article if I ask it of you as a favor? But I do not believe, you know, that a married woman should seek a favor from any man except her husband."

He caught her meaning at last. "Oh, Mrs. Hone!" he broke out reproachfully. "I told you, did I not, that I wanted to be your friend; that I would prove I was your friend; and

this is how I intend to make good. There are no strings to that article. It will be published just as it stands, whether you ask me to do so or not. Nor did I show it to you with any sense of conferring an obligation, but merely to relieve your mind."

Clever as he was, the man may have been dissimulating for his own ends: but with Mabel there was no question of his sincerity.

As if by magic, her face changed, and turning swiftly she caught Ortle's hands in both her own.

"Oh, forgive me," she cried. "How can I ever thank you. You have driven away all my unhappiness as with one wave of a wizard's wand."

"Then I am more than repaid," he murmured softly.

But as they stood there in this intimate attitude in the room lighted only by the dancing glow of the firelight, the portières at the doorway leading into the hall suddenly parted, revealing the figure of Colonel Hone.

"Ah!" He stiffened at the spectacle before him.

A little twinkle of amusement gleamed for a moment in Ortle's eyes behind the heavy-rimmed glasses.

"Don't be jealous, colonel," he drawled jocularly. "Mrs. Hone was just congratulating me on my article for to-morrow on the Hodge mystery. She considers it the best thing I have done yet."

CHAPTER VII.

SAUCE FOR THE GANDER.

THE colonel did not appear in any degree mollified by Ortle's nonchalant explanation. In fact, he paid no attention to it.

"Mabel," he addressed his wife curtly, "if I am not mistaken, Allison wants to see you."

Stiffly, he held the curtain aside into the hall until she had passed out; then dropping it back into place, turned, and in two swift strides crossed the room toward the newspaperman. His face was white with fury, his nostrils quivering, the look with which he regarded the other was blackly hostile.

"Now, sir," he gritted between his teeth, "will you kindly explain—?"

"This new theory of mine?" Ortle interrupted, never shifting his careless pose. "Certainly. It directs suspicion toward a man seen descending the hotel fire-escape."

"Eh? What's that?" The colonel's savage humor seemed suddenly to subside. The glare in his eye gave way to a timid, almost placating look. The white rage in his face turned to a greenish pallor. His arm, which he had half upraised as though to strike, dropped to his side.

"A man seen descending the fire-escape?" he gulped. "This is—this is quite a new development in the case, is it not? You interest me, Ortle. Sit down." He waved his hand toward a chair. "Sit down, man, and tell me all about it."

He sank into a seat himself somewhat heavily as he spoke, and with some muttered execration about a glare hurting his eyes, shifted it about so that his face was in shadow from the flickering firelight.

"Well, there really isn't very much to tell."

Ortle betrayed a sort of malicious enjoyment in spinning out the preliminaries of his story; "But, as I point out in my article, it seems about the most significant clue that has yet been turned up."

"I don't see that," the colonel broke in impatiently. "I don't see it at all. On the other hand, the circumstance of the young woman who left the room so precipitately just before the discovery of Hodge's disappearance offers a direct connection, and one which it would appear more profitable to follow up than to waste effort in hunting down some indefinite man who came down the fire-escape—if, indeed, there was any such person."

"Oh, there was such a person all

right. Make no mistake about that. I have two witnesses who watched his antics from the window of a neighboring house.

"They first saw him climbing rapidly up the ladder past the carefully screened windows on the third floor where the stag dinner was in progress, and say that he continued on until he reached the fifth floor, where he either entered a window or stretched himself out on the iron balcony.

"The fire-escape I mentioned is at the back of the hotel, you understand, and the light there not sufficiently strong to be sure on this point. Presently, however, the fellow was seen coming down again in the same furtive, stealthy fashion until he reached the ground, and made off up a court to the street."

"Humph!" The colonel again interposed with a sniff. "Some mechanic, no doubt, engaged in making repairs for the hotel of some kind or another."

"That is what my witnesses thought, too," nodded Ortle; "and that is the reason they failed to notify the police or raise any alarm. But when he had reached the ground and passed for a moment under the full glare of an electric arc lamp, they caught a better view of him and saw that he was in evening clothes. A man of about fifty, they say he was, tall and slender, with a singularly erect carriage. Both insist that they would be able to identify him if they saw him again, and—"

"But granted all that you say," demanded the colonel somewhat hurriedly, "how does this fit into the Hodge mystery? The mere fact of a man on the fire-escape doesn't mean anything. He might have been a sleep-walker, a guest in the hotel who for reasons of his own chose that unconventional mode of exit, or any one of a dozen other things that I could mention."

"Yes," rejoined Ortle; "and he might also have been some jealous old Turk of a husband with a young wife. At least that is the theory I have chosen to go on, for the reason that it furnishes an adequate motive, and of the few things established about Hodge the most certain is that he was something of a lady-killer.

"We know of another woman beside the one that has been mentioned in the case, who took the risk of visiting his apartment last evening without being announced from the desk.

"My idea, briefly," he went on, tapping the roll of manuscript that lay on his knee, "is that the trip up the fire-escape which was observed by my witnesses was not the first taken along that route by the old man, but that he had previously come down it with the body of Hodge, whom he had murdered in a fit of jealousy.

"Returning, then, perhaps, to get something he had left behind, perhaps to remove the traces of his crime, he undoubtedly entered the room, since the balcony on the fifth floor where he was seen to disappear opens only into rooms 513 and 514, and the occupant of 513 swears his window was locked throughout the night. Into 514 he must have gone, therefore, and there, as I conceive, he remained until he was frightened off by the advent of the young woman whose agitated flight from the place served to arouse inquiry and investigation.

"That she is innocent of any share in the crime seems to me plain from her actions. Probably she only came to the door, stepped inside, and then, appalled at what she saw, scurried away in a panic. I thoroughly believe, though, that when we get hold of this man who was on the fire escape we shall have the solution to the mystery in our hands."

"Yes, when?" repeated Colonel Hone with an uneasy attempt to sneer. "But that is going to be something of a job, isn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know." The newspaperman shrugged his shoulders. "All we have to do is to look for a middle-aged man of good address and ultra-

military bearing, and who in addition has a young wife and a fiercely jealous disposition. There ought not to be so many of that sort even in this city of jealous old husbands but that we should be able to track him down."

The colonel rose and started for the door, staggering so as he went that he had to stretch out a hand to the lintel to steady himself.

"Excuse me, Ortle," he muttered thickly as a drunken man. "I've had a hard day's work at the office. Don't go, though. Just amuse yourself until Mabel comes back. I know she'll be anxious to see you."

"He's bound to relieve himself of the imputation of jealousy, I see."

Ortle grinned as he seated himself once more at the piano and began picking out bits of Chopin from memory.

In the meantime Mabel, on leaving the room, had paused irresolutely for a space at the foot of the staircase, breathlessly awaiting the result of the encounter between the two men: but as the critical moment passed, and the low hum of their voices reached her settling down into what seemed an amicable conversation, her fears abated, and she went on up the stairs to Allison.

Under plea of a sick headache the latter had kept to her bed all day, recuperating from the nervous shock and terror of the night before; but now, as the elder sister entered the room, she found her sitting up in bed and gazing with mingled emotions at a note which had just arrived.

"It's from Jimmy Essex," she explained. "And—what do you think, Mabel?—he's in Washington, has been here for two days, he says, working under cover on this case. Now he has learned of my arrival through the evening paper, and wants to come out here this evening to see me."

"Well, why not?" Mrs. Hone elevated her brows slightly at the girl's dubious tone. "You don't usually look so tragic over the prospect of a visit from Jimmy."

"I know." Allison shook her head. "But I'm afraid about this wretched Hodge business."

"Afraid?"

"Yes. I don't want to tell him, and confess what a blunderer I have been. Yet, on the other hand, suppose the truth should leak out. He would never forgive me for not having confided in him. And you know, dear, with all this stir that is being made something is very apt to come to light."

"Nonsense." Mabel tossed her pretty head with sublime assurance. "If that is all that is worrying you, you can set your fears at rest. Ortle has promised to protect us."

"Ortle?" Allison's tone expressed something akin to consternation. "You don't mean to tell me that you have been talking over the affair with him?"

"I couldn't help myself, my dear. And there was really nothing I could tell him that he didn't already know. I haven't said anything to you about it for fear of upsetting you, but I have been on pins and needles all day ever since I got a note from him this morning which showed me plainly that he was acquainted with the real facts."

Then, commencing with the receipt of the note, she detailed all that she had been through, and recited as fully as she could remember all the conversation that had passed between her and Ortle.

"So, you see," she concluded triumphantly, "everything is going to be all right, and we needn't give ourselves another moment's anxiety. Come now, wipe that distressed frown off your face, and send word to Jimmy that of course you will see him. Where is he stopping? At the Millward?"

"No; as I told you, he is here under cover. He has given me a number, though, where I can get him on the telephone. It's some third-rate boarding house over in the wilds of the Northeast somewhere, and he says the food is almost killing him."

"Poor boy." Mabel laughed. "By all means tell him to come to dinner then. Or," she bethought herself, "I'll tell you a better plan than that; let me speak to him and ask him to bring along his traps and stay with us. He can come and go as he pleases, and I can easily arrange it so that no one outside of the house will know of his presence. I am sure that Ethelbert will have no objections," a trifle doubtfully, as she recalled his somewhat impatient strictures upon Essex that morning at the breakfast table.

Before extending the invitation, too, she took occasion to consult her husband, when he hurried by a few minutes later on his way to his own room to lie down, as he said, a little while before dinner.

But the colonel was in very different mood from his usual arrogance of spirit, and meekly told her to go ahead and do as she thought best.

Having got Jimmy on the wire, therefore, and secured his grateful acceptance to her hospitable program, she vibrated like an especially lively humming bird between Ortle in the music room, Wilkins in his butler's pantry, and Allison in her room up-stairs.

In her revulsion of spirits from the fear and panic which had oppressed her all day, she was almost extravagantly buoyant, laughing and chatting all sorts of gay nonsense as she lightly flitted from one to the other of her charges.

The younger sister by contrast was singularly silent and preoccupied, seeming to be turning something over in her mind, as she sought by means of various feminine artifices to restore her cropped head to something like its natural semblance.

"Mabel," she finally questioned, turning from the mirror with a speculative gleam in her eye, "you say, as I understand it, that Mr. Ortle knew you were at the Millward last night, because he saw you leaving; but he doesn't claim anything of the sort in regard to me, does he?"

"No."

"Then did he explain how he discovered that I was Hodge?"

Again the other shook her head.

"Nor even how he came to know that I was in Washington, when he wrote you that note at eight o'clock this morning, eh?"

"No; I asked him that. But he merely shrugged his shoulders, and told me that it was his trade to find out things of the sort."

Allison turned back to her mirror, and for a few moments was silent as she preened her head from side to side to observe the effects of her coiffure. Then she asked a bit irrelevantly:

"Did you ever notice anything peculiar in regard to his hands? He hasn't a finger missing, for instance, I suppose?"

"Anything peculiar with his hands? Nothing that I know of, except a rather odd-shaped scar at the base of the thumb. Strangely enough, too, I had never happened to remark it before; but this afternoon I could hardly keep my eyes off it while we were talking. It's exactly in the form of a cross. Why do you ask such a funny question, though, sister?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking —that's all."

But what she was thinking of, was the persistence with which her assailant of the night before had worn these gray, suède gloves throughout the entire exciting interview.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LIFE-SAVER.

Ortle, declining an invitation to dinner, took his departure from Colonel Hone's just before the arrival of Essex.

Indeed, the two met practically at the foot of the steps, and the army man, seeing that he was recognized, yielded after a moment's hesitation and responded to the other's greeting.

Jimmy was in citizen's clothes, of

course, and wore a black slouch hat, drawn well down over his face; but Ortle had to smile at the suggestion of a disguise.

His military stride and braced-back shoulders put on him the ineffacable stamp of West Point; he was as plainly U. S. A. as though he had appeared in his uniform.

"No need to worry on my account, captain," Ortle cordially assured him. "I have not the slightest intention of spoiling your incognito, and if there's anything I can do to plug your game along, command me. I believe you're a deeply wronged man, and before I get through I'm going to prove it, too."

"That's awfully good of you." Essex nodded gratefully. "Don't think, either that I fail to appreciate the splendid defense you gave me in this morning's *Appeal*. By Jove, old man, the way you reasoned out the case was nothing short of masterly. It was the clearest and most enlightening presentation of my side of the affair that could possibly have been made, and if the matter ever comes to an official inquiry I am going to have my attorney follow your line of argument practically to the letter.

"I want to ask you, though," he went on eagerly, "if you have any actual grounds for that suggestion of a slip of cardboard having been thrust into the crack of the door by some one passing out, or was it a mere surmise on your part?"

Ortle smiled quizzically and shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't answer that just now, captain. I'll tell you this much, however: if I am able to establish the fact definitely, or to get any evidence that will be accepted in court, you shall have full advantage of it."

Essex was plainly disappointed. "I doubted if it was anything more than just conjecture," he said. "In fact, I was sure of it; for the only persons who could have done such a thing were Lieutenant Baird and the stenographer, and they, of course, are both above suspicion. Still, you have such a deuced convincing way of making your points, Ortle, that you had me half wondering if there might not be something in it."

The newspaperman laughed outright at this tribute to his powers. "Well, sometimes I do mix a little fancy with my facts," he confessed; "but when I do it's only to mislead the fellow I'm really after and give him a sense of false security.

"And here's some evidence that's absolutely straight, captain, if it will help you any. That sentinel out in the corridor lied when he said he did not leave his post.

"He was away, I have discovered, for anywhere from six to eight minutes, drawn around the elbow in the hallway by the noise of a scrap between two Italian bootblacks. Plenty of time, you see, for the thief to slip into your office, knock you over the head, grab the report, and make his getaway."

"A fixed-up row, you mean, I suppose, to attract his attention and take him away from the door? Yes"—Essex scratched his head—"but don't you see how improbable that makes the story? A crook who could know in advance that the report was to be returned to me for final drafting that morning, and then arrange to be on hand himself and get the sentry out of the way just at the exact moment when I was shifting stenographers, might go all right in fiction or one of your articles; but I'm afraid it's just a bit too fine-drawn for real life."

"Not if the crook happened to be Nadie," quickly retorted the other. "Anyhow, that is certainly the way it was done."

"Possibly," Essex sighed. "But I question very much whether it would pass muster with a board of cut-and-dried old army officers. No, Ortle"—he shook his head—"I am beginning to realize more and more all the time that if I'm ever to get out of this

scrape I've got to find out who Nadie is and force him to give up that report, if I have to choke it out of him."

"Ah? So that is the reason of this little trip on the quiet to Washington, eh?"

"Yes," admitted Jimmy a trifle reluctantly. Then he broke out with a fierce: "By Jove, I'd give ten years of my life for just five minutes' conversation face to face with him."

Ortle's eyes twinkled incomprehensibly behind his gold-rimmed glasses. "Maybe, you'll get your wish," he said. "Here's luck to you, anyway."

Then after a little further conversation of no especial consequence, the two separated. "We're both on the same trail, you might say," observed Ortle, as he extended his hand at parting; "so what do you say, captain, to our pooling issues in a way. You let me know of any new developments you may happen to run across, and I, on my part, will agree to return the courtesy."

"Glad to, I'm sure," assented Essex; "only, it'll be a rather lop-sided arrangement, I fear. I'm nowhere near your class as a sleuth, you know; fact is"—a shade ruefully—"I'm beginning to think I'm more or less of a dub at it."

And—whether it was this mournful confession that provoked it, or the futility of Jimmy's attempted disguise, as proven by the presence of two lurking figures whom Ortle's keen eye immediately spotted as secret service operatives—the newspaperman smiled quietly to himself as he went his way.

Arriving at the office, too, he stopped at his desk to add a closing paragraph to his review of the Hodge case before turning in his copy.

"Strange as it may seem," he wrote, "there appears to be a very close connection between this affair and the theft of Captain Essex's firing device report. In fact, the *Appeal* investigator, although not yet at liberty to make known the full character of his information, states unhesitatingly that the errand which brought the so-called Hodge on his ill-fated visit to Washington was an attempt to recover from Nadie and his band the missing papers."

The next morning this appeared in the paper, and was read by several thousands of people in Washington and its environs, not failing to include the Angel-Face Kid in his retreat at Laurel.

Turning from the sporting page and "dope" on the horses which naturally claimed his first attention, the Kid somewhat cursorily started to peruse the article; but had not proceeded far before the mention of his own name and the assertion that the missing man was probably none other than himself caught his attention, and thereafter he read with an avid, if somewhat skeptical interest.

But with the closing lines, a great light suddenly burst in upon him; for he was shrewd enough in a way, and from what he already knew and the various hints furnished in the article, by putting two and two together, it did not take him long to arrive at pretty nearly the true facts of the case.

The supercilious smile he had been wearing died, and his lips pursed up to a low whistle of consternation.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he ejaculated. "It was little Allison playing off as me, and never realizing the risks she ran parading openly into Washington. What ever could have got into her to do it?"

But with his experience in human nature, that question was answered in his mind almost as soon as put. It could have been nothing less than a romantic devotion.

"This guy, Essex, is her steady, I'll bet," he muttered. "And here I've gone and put him in bad."

Even more perturbing reflections occurred to him, however. It seemed certain from the account that, taken for him, his sister must have encountered Nadie or some of his emissaries

in vengeful mood, and had been done away with.

There is no human being utterly devoid of good impulses; and although this wayward brother had not scrupled to deceive Allison and make use of her sisterly feeling, he was horror-stricken and appalled now at the idea of the fate which he could hardly doubt had befallen her.

With a passionate oath, he dashed his fist down on the table before which he sat. "I'm going down to Washington," he swore, "to find this Nadie, and make him tell me what has become of her. And if so much as a hair of her head has been hurt, I'll get that cur, and get him right, too."

Less than two hours after his departure, a couple of unobtrusive strangers called at his lodging place and inquired for him under the alias he had given.

Naturally they got but little satisfaction, as the Kid was not one to leave his itinerary behind; but it might have been of interest to him, had he been apprised of the circumstance, also to know that the same pair had managed the killing of Detective Tuttle, executed as a warning to those who might dare oppose the lawlessness of Nadie and his band.

So, although unwittingly, Ortle, the newspaper man, had by the addition of those few lines to his article actually saved a life.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KID'S BUSY DAY.

THE Angel-Face Kid, more of an adept at disguise than poor Jimmy Essex, made his entrance into Washington undetected by the scores of keen-eyed watchers on the lookout for him, and promptly betook himself to a covert where he could feel safe even from the omniscient Nadie.

Later in the day he emerged as a trim nurse-maid—for no one could more perfectly assume a feminine rôle—and with a borrowed baby in a perambulator trundled his way across town to join the coterie of infants with their nurses always to be found about Dupont Circle on a sunny afternoon.

Little did the mother of that hapless babe imagine what would befall her darling when she yielded to his blandishments and entrusted it to his care.

The flinty-hearted Kid, after wheeling it a few times up and down the street past the residence of Colonel Hone, incited it to such howling by the surreptitious use of a pin that it was like to arouse the whole block.

Other nurse-girls gathered around to inquire what was the matter, and passers-by stopped to look and listen.

"Oh, 'e's goin' to be took with convulsions again!" the Kid let out an imitation Cockney wail. "'E 'ad 'em only last week, an' the doctor said another turn at 'em would end 'im sure, poor, little tyke."

Then agitatedly grabbing the squalling infant to his breast, he made a wild dash up the steps at Colonel Hone's, brushed past the scandalized Wilkins when he came to answer the frenzied peal at the bell, and rested not until he had gained the presence of Mabel.

His purpose had been to gather from the attitude of the elder sister some inkling as to just how much she knew of Allison's connection with the Hodge affair, and also by adroitly leading her into conversation to learn the extent of her fears and anxieties.

Imagine his surprise, therefore, when he beheld Allison herself start up with Mabel at his tumultuous entrance into the latter's boudoir.

He saw, of course, that the girl was safe and sound; but at the same glance he noted her boyishly cropped head so at variance with the dainty, feminine negligee she wore, and recognized that he had made no mistake in his conviction that she was one with the masquerading Hodge.

How, he wondered, had she escaped the pitiless malignity of the gang-leader toward those who sought to oppose him; and what, since she was so

plainly uninjured, had been the meaning of those blood-stained garments found at the Millward?

His relief and curiosity at seeing her there was tinged, too, with a shade of consternation; since having so recently seen him, she was much more likely than Mabel to spot him under his disguise.

Nevertheless, his self-assurance did not desert him. "Fer Gawd's sake," he shrilled, giving the baby an extra jab with the pin, "let me 'ave the use of your bawth, won't you, an' a couple o' tablespoonfuls of 'ot mustard. Eustace 'ere is took with the spasms again, an' the doctor said as 'ow if it 'appened, a mustard bawth immejit was the only thing 't would save 'is life."

And Eustace under the impetus of that pin played up manfully to the situation. Waving his little arms about, and purple in the face, he sounded his vociferous protests, until the Kid himself almost began to believe in his fake diagnosis.

"If the brat isn't having a spasm," he muttered under his breath, "he's certainly giving a dead swell imitation of it."

The child's manifest distress, however, served him even better in warding off the recognition he dreaded than his nursemaid's rig and cap, or the spectacles he wore; for who could expect a pair of women to have eyes for anything else when a suffering baby was at hand?

Mabel and Allison overflowed with sympathy at once; and while one conveyed the Kid and his shrieking victim to the bath room and turned on the hot water, the other raced kitchenward for mustard.

Then while Eustace was being energetically tubbed by himself and Mrs. Hone, and, it must be admitted, almost scalded in the process, the Kid out of the tail of his eye glimpsed an enlightening interlude through the crack in the bathroom door.

Essex, aroused by the clamor and excitement in the house, had come to Mabel's apartments from his seclusion on the floor above, and was eagerly inquiring of Allison what was the trouble.

"Oh, Jimmy," the girl sobbed, casting herself into his arms, "it's a poor, little, sick baby that's been brought in off the street, and the way it carries on would wring your heart. Won't you run down to the drug store on the corner—servants are so stupid to send—and ask them what to do for a child in spasms, or get a doctor, or do something?"

"Certainly, I will," he assured her, "Just a minute, till I get my hat." And turning, he was off to his room like a shot.

"Captain Essex is going to the drug store to find out what to do," Allison announced through the bath room door.

"But you mustn't let him," Mabel paused in her ministrations to Eustace long enough to protest. "You know, he said it wasn't safe for him to leave the house in daylight. Besides, the baby is getting much more quiet."

It was true. Eustace—whether from the shock of the stinging froth into which he had plunged, or whether he had simply made up his mind that it was useless to struggle against his tormentors—had ceased his defiant yelling, and now only emitted an occasional feeble moan.

"Yes'm," the Kid coincided, not without some faint stirrings of contrition, "'e do seem to be comin' around all right, the lamb. We might be takin' 'im hout now, I fawncy, ma'am; and I don't really think it'll be necessary to trouble the gentleman to get nothink."

Then, having the very valid excuse of wishing to get his charge home as speedily as possible, he whipped Eustace into his clothes without delay, and successfully made his escape.

Musingly he wheeled the perambulator homeward; for the baby, probably worn out by its strenuous experi-

ences, at once dropped off into slumber, and thus he was left free to follow the course of reflection.

Nor did he rouse from his reverie until Eustace's mother, the woman with whom he was putting up, came out to hail their return with expressions of relief—how well justified in view of the tragic adventures of her offspring, she little realized.

"It's plain, though, that I needn't 'a' worried, Mr. Manning," she addressed the Kid by his latest *alias*. "We've sure got to hand it to you as a baby-tender. Why, the little angel usually frets his head off when I ain't around; but here he is, sleeping with you just as good as gold. And look at the fine, healthy color he's got, too, from being out in the open air," gazing at her parboiled darling.

The Kid did not think it necessary to expatiate; instead, he beat a hurried retreat to his room on the plea of wishing to change his rig, promising her that he would be down again almost immediately for supper.

But when he had shifted once more to masculine habiliments, he did not descend to the kitchen.

On the contrary, he sat a long time scowling meditatively at a spot on the floor, until finally rising and opening his suit case, he thrust his hand into a cunningly concealed flap in the lining, and brought to light a handful of loose documents and papers, mementoes of various past forays, and which he had kept by him in the hope of some day realizing upon them. From among them he singled out one enclosed in an official-looking envelope—Jimmy Essex's stolen report.

Thoughtfully he gazed down at it, as he held it in his hand. For this, he had committed the most delicate and daring exploit of his criminal career—unquestionably his master-stroke as a crook.

For it, too, he had played traitor to Nadie and the band, and disproved the old adage that there is honor among thieves.

And for it, there was now the sentence of death upon his head, and he was a hunted creature with no place where he could claim sanctuary.

It was a $100,000 secret, he thought when he took it; but it had turned to Dead Sea fruit, dust and ashes, in his hands. Unable to dispose of it, since the people who traffic in that sort of merchandise are very careful with whom they do business, he had still held on to it, hovering around in the neighborhood of Washington in the vain hope that among the capital's army of foreign spies he might be able to find some one who would put him in touch with a purchaser.

From Laurel he had brought it with him as a means whereby to force a personal audience from the elusive Nadie, so as to demand an accounting for the fate of his sister; but that now was obviously unnecessary.

He was satisfied, too, thinking it over, that it was practically impossible for him to negotiate any sale of the thing, compelled as he was to keep under cover by the dangerous enmity of the band.

What, then, was he to do with this booty for which he had risked so much? Something quickly, he realized; for he was almost penniless, and with no one to whom he could apply for money, save those who would betray him to the gang, since he could hardly expect his sisters to extend him either aid or an asylum after the hobble into which he had led Allison by his misrepresentations.

Obviously the sensible course to pursue was to make his peace with Nadie by surrendering the report and suing for pardon; but at each recurrence of that suggestion the Kid's brow clouded over, and he made an emphatic gesture of dissent.

"Oh, what's the use?" he growled. "I never yet crawled to any man, and I'm not going to start it now. Before I do that," ripping out a defiant oath, "I'll tear the blamed old report into slivers, and set a match to it."

As if to suit the action to his words, he drew from the wrapper the sheaf of typewritten pages and carefully scaled drawings, and twisted them vengefully between his fingers. But before he could wreak the destruction he planned, he paused, stayed by a sudden whimsical impulse.

"By Jove, why not?" he grinned. "This Essex is her 'steady' all right. A girl don't 'come through' like she did for him in this Hodge business, unless he's the boy that belongs. Then, too, look how she cuddled up to him there at Mabel's this afternoon. So why not make 'em happy? It's no more than fair, anyhow, to square it up with Ally for all the bother I've put her to. She's been a good pal to me."

The more he pondered the idea, the more it seemed to appeal to him. Perhaps he was influenced to some extent by the thought of Nadie's chagrin.

Perhaps it was but the mere yielding to a wayward caprice. Perhaps it was, as he said, a glimmering spark of brotherly affection and a desire to right the mischief he had caused.

Let him at any rate be given credit for the nobler motive. The career of the Angel-Face Kid was not so studded with worthy deeds, that one bearing even the semblance of virtue can afford to be overlooked.

He gave a nod of quick decision finally, and slipping the report back into its envelope, dropped it in his pocket. Then restoring the other papers to their hiding place, he effected a few simple changes in his appearance, drew a cap well down over his brow, and took his departure.

Not by way of the stairs and under the sharp-eyed scrutiny of his landlady down in the kitchen did he leave, however, but removing his shoes, swung lightly from his window to the roof of a shed some eight or ten feet below, and thence scrambling to the ground, cut away across lots.

It was not his custom, as previously remarked, to give even his friends a cue to his projected movements.

It was dusk as he emerged from the house, and since Washington, except in the fashionable section, dines early, most of the people in that quarter were at their evening meal.

Nevertheless, as he climbed over two or three back fences, and slouched along through alleys and unfrequented by-ways, he kept a wary look-out; for on his present enterprise he had not only Nadie's spies to avoid, but also the possibility of being picked up as a suspicious character by the police.

By devious routes, therefore, and with much dodging and circumlocution, he finally gained the rear of Colonel Hone's house, and learning upon investigation that the family was at dinner and the servants all busy downstairs, shinned adroitly up a lightning rod to one of the second story windows, and with a couple of minutes' dexterous work on the latch effected an entrance.

CHAPTED X.

AT BLUE GUM SALLY'S.

THE window through which the Kid made his burglarious entry opened as he had conjectured would be the case into Mabel's boudoir, the apartment to which he had penetrated in nursemaid guise that afternoon, and having used his powers of observation to good advantage on the previous visit, he had no difficulty in locating from it the chamber given up to Captain Essex on the floor above.

Stealthily he mounted the stairs, pausing occasionally to listen to the voices and rattle of dishes ascending from the dining-room below; yet for all his alertness to the requirements of his delicate task, he was on a broad grin at the fantastic humor of the situation.

Here he was, painstakingly jimmying his way into a house where he had only to ring the bell and disclose his identity in order to gain admission; and he was doing it, too, for a purpose

directly contrary to the one which usually influenced him in his line of business.

"All I need on this stunt," he chuckled to himself, "is a set of white whiskers and some sleigh-bells to turn me into a regular Santa Claus. But it's too far away from Christmas for that," he reconsidered; "so I guess, I'm just an April fool."

By this time he had reached the door of Essex's room, however, and ceased his reflections for a moment to reconnoiter and make sure that the coast was clear, until satisfied at last on this score, he felt free to slip softly inside, and drawing his pocket search-light make rapid inspection of the place.

Hither and thither, he flashed the ray, picking out and noting the location of every article of furniture, so that with the ensuing mental photograph stamped on his memory, there would be no fear of his stumbling over any of them in the darkness.

Suddenly he paused, though, with a stifled exclamation; for the roving pencil of light revealed to him on the top of the dresser Essex's watch and wallet, which Jimmy had carelessly left lying there when he dressed somewhat hurriedly for dinner.

The Kid stepped over and made an examination. The watch was a handsome time-piece capable of being "hocked" for anywhere from fifty to seventy-five dollars, and within the wallet was currency to the amount of over $200—one yellow century-note, and several other bills of smaller denominations.

Enough to stake him, he could not help reflecting; to pay his passage across the ocean, and give him a chance to dispose of his stolen papers on the other side. But the Kid was game. It would not be fair to say that he didn't hesitate; but whether out of pure whim, or from a higher prompting, he did not yield.

"No," he muttered, backing away from temptation, "I'm going to play this string out as I started in."

It did not take him long to find Essex's suit-case, and opening it, to drop in the envelope containing the report. Then with glance carefully averted from the seductive loot on the dresser top, he started for the door.

But this very anxiety to eschew temptation came very near proving the poor Kid's undoing; for as he bolted into the hall, quite forgetting in his haste his usual caution, he ran squarely into one of the maids who had been sent up-stairs on an errand for Mrs. Hone.

At sight of him the girl let out a piercing shriek and, turning, clattered away down the two flights, while he following scarcely less hurriedly, dived through Mabel's boudoir and vanished along the route he had come.

Yet, for all his rush, he did not fail in his swift passage to obliterate all evidences of his visit, even to carefully closing the window after him, so that when Essex and Colonel Hone came charging up the stairs a moment later they not only found no traces of an intruder, but discovering the money and watch intact on the dresser in the very room from which the maid claimed to have seen the burglar emerge, were firmly convinced that she had been a victim of her own imagination.

The Kid, however, did not wait to learn the result of their investigation, but lost no time in putting as much distance as possible between himself and the scene of his late activities. And again his haste causing him to relax his vigilance brought dire consequences in its train, for as he took a chance and dodged through a brilliantly-lighted section of the Avenue the same two "dips" who had trailed "Mr. Hodge" two nights before caught sight of him.

Sauntering along the broad thoroughfare as they awaited the letting out of the theaters they gave no overt sign of the recognition, but a nudge of understanding passed between them and, abandoning whatever other plans they might have had for the evening,

they settled down at once to an artistic bit of shadowing.

In and out through the purlieus of the "Southwest" the Kid led them a roundabout chase—up narrow streets and down dark alleys, by way of all sorts of cross-cuts and détours, but never once did he succeed in shaking them off; nor, wary though he was, did he gather the faintest suspicion that he was being followed.

So at last he came to an old abandoned warehouse down near the river front in the neighborhood of the steamboat docks and, turning swiftly, disappeared into its unlighted doorway.

The two spies, meeting a moment later before the entrance, could hear his light footfalls ascending the rickety stairs, and finally his cautious rap at a door as he arrived at the top.

"Ah?" said one of them, glancing up at a faint glimmer of lamplight which showed through a chink in one of the windows just beneath the roof. "Blue-Gum Sally's place. You remember, 'Keno' told us to keep particular watch on all the hop-joints. He's good for a couple of hours now, sure; but just to be on the safe side you'd better stay here and watch while I run over and slip the tip to headquarters."

The place was, as he said, one of those clandestine dens against which the police of the capital are forever warring, and which carry on a contraband trade in forbidden drugs chiefly among the negro element of the population, although many whites of the underworld are also rated among their customers.

Angel-Face who, like most criminals, was a "coke fiend," had obtained "Blue-Gum Sally's" address from a tout addicted to the same vicious habit whom he had met at Laurel, and now was seeking to replenish his depleted supply of the drug.

In response to his knock the door was opened guardedly on a chain-bolt, and the wrinkled face of an old negress peered out at him suspiciously.

"W'at yo' all want?" she demanded, her hand ready on the knob to slam the portal if any attempt was made to rush it.

For answer the Kid leaning closer mumbled some sort of a shibboleth which the tout had given him, and, after a little further scrutiny she somewhat grudgingly unbarred the door and permitted him to enter.

As a matter of fact, however, his appearance furnished better credentials to her shrewd, old eyes than all the passwords he could have given, for in his trembling eagerness she saw all the signs of the confirmed "dope."

It was a squalid roost into which she admitted him, nothing but a roughly boarded-off corner of what had once been the upper left of the old warehouse with the bare bricks of the outer wall forming two sides of the large room into which he was conducted.

The floor was grimy and uncarpeted; the furniture of the most meager description, including only a battered and rusty cook-stove, a few boxes to serve as chairs and table, and a couple of shakedowns on the floor, one of which half-covered by a dirty patchwork quilt lay a pasty-faced mulatto in stertorous slumber.

Yet the old woman as she stood there in the dull glow of her smoky lamp was even more unprepossessing than her environment.

Skinny almost to the point of emaciation, her frame was bent and twisted, the cords of her neck, where her buttonless jacket fell away from her throat, stood out like a chicken's, her face wrinkled and seamed with the woolly, lifeless hair stretched back from it was like a mummy's, save for the wolfish gleam in her deep-set little eyes, while, when she spoke, the toothless, indigo-colored jaws which gave her her sobriquet lent the last sinister touch to her expression.

She wore, in addition to the jacket already mentioned, only a loose blouse of some sort, and a short dingy skirt beneath which showed her bare feet as she shuffled across the floor.

The Kid, however, with the drug-craving strong upon him, was not inclined to be critical of the source of his supply, so long as he got it. He had been in many dens as bad or even worse than this one in his quest for the white crystals which had become as much of a daily necessity to him as the food he ate or the water he drank.

Speedily, therefore, he transacted the business for which he had come, receiving from the old woman a bottle which she extracted from somewhere among the folds of her scanty attire.

But as he chinked the money into her outstretched, clawlike hand, he paused, sniffing at the heavy, acrid atmosphere of the room, and glanced suggestively toward the figure of the mulatto snoring on the heap of bedding in the corner.

"Get your lay-out," he ordered, producing a bill. "I'm going to have a smoke." For to him had come the thought that it would be safer to spend the night there than to thread the city's streets at this hour, when Nadie's creatures, emerging from their haunts and coverts, were most apt to be in evidence.

Accordingly, while the hag bustled about to bring from its hiding-place her thick-stemmed bamboo pipe and packet of dry, brown opium, he divested himself of coat and shoes and stretched himself out on the pallet across from the sleeping mulatto.

Pill after pill she cooked for him, squatting there beside him over the flame of her tiny spirit-lamp like some witch at her incantations; but it was long before the Kid, seasoned smoker that he was, succumbed to the drowsy influence.

At first his eyes only dilated and his brain seemingly never more awake soared off into visions of exaggerated power and accomplishment. He plumed himself vaingloriously upon the altruistic deed of which he had just been guilty.

All the philanthropists and humanitarians living and dead, he told himself, had never shown themselves capable of such noble self-sacrifice. Savonarola, St. Francis of Assisi, Carnegie and Dr. Pearson, he felt, had nothing on him. The restoration of that report was an act which would live in history, he gravely assured himself, and millions yet unborn would praise such an example of generous devotion.

But as with a glass of ever-widening focus, this expanding self-aggrandizement presently brought only a blur of gigantic conceptions. Consciousness weakened, his lids drooped lower and lower, his muscles relaxed, and, at last, the pipe slipping from his nerveless fingers, he was asleep.

An hour passed. The room was silent save for the heavy breathing of the two sleepers. The old woman seated over by the lamp nodded half-asleep herself, and laboriously counted her money.

But she was aroused by a low, cautious knock at the door, and, starting up quickly, thrust the handful of silver and paper—her takings for the day—out of sight.

A moment she hesitated; then, as the rap was repeated a trifle more imperatively, she caught up the lamp and, with a muttered execration, went to answer it.

Outside stood two masked men, and as in swift panic she sought to bar the way against them, one quickly pushed his foot into the aperture and, leaning forward, whispered a word which instantly brought her into terrified subjection.

"Nadie?" she recoiled, her teeth chattering, her black face ashen. "W'at—w'at dat man want wid me?"

"Nothing with you," the other roughly informed her. "But we're going to have that 'dope' that came in a while ago—so open up there and quit your fooling."

It was an order she knew better than to disobey, and with trembling fingers she unloosed the bolt and then shrank back as they stepped by her toward the recumbent figure of the Kid.

As they bent over him, though, she summoned up the courage to pluck at one of them by the sleeve.

"Ef yo'—ef yo' all got anything to do," she begged, "won't yo' please take him out'n here?"

"Sure," the man growled. "That's the chief's orders. But, mind you, don't you spill anything about this, no matter how hard the bulls go after you. The guy come in, you understand, and then left about twelve o'clock—that's all you know. Here"—he turned to his companion—"let's see what he's got."

With a dexterity born of long experience they "frisked" their unconscious victim, but with a contemptuous grunt at the small amount they found tossed it over to old Sally.

The Kid never once stirred through the entire proceeding. "Couldn't wake him up, if you'd shoot a cannon over him," muttered the man who had previously spoken. "Guess we'll have to tote him."

The two picked up the limp, comatose figure between them and bore it out the door.

"So long, aunty," they called a low farewell to "Blue-Gum Sally" as they descended the stairs with their burden. "And if you value your health, remember and keep that black mouth of yours shut about all this."

CHAPTER XI.

A HELPING HAND.

SHORTLY after the burglar scare at Colonel Hone's, and while the family group still lingered at the table discussing the incident in its various amusing aspects, Ortle dropped in, and with the assured air of an intimate pushed past Wilkins back to the dining room.

The colonel glanced up with a quick frown at this unceremonious entrance; but the newspaper man seemed in no way disturbed at his obvious displeasure.

"Don't bother about me, colonel," he laughed easily; "that is, if it's the presence of Essex here that's fussing you. I've known all along that he was under cover with you, haven't I, captain?"

The explanation, if anything, made matters worse; for although no direct charge had been preferred against Jimmy, the colonel, punctilious of appearances, rather chafed against the idea of having a man under his roof who was in the position of hiding from the authorities.

And Ortle, recognizing this with his shrewd perception, evidently took a certain malicious pleasure in flicking the starchy officer upon the raw; since as he turned now to make his excuses to Mabel for intruding unannounced, he shot a significant look at the master of the house, and added dryly: "It's easier sometimes to break into a dining-room than it is to break out, eh, colonel?"

Then, without seeming to note the sudden wilting of his victim, he went on rapidly. "The truth is, though," he said, "that I have some information for you people which wouldn't wait. Don't get needlessly alarmed, please, but as I started to come up the steps just now, the cop on this beat, who happens to be an old acquaintance of mine, told me he had sighted a few minutes ago a chap who made off in extremely suspicious fashion when he attempted to overhaul him, and who he is convinced came from this house. Of course, the fellow may have only been prowling around looking for a chance to break in, but on the other hand—"

He was interrupted, however, by a startled exclamation from Mrs. Hone. "Do you suppose," she questioned, glancing around the table, "that Louise could really have seen some one up there after all? You must know," she explained to Ortle, "that one of the maids came shrieking down the stairs not fifteen minutes since, declaring that she had run into a strange

man just stepping out of Captain Essex's room.

"Jimmy and the colonel went up at once to investigate, but could find no trace of any burglar, nor anything missing; so we had about concluded to set the affair down to panicky nerves.

"This story of yours, though, makes it look as if there might be more in Louise's fright than we thought, and that possibly the man was scared off by her outcry."

"Hardly," demurred Essex. "If the fellow had been going into my room, that might have been true all right; but coming out as she insists he was, it seems most unlikely that he would have overlooked my watch and money laid out there in plain sight."

The newspaper man's eyes narrowed thoughtfully. "Perhaps," he suggested with a certain relish as he saw the colonel wince, "it was some secret service agent who had dropped to the fact that Essex was in the house, and was snooping around on the chance of picking up a bit of evidence against him. What do you say," he proposed, "that we take another and more careful look around? I've had more experience than the rest of you at this sort of thing, and possibly I can pick up some sort of a clue that otherwise would be passed by.

Without waiting for their assent, he jumped to his feet as he spoke and started off up the stairs so alertly, that before the others had time to catch his idea and join in the search, they were trailing a full flight behind him.

At the landing opposite Essex's door, they heard him suddenly halt with a little exclamation, and the next moment there came down to them the sounds of a scuffle.

Essex bounding ahead flashed up the hall light which somehow had got extinguished, and when the others arrived on the scene, they found Ortle just releasing Wilkins, the butler, whom he had collided against and grappled with in the darkness.

"Why, Wilkins!" Mabel surveyed the man in astonishment. "What are you doing up here?"

"Excuse me, ma'am." The butler gulped painfully, and felt of his throat where it had been seized by his assailant in a vigorous clutch. "But I couldn't help overhearing what Mr. Ortle said had been told him by the policeman out in front, and it struck me that maybe Louise hadn't been so far wrong when she would have it she had seen a man up here.

"So I crept up to take another look, but just as I was about to turn on the light I was startled by hearing some one come running up the stairs and as I stepped forward to see who it might be, Mr. Ortle grabbed me and commenced choking me for all he was worth."

The newspaper man, breathing a trifle hard, grinned amusedly but said nothing, and Mabel with a touch of asperity ordered the man back to the dining room.

"The next time you want to go on a burglar hunt," she admonished, "please notify us in advance, and not get us all excited with the idea that we have run into some prowling marauder. How comes it, too, Wilkins," severely, "that the lights were out on this floor?"

"I don't know, ma'am. That is just what I was wondering myself. Possibly, though, Colonel Hone or Captain Essex may have done it without thinking, when they were up here a bit ago."

And since neither the colonel nor Jimmy could affirm that they had not inadvertently done so on the completion of their previous investigation, that was the explanation which had to stand.

Wilkins shuffled away rubbing his throat, and the party from downstairs took up the hunt for evidence of an intruder under the lead of Ortle.

Nor did they have to wait long for confirmation that the house had been really visited. The third floor and

Essex's room, it is true, betrayed nothing out of the way; but after a glance out of the window and a brief study of the plan of the building, the writer led them almost as if by instinct to Mabel's boudoir, and showed them how an entrance had been effected.

Then, while they all stood about thrashing the matter out among themselves, and proving by practical test how the window latch had been manipulated, he slipped quietly away to Essex's room, and hurriedly opening the suit case found and abstracted the papers which the Angel-Face Kid had placed there in the flush of his capricious benevolence.

In order to make sure that there was no mistake, he drew them from the wrapper, and glanced them hastily over; then satisfied, was about to replace them in the envelope when a sudden reflection came to him.

With a smile which was almost a leer of triumph, he opened the suit case again and dropped in the empty envelope, at the same time thrusting the papers themselves into his inside pocket.

He had just finished buckling the straps of the grip, and rising had started to rejoin the others, when the door opened and Allison confronted him with accusing eyes.

Happening to miss him from the circle gathered about the boudoir window, she had divined with a woman's intuition whither he had gone, and at once had followed him.

A moment sooner and she would have found him fumbling at the suit case; but now, as she flashed a quick glance about the room, she could see nothing on which to base suspicion, although instinctively she doubted him.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded, and he breathed a sigh of relief as he recognized the note of puzzled uncertainty underlying her tone.

"What am I doing?" He shrugged his shoulders. "The usual thing in such cases, hunting around for footprints, finger-marks, any slight clue on which to establish identification. I don't think it's much use, though," with a shake of the head. "Too many other people have been tramping and pawing about, don't you know?"

"Then, too," she observed, directing a searching glance at him, "in order to avoid leaving finger-prints, the modern criminal usually wears gloves, does he not? At least I have heard so, and I know of one case where it was done, either for that purpose, or—to hide a telltale scar on the man's hand."

"Something like this, eh?" Ortle held out his arm to show the irregular, cross-like mark above his thumb. There was the hint of a little, teasing smile on his lips. "Yes; if I were a crook, I suppose I should have to cover it up in some way.

"But come, Miss Marbury," he went on rallyingly, "if you continue to betray so much knowledge of the methods of the underworld, I shall have to resign my post as chief investigator here to you. Probably you have already 'sherlock-holmesed' out the entire system, and are now laughing in your sleeve at the futile blundering of the rest of us."

Evidently he sensed the antagonism of the girl toward him, and was rather enjoying the little clash between them. But if he had hoped to exasperate her by his banter, he was destined to be disappointed.

"This affair?" She gave an indifferent toss of her head. "To tell you the truth, I haven't much interest in it. But if I were really the Sherlock Holmes that you suggest, I know of a case on which I would love to employ my talents."

"Ah? The man with the gloves?"

"Suppose it were? And suppose I wanted to find him?" Her eyes held a glint of challenge. "You are an expert in such things, Mr. Ortle; what would you advise me to do? Look for a man with a peculiar scar on his hand?"

"Lord!" he scoffed. "Their name is legion. I am one of them, as you have already seen; and, if you are at all a close observer, you must have noticed that Colonel Hone is another and Wilkins a third, to mention only those of this immediate household. Besides, as you yourself admit, the gloves might have been worn for an entirely different purpose.

"No," he counseled, "if I were at work on such a matter, I would take up and study every incident related to or bearing on the people connected with it. You say, this affair to-night has little interest for you, yet in it may lie the secret you are looking for.

"I learned long ago in my investigations to put aside no associated circumstance as trivial or unimportant; since in the interwoven threads of human destiny, you never know just where you are going to pick up your clue. For instance, this very job which seems to you unworthy of consideration has given me a new suggestion. A suggestion, too, that you might make use of in your request for the man with the gloves."

"A suggestion here that I might make use of? What do you mean?"

"Well, as I said before, it's plain that the man who broke in here to-night was no ordinary sneak-thief or second-story worker, but a sleuth from the War Department on the hunt for evidence; and since I have reached that conclusion, I have been asking myself the question, why might not your assailant of night before last—you see, I have had the whole story from your sister, and understand of course what you mean by the man with the gloves—why this assailant of yours, I say, might not have been of the same stripe—a secret service agent, in short, who mistaking your identity, and believing that the stolen report was in your possession, attempted to frighten you into giving it up by pretending to be Nadie?"

She turned away in silent contempt, not even taking the trouble to answer him. Did he really think that she was to be hoodwinked by any such feeble subterfuge? Her anger flamed at so low an estimate of her sagacity, and it was on the tip of her tongue to fling out at him with a denunciation.

But while she hesitated, restrained by some instinct of prudence, a springy footstep sounded on the stairs outside, and a moment later Captain Essex poked his head in at the door.

"Oh, here you two are?" he exclaimed. "We have been looking for you everywhere. Ortle, you are wanted on the phone. It's somebody who will neither give his name nor leave a message. He insists on talking to you in person."

The newspaper man with a nod hurried off in answer to the summons, and Allison, left alone with her fiancé, stepped over quickly and laid her two hands on his shoulders.

"Jimmy," she whispered earnestly, "don't trust that man. I am convinced that he means you no good."

He stared back at her in surprise. "Ortle?" he questioned. "Why, what are you thinking of, deary? Look how he has come to the front for me in those articles of his; and more than that, he is working like a nailer to prove his theory of the case correct. He's my one best bet, I tell you—my main hope both as to running down this mysterious Nadie and the recovery of my report."

"You are leaning on a broken reed." She shook her head sadly. "That report is gone for good, and Ortle knows it as well as I do."

Then, seeing a question forming on his lips, she went on hurriedly: "The man is simply deceiving you, Jimmy—leading you along with false promises of aid for his own ends. Don't ask me how I know all this, my dear; but take my word for it that I am making no mistake, and that instead of being your friend, Ortle is really your most dangerous enemy."

He smiled skeptically, and evidently deciding that she was hysterical and

overwrought, attempted to soothe her. But she twisted away from the hand with which he was patting her shoulder, and redoubled her entreaties.

"Promise me, at least," she finally implored, "that you will not act on his advice, or take any step of which he knows, without first telling me."

And in order to satisfy her, Essex gave the desired assurance. But a little later, when they had returned to the others, and Ortle drawing him aside whispered a quiet tip in his ear, he was thrown into such a fever of excitement that he forgot all about the pledge he had given, and dashed off to follow up the intelligence he had received without a word to Allison or any one else.

"Listen," the newspaper man disclosed to him, "I've just been dropped a hint that may be of use to you. The Angel-Face Kid is in Washington, and as I told you, I believe he is the man who has your report. Now, it will do no good to go to the police with this; the Kid is wise as a fox to all their tricks, and he'd have those papers destroyed or out of sight before they ever got to him. The way that I'd suggest, instead, while not legal, will be, I think, more efficacious. Try a little strong-arm work on him. Lay for him, and then when he's not expecting it, jump out and collar him, and get your property for yourself."

Essex nodded his comprehension. "Where will I find him?" he asked.

"He's at Blue Gum Sally's now," Ortle whispered cautiously, "a 'coke' joint at the top of an old warehouse down near the steamboat docks. If I were you, I'd sneak up the stairs and wait outside the door until he starts to come away; then nail him, and get what you want."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CLOSE OF THE EVENING.

It was late when Essex returned, an hour or more after midnight; yet the lights were all burning brightly at Colonel Hone's. In fact, the colonel himself had only just got home a few minutes before, detained at the club as he explained in response to Mabel's wifely inquiry; and Ortle had not left until his arrival.

A great editor once said that the test of a good newspaper man was for him always to be on hand when hell was going to break loose; but Ortle seemed to make it a point always to be somewhere else, and that, too, in the most innocuous somewhere-else that he could find.

So to-night he lingered on chatting with Mabel and playing Chopin to her under the rose-colored lights of the music-room, while down in the dimly illuminated streets along the river front where the heavy, gray mists crept up from the Potomac, a grim and sordid tragedy was being enacted.

Allison had also remained up, uneasy over Jimmy's absence since he had gone out without communicating to her his mission, and spent her time flitting anxiously about from room to room.

Again and again she went to the windows at the front to peer out along the street in the hope of seeing him returning, and on each occasion observed two men lurking under the shadow of the trees across the way.

Finally, as she watched them in more or less preoccupied fashion, she was startled by a slight sound behind her, and turning found Wilkins staring out at the two over her shoulder with a gleam of interest in his fishy eye.

"They've been standing there all evening, ma'am," he vouchsafed in response to the question she put him. "It looks to me as if they were watching the house for some reason. Maybe the colonel put them on guard on account of the fellow that Louise saw."

He paused, then added differentially: "Shall I draw the blinds now, ma'am?"

She stood aside, watching him as

he pulled down the shade and adjusted the inside shutters for the night; and as her gaze almost unconsciously followed the movements of his long, flexible hand, she gave a little start to notice, as Ortle had told her, that the man bore a distinguishing mark—a small, blue anchor tattooed between the thumb and first finger.

"How did you get that, Wilkins?" she asked curiously. "You must have been a sailor at one time?"

"Cabin-boy, ma'am," he answered quietly. "You probably won't remember the Zerelda, but there was quite a good deal about her in the papers fifteen years ago. She was the private yacht of Orlando J. King, the millionaire, and she went down in a big tornado in the Caribbean.

"That was before the days of the wireless, of course, and we had to put off in the boats, me in the one with the owner and his wife and daughter.

"Fourteen days it was before we got picked up, and then, when the tramp, Sidney Towers, bound from London to Rio, took us aboard, there was only two in the boat out of all of us that had left the Zerelda, me and Olaf Anderson, a big Swede that belonged to the crew.

"The rest was dead, and we'd had to shove their bodies overboard. That cured me of any hankering for the sea, ma'am," he concluded his grim recital. "I hung around Rio for two or three years, doing one thing and another; then I came back to New York, and went into service."

The dreamy strains of Ortle's playing had ceased while the butler was talking, and he and Mabel coming along the hall in search of Allison, paused at the door of the drawing-room in time to hear the close of Wilkins's adventure.

"I remember that affair of the Zerelda," the newspaper man spoke up suddenly. "There was some question, was there not, as to how the survivors could have appeared so fresh, when all the rest of the boat's company had perished from hardship and exposure?"

"Quite so, sir." The man bowed. "But it was not entirely a question of physical endurance. The owner, you may recall, went crazy on the eighth day and killed five of the party, including his wife and daughter, ending up by committing suicide himself.

"Then all the rest of the men except Anderson and myself got at a case of brandy we had aboard, and that didn't help them any to weather our difficulties.

"There was one night, I recollect, when what with the fighting and rough-housing that was going on, I doubted if any of us would see morning."

Allison involuntarily shuddered at the picture of horrors which his calm narrative called up, and Mabel gave an agitated exclamation; but Wilkins, as he ended, returned in a quite matter-of-fact way to his interrupted task. His coat-sleeves, as he raised his arm to straighten out one of the curtains, slipped back, and disclosed his long, skinny wrist.

Ortle drew attention to it with a laugh. "You're right, Wilkins," he said. "It was never physical prowess that pulled you through. Why, look; you haven't much more of an arm than myself."

As he spoke he stepped swiftly across the room, and jerking back his cuff, held up his own arm for comparison, at the same time directing a glance of mocking challenge toward Allison.

It was as though he thus defied her to identify him as her masked assailant of the Millward; and catching the significance of his action, she could not but realize that she was completely checkmated, for he and the butler were almost of a type—lean and hungry Cassiuses both, with scarcely the difference of a half inch in height, or a dozen pounds in weight between them, and of practically identical coloring.

Stand the two up side by side with a domino over their features, and it would have been very difficult to distinguish between them, practically impossible to swear that either was the masked and padded figure of her fearsome experience.

Ortle, seeing her expression of discomfiture, did not fail to press home his advantage.

"Yes," he said; "we're cut pretty much on the same pattern, aren't we, Wilkins? Now, if Colonel Hone was only here, we'd be three of a kind."

Again he scored. The colonel, too, was tall and lank, and of an indefinite, sandy complexion. And with the scar of an old saber-cut across his knuckles, he had as much reason to wear gloves in order to avoid recognition as either of the others.

Nor did the matter of voice help any; since in Ortle's lazy drawl, the butler's obsequious purr, and the army officer's crisp utterance, there ran, nevertheless, a strain of similarity which could with either of them have fitted itself to the disguised tones of her visitor that night in Room 514.

Of course she knew that neither her brother-in-law nor Wilkins was the infamous Nadie, while she was equally positive that Ortle was; and she was chagrined and maddened at being so successfully blocked from bringing it home to him.

The chance for a counter-stroke occurred to her, however, and impulsively she turned to her sister. The butler, as if realizing that there was electricity in the air, although not just exactly comprehending the nature of it, had already discreetly taken himself off.

"Mabel," the girl cried with a flash of triumph at Ortle, "you can vouch of course that Wilkins was here in the house all night before last, can you not?"

Mrs. Hone gazed at her a trifle wonderingly. She, too, dimly conscious of the thrust and parry in the duel of wits, was puzzled by it.

"Wilkins?" she repeated. "Night before last? Oh, no; that was his evening off, and he did not come home until—until shortly before you arrived. But why do you ask such a thing as that, dear?"

"Oh, nothing." Allison gazed sullenly at Ortle, whose eyes were dancing with amusement behind his heavy glasses.

A few minutes later, also, he took occasion, while Mrs. Hone's attention was otherwise engaged, to clinch his victory.

"If I were you," he whispered dryly, "I would avoid any similar investigation as to Colonel Hone's whereabouts that evening. Married men sometimes do not care to have their movements questioned too closely, you know."

What she might have answered it is hard to say, for the calm way he trumped her every trick was irritating her almost beyond control; but at that moment a diversion was created by the ringing of the telephone bell.

Ortle at once sprang toward the instrument in the hall, lifting the receiver from the hook; but Mabel, coming out of the library with some cigarettes which she had gone to get for him, called to him not to trouble himself.

"We have three connections, you know," she explained; "one here, another down-stairs, and a third in my apartments. Wilkins will answer that ring from the basement, and then if any of us are wanted will switch on up here."

Nevertheless, Ortle did not replace the receiver, but stood with it to his ear listening until the conversation over the wire was finished. Then very guardedly he slid it back on the hook and faced about toward the two women.

"It was nothing," he said carelessly. "Merely some one inquiring if the colonel was at home."

But a close observer might have noticed that his expression was just a

shade tense, and that although he talked along as usual on indifferent subjects, he seemed not entirely at his ease.

Indeed, one might almost have thought from a certain suppressed air of expectancy he wore that he was waiting for something to happen; and it was almost with an air of relief, when the colonel presently came in, that he hastily rose and made his adieux.

The jealous husband, although concealing his displeasure at Ortle's presence, so long as the latter remained, turned with a scowl back into the hall the moment the doors had closed upon him.

If, however, he was meditating a rebuke to his wife for entertaining so belated a caller, he evidently changed his mind and shifted the course of his ill-temper to another quarter.

"Where is Essex?" he demanded shortly.

"He hasn't come in yet," Mabel returned, "and Allison is really getting quite worried. Have you any idea where he went to, Ethelbert, or what took him off in such a hurry?"

The colonel shook his head. "All I know," he growled, "is that he is making a most confounded mess of things by the imbecile tactics he is carrying on. This dropping out of sight at such a time is the very worst move he could make, creating, as it does, all sorts of fresh rumors, and seeming to give a certain amount of confirmation to the charges against him.

"He is on leave, of course, and can't very well be questioned on what he is doing; but I have it pretty straight that the Department is getting so stirred up with all the talk and gossip there may be very unpleasant developments.

"And then, look," he fumed, "at the lovely position I'd be in. I tell you, I don't propose to occupy the rôle of shielding a fugitive from justice, nor will I have my house made a convenience of in that way by any man."

He banged his fist down emphatically upon the table, beside which he stood.

It was at this inauspicious moment that Essex's key grated in the lock at the front door, and, slipping hurriedly inside, he quickly closed the door after him. He straightened up in surprise at finding the three members of the household awaiting him, and shot at them a glance not devoid of a certain uneasy inquiry.

In fact, as he stood there panting as if from a hard run or walk, his hair streaked down over his brow, and his face white and apprehensive, he looked for all the world the character the colonel had applied to him—a fugitive from justice.

Taken aback by his abrupt entrance and peculiar appearance, the three faced him in silence, and he in turn crouched there at the door, staring back at them.

Then as Allison took a step toward him there came a sudden, sharp ring at the bell.

Essex started at the sound, grew, if anything, a shade paler; but, after a second's hesitation, stood aside with a half-gesture of surrender, and let Colonel Hone answer the summons.

Two men stood outside in the vestibule.

"Sorry, colonel," they said, "but we have a warrant here to search the house for certain property belonging to the government, and alleged at present to be in the possession of Captain Essex. We know that he is stopping here with you, so it will save time and trouble all around if you just show us which is his room."

The colonel began to protest and bluster against such an indignity being offered to an officer of his standing; but Essex, whose hunted air had left him entirely the moment he heard the errand of the visitors, stepped forward to intervene.

"Let them come up, Hone," he urged. "I'll show them everything I've got in five minutes, and convince them they are following a false trail.

I regret, of course, letting you in for anything like this, and if I had dreamed of any such step being taken, would never have considered darkening your doors; but as for myself, I rather welcome the chance to refute all this baseless gossip that's been going around.

"Anyhow, there's no use in kicking: these chaps are simply obeying orders, and since they've got the authority to back them up, all we can do is to submit with as good grace as possible."

As he spoke he started toward the stairs, nodding his head back toward the two officials in the doorway; and the colonel, persuaded by his arguments, stood aside to let them enter.

So, while the two sisters, clutching breathlessly at one another, waited below in the hall, the little procession mounted to the third floor, Jimmy in the lead, then the two officers with the warrant, and finally Colonel Hone bringing up the rear.

But as Essex flung open the door of the room and flashed on the light, he halted suddenly with an exclamation of amazement—for his suit-case lay open at the foot of the bed, and his belongings were scattered in confusion all over the place.

"Well, what the—!" he started to ejaculate; but before he could get out the words one of the sharp-eyed searchers, darting past him, had pounced upon a long, official envelope lying on the floor.

Its contents were missing, and the most rigorous search of the chamber failed to disclose them; but even Essex himself had to admit that this was the wrapper to the missing report.

Nor could he offer any satisfactory explanation for its presence in his room. The upset condition of the place, he suggested, was probably due to a second visit from the sneak-thief who had been there earlier in the evening; but it was manifestly absurd to claim that the envelope had been left there by him.

The two minions of the law, unable to find anything more, put their heads together for a minute or so—then turned to the young officer.

"I'm afraid you'll have to go with us, captain," said the spokesman of the pair.

"You mean—?" Jimmy recoiled.

The other nodded. "That's about the size of it," he said. "You are under arrest."

CHAPTER XIII.

GREEK MEETS IRELAND.

ORTLE, meanwhile, on leaving Colonel Hone's, had proceeded directly down town to police headquarters, and there dropped in on his warm friend and most disparaging critic, Captain Rigney of the Detective Bureau.

According to Rigney, what Ortle didn't know about crime and criminals would fill more books than could be contained in the Congressional Library; while the newspaperman was no less frankly contemptuous of the captain's qualifications for his position.

"Just a flat-footed pavement bull, you are, Dennis," he would rail when the other started to air his theories. "Handling a drunk and disorderly is pretty close to your limit; for when it comes to the higher branches of crime, you're as completely lost as an Arkansas congressman at the Chevy Chase Golf Club.

"Is tha-at so?" Rigney's eyebrows would go up, and his black mustache begin to bristle. "Well, if spinnin' fairy tales f'r the *Appeal* is police work, maybe I am a dub; but when it comes to landin' a man that's really wanted, ye'll notice I'm giner'lly there wid th' bells on."

"As for instance—Nadie, eh?" Ortle would drawlingly retort, and then beat a hasty retreat before the outburst of Milesian wrath which his sally was sure to evoke.

But to-night he refrained from his usual pastime of baiting the touchy "cop." There was a self-conscious

gleam in the glance Rigney slanted at him as he entered, a secretive expression about the buttoned-up mouth, which warned him that it might be wise to cultivate the flowers of confidence.

Affably he chatted along, therefore, deftly flattering his man and side-stepping every rock of possible contention, while all the time he fished assiduously to get at what was on Rigney's chest.

A half-dozen casts he made without success. Dennis lurked cannily in the pools of deep reserve, and refused to be drawn by the tempting flies dangled above him.

But finally unable to resist the warm sunlight of Ortle's geniality, he came to the surface with a rush, and as the other had expected, hooked himself.

The newspaper man, merely to keep the conversation going, had been dilating ruefully on the difficulties of his lot.

"Why, it's got so now," he grumbled, "that people say I'm rotten, and 'going back', if I don't dish 'em up a brand new mystery every day.

"And look at the material I've got to go on. Couple of 'Ginnys' had a cutting scrape over a quarter out at Glen Echo, and a Georgetown girl ran away from home because her mother made her wash the dishes; that's all that's happened in the last twenty-four hours, and I'd challenge Edgar Allan Poe himself to make a mystery out of stuff like that. Guess I'll have to take another shy at the Hodge case."

He shrugged his shoulders resignedly. "It's worn so threadbare now, that it's positively indecent; but with a few fancy patches tacked on here and there, it will have to serve."

Rigney squinted his eyes half shut, and removing the big, black cigar he was smoking, blew a succession of rings.

"So ye think th' Hodge case is played out?" he quizzed tantalizingly. "There's nothin' more in it, eh?"

"Not for my purposes." Ortle felt the slight pull on the line, and skilfully played his capture. "Of course with you, it is different You can take time to work up your evidence, and be sure you are right; but I've got to dig out a solution while public interest is hot, and run all the chances of being wrong."

He paused for comment, and as the detective made none, shrewdly surmised that the latter had adopted as his own the explanation of the Hodge affair which had appeared in the *Appeal*.

Still, gratifying as this might be to his professional vanity, silence was not what he was seeking from Rigney, and consequently he angled anew.

"You police also have a big advantage over me when it comes to dealing with witnesses," he observed petulantly. "What I get, I have to scheme for, and bluff or cajole out of people; but you can drag a man in here, put him to the third degree, and force him to tell everything he knows."

His gaze, as he spoke, was apparently fixed in dissatisfaction on the tip of his cigarette; but in reality he was covertly studying the play of expression on his companion's face, and the little suppressed grin which puckered Rigney's lower lip at his complaint told him that he might begin to reel in.

As he figured it now, the detective's air of complacency was due to his having got hold of some witness able to give direct testimony bearing on the mystery, and he swiftly sought to conjecture who that witness could be.

The list of people about a hotel between midnight and two o'clock in the morning, who are sober enough to be relied on, is not, he realized, very extensive.

"Yes," he went on, running over the various possibilities as they suggested themselves to him, "if there was a hotel porter who knew anything, or a bell-hop, or a bar-tender, or a cab driver, or—" There was no need to press his inquiry farther. He knew

from the quick narrowing of Rigney's eyes that he had the correct answer.

Mentally he reconstructed the scene as it must have appeared to Allison's eyes when she fled out of the side entrance of the Millward, and instinctively followed the reasoning which had led her down the deserted street, instead of around to the wider thoroughfare and more garish light at the front.

Familiar with the locality, he traced in imagination the course she must have taken; then suddenly paused. At last he was ready to pull in his line.

"Dennis," he said sharply, "what did you get out of 'Nighthawk Jack' when you had him up here to-day?"

The captain almost collapsed in his astonishment. "'Nighthawk Jack'?" he stammered.

"Sure. Don't try to tell me you haven't been putting him over the hurdles, because I know better. The only thing that gets me, is that you should take any stock in what an old liar like him should hand you."

Rigney flushed angrily. "There ain't nobody handing anything to me," he snapped, "nor there ain't nobody getting anything away from me, neither. You'd be tickled to death to find out what I know, Ortle; but you ain't goin' to. See?"

The newspaperman laughed scornfully. "Tickled to death to find out what that old coon in the Dan'l Webster hat has been giving you? Why, Lord, Rigney, I had it all by ten o'clock the next morning. He told you, didn't he, that he took in a young lady about two o'clock that night, and drove her to a house in the neighborhood of Dupont Circle?

"Well, take it from me, there isn't a word of truth in any such pipe-dream. I ran it down, and fully satisfied myself that it was only nigger talk."

But if he had hoped to throw off the detective by any such tactics, he was due for disappointment; since Dennis merely cocked a skeptical eye at his misleading assurances.

"Well, f'r it bein' just nigger talk," Rigney observed crushingly, "somebody seems mighty anxious to get it hushed up. Tell me, please, where did 'Nighthawk Jack' pick up the fifty dollar bill that he was gettin' changed around at Jerry Coogan's on Thirteenth Street this mornin'?"

In spite of himself, Ortle gave a start of chagrin. What on earth had possessed Mabel to yield to the blackmailing demands of the hackman without consulting him, or even telling him about it afterward? If she was to go blundering ahead in that way, how was it possible for him to save her from the notoriety she dreaded?

"A fifty dollar bill?" he exclaimed unguardedly.

"Sure," grinned Rigney. "One nice, yellow gold certificate with a big 'L' on it. Pretty soft, ain't it, f'r a fifteen-block spin in that old cab?"

Ortle saw that he had to make a quick move of some sort. "But you're wrong, Dennis," he plunged in desperately. "Dead wrong, as I can easily prove to you. 'Nighthawk Jack' has simply been conning you along to cover up the real facts. Now, the truth is that the old villain drove out to Dupont Circle that night all right, but he didn't have a lady in his cab. His fare, if you must know it, was Colonel Hone himself who was making a hot get-away from that stag dinner the commissoner had raided."

It was a clumsy expedient, but the best he could invent on the spur of the moment; and he felt that at any cost he must protect Mabel and her sister. Besides, if the worst came to the worst, the colonel could be made to corroborate the story, if not for the sake of his wife's reputation, then by simply whispering the one word, "fire-escape," in his ear.

But Rigney's cynical smile showed that he understood. "Not so bad," he granted with a long puff at the black cigar. "Not so bad f'r a hurry-up stall, me boy. And mind ye, I ain't blamin' ye none f'r it.

"These folks is friends of yours, I know, and blast a man that won't stand by his friends, is what I say. But don't think, Ortle," he wagged his head knowingly, "that ye can ever fool me on who was in that cab."

"It was neither Mrs. Hone nor her sister, I swear it," lied Ortle manfully. "If you—"

But he was interrupted by the detective's burst of laughter. "An' who said it was Mrs. Hone or her sister?" demanded Rigney. "Come now, me boy, what's th' use of you tryin' to double-cross me for the sake of a low-life crook like that? You know as well as I do, that the girl 'Nighthawk Jack' took aboard that night was the Angel-Face Kid in woman's clothes."

If the floor had suddenly given way beneath him, Ortle couldn't have been more surprised. Yet now that the cop had unbosomed himself, he could see plainly enough how the blundering solution had been reached.

Rigney, taking a hint from his own assertion in the *Appeal* that the mysterious Hodge was none other than the Kid, and learning, too, no doubt of the relationship to Mabel and Allison, had simply transposed the actual facts, and had the brother masquerading as the sister instead of vice versa.

Still, the newspaperman did not dare betray his relief and amusement.

"Ah?" he felt his way cautiously. "So you're on, are you?"

"Like a ton of brick," asserted Dennis. "Why, it clears up the whole thing in a flash. There wasn't no murder and there wasn't no disappearance. The Kid simply comes here to dicker with Nadie over this paper he's stolen, and registers at the hotel as Mr. Hodge.

"Nadie meets him by appointment in his room, and they get to scrappin' over something, and in the set-to the Kid gets cut. What's he to do? He needs a doctor, and knowin' that we ain't just exactly asleep down here, he don't dare stay at the hotel or go to a hospital.

"Naturally, then, he decides to beat it to his sister's. So, slippin' into female rig, which it's well known he always carries with him, he lights out. And that," he concluded, lighting a fresh cigar, "is all there is to the Hodge mystery."

"Pretty smooth work, old man," Ortle nodded with feigned admiration. "But how in the world did you dope it all out?"

"Easy. I dropped to the whole game the minute 'Nighthawk' came across with his story of the young lady. Then it seems like something 'd pop up every minute to bear out my the'ry; for in comes a snitch with the word that the Kid is certainly in town, and on top of that, one of the boys gets onto the fact that Colonel Hone's house is being shadowed by 'dicks' from the War Department, and that a strange man had been hangin' out there for two days, comin' out only at night. I knew already, you see, bein' a Baltimore boy myself, that the Kid was related to the two Marbury sisters."

Ortle nodded again. "And now," he questioned, "what's the next move?"

"Ah!" Rigney thoughtfully scratched his head. "That's what's been bothering me. I couldn't pull any rough stuff on people like Colonel Hone and his wife of course, with a chance of being wrong; so I'd about decided to hold my horses until morning, although it went against the grain to do it, slippery as I know the Kid to be. But now," he gave a triumphant chuckle, "since I've played you into admitting that I've got it straight, I'm going out there to-night and cinch this case."

"I haven't admitted a thing," protested Ortle.

"Not in words; no." The captain laughed. "But I guess I can see around a corner as far as the next man. And listen here, Ortle," he suddenly waxed serious, "no tipping me off, you understand."

"Tipping you off? To the Kid, do you mean?"

"Who else? Do you be thinkin' I'm goin' up to the White House to make a collar on the president?"

"Well," Ortle smiled grimly, "if you want to know the truth, there's a whole lot more probability to that than there is of me tipping off your intentions to the Angel-Face Kid."

There seemed to be a certain underlying significance to his words; but, if so, it was lost upon Rigney, for the telephone bell rang at that minute, and he paused in his preparations for departure to answer.

A moment of excited colloquy over the wires, and then he lifted a dazed and almost incredulous face to Ortle.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he gasped. "The Angel-Face Kid has been found down on the river front with his throat cut from ear to ear!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXPERT OPINION.

It never rains but it pours. Jimmy Essex, already under arrest for the misappropriation of his firing-device report, was within twenty-four hours called on to face the more serious charge of murder.

That he came to be accused as the slayer of the Angel-Face Kid was due chiefly to the discovery of a blood-stained handkerchief in his pocket when he was taken into custody on the lesser count and to information furnished Police Captain Rigney by the secret service agents who had been shadowing him.

Four operatives, it appeared, had been detailed to keep him under surveillance; and when he left the house so hurriedly that evening two of these had remained on guard at the premises to look out for possible developments there while the other two took up the work of actively trailing him.

This latter pair deposed that they had followed their man down to the vicinity of the steamboat docks and there had seen him enter the old warehouse in which "Blue Gum Sally" maintained her noisome resort.

Lurking a little distance away, they had waited then for perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes until he reappeared. He came out furtively, they stated, hanging back in the shadow of the doorway until he had satisfied himself by cautious glances up and down the street that no one was in sight; but, once free of the place, he hurried off at such speed that, as they graphically put it, he looked like he was trying to do a Marathon.

Yet for all his haste he evidently had no destination or object in view; for after spending some time aimlessly traversing the unattractive, cobble-stoned streets of the "Southwest," he struck over into the Mall and passed almost an hour racing hither and thither along its winding paths.

Once, as he turned suddenly and came back down the little rise on which stands the Smithsonian Institution, the men averred that they met him directly face to face under the rays of an electric lamp, and they noted that his features were pale and distorted, his manner almost that of a crazy man.

Passing them, he shot a scared, suspicious glance in their direction and jerked his slouch hat down lower over his brow, as if to avoid recognition.

After that, for a hundred yards or so, he kept looking back uneasily over his shoulder, as though to make out whether or not they might not be following him, but convinced at last from their actions that they were mere rambling loiterers, he resumed his headlong, purposeless rush.

Gradually, though, his step grew slower, his bearing more composed, and finally, with an approximate return to his normal manner, he boarded a taxi along the avenue and headed back to Colonel Hone's.

Close behind him came the two shadows; so close, indeed, that he had

hardly passed into the house before their associates were informing them that during their absence instructions had been received for the immediate arrest of Essex and a thorough search of his effects.

Accordingly, as has already been related, the order was carried out; and with the finding of the blood-smeared handkerchief, for which the prisoner refused to offer any explanation, the two trailers, their suspicions already aroused by his peculiar behavior, lost no time in hurrying back to Blue Gum Sally's, there to encounter half-way up the rickety staircase the huddled, lifeless body of the Kid.

It was from them that the news of the murder was communicated to police headquarters, and within two minutes after the receipt of the message Rigney and Ortle were speeding in a motor-car to the scene of the tragedy.

Hammer and tongs, the chief of detectives went at the work of investigation, and soon had his evidence so well in hand that he felt justified in making formal requisition on the Federal authorities for their prisoner.

Essex, accordingly, was taken over to the municipal prison, and declining to make any statement, was locked up on the technical charge of "suspicion."

"To-morrow we'll make it 'murder,'" Rigney commented with a self-satisfied air, as he and Ortle came down the steps of headquarters together, "f'r if ever there was a plain case of havin' the goods on a man, this is it."

Ortle made no immediate reply. It was broad daylight now, and his face looked a little pale and weary as he came out into the open freshness of the morning. Musingly his glance roved away for a moment down the wide expanse of the Avenue to where above the green tree-tops the white dome of the capitol uplifted itself, the great bronze statue on its summit flashing and glittering in the rays of the rising sun. He flung out his arm toward it with an ironic gesture.

"Oh, Liberty!" he exclaimed. "What blundering bullwash is committed in thy name!"

The police captain halted and surveyed him with an almost wondering stare.

"Now what do ye mean by that?" he demanded. "After all that you've heard and seen to-night, you surely ain't questionin' none but what this guy is guilty? If ye are," he added explosively, "ye're a worse nut than I thought ye were, an' that's goin' some, take it from me."

Ortle merely shrugged his shoulders at the unflattering tribute to his powers and walked on. He was used to Dennis's testy outbursts.

"Sure, you're kiddin' me?" Rigney glanced at him uncertainly. "No? Then, if you don't believe this fellow croaked the Kid, for the love of Mike, tell me who you think did?"

"Well," drawled Ortle, "that, I suppose, is really a point I ought to reserve for my review of the case in to-morrow's *Appeal;* but seeing that you're so hopelessly befogged, Dennis, I don't mind giving you a friendly tip. It was Nadie."

"Nadie!" The Irishman ground out a string of impatient expletives. "Nadie! That's about all you newspapermen can say. You ring it on everything that's pulled off, like a flock of screechin' parrots.

"Blast me if I believe there is any such a person. It's just a name that you've made up, same as them yellow sheets over to New York did when they hollered 'Black Hand!' every time some dago started out to collect a bit of private graft."

"Bill Tuttle found that Nadie was something more than a name, didn't he?" dryly observed Ortle, and Rigney subsided.

"Anyhow," he growled doggedly, "you can't make no Nadie job out of this. Why, it's plain as twelve o'clock that this Captain Essex is the man. Look how it all dovetails in. The chap was short, so the secret service 'dicks'

tell me; they've got it all nosed out where he'd been monkeyin' with the market and was nipped. He needs the coin, they say, and he needs it bad; and he has this report in his hands. which he knows is good for a wad any time he chooses to come across with it.

"But he knows, too, that it's all day with him in the army if he tries on any funny business of that sort, f'r even to sell a copy is almost sure to be traced up to him; so he goes out and frames up a deal with the Kid whereby it's to appear that he's been 'enrolled.'

"All right; the trick is turned, and fin'lly, when things look safe, arrangements is made for him an' the Kid to meet here in Washington and close up the sale. The Kid as 'Mr. Hodge' shows up and so does Essex; and a scrap coming off between them, Essex being the stronger, carves the Kid and makes off with the papers—"

"Hold on, please," Ortle interrupted. "This is all very entertaining, but just a bit bewildering. The last solution you gave me of the Hodge affair was radically different."

"Ah, but that was when I'd been paying too much attention to you fellows and was trying to fit Nadie into the picture. Now, with this killing to clear things up for me, I've altogether changed my the'ry."

"So you admit it's only theory, then? I thought from the positive way you spoke that maybe you had a stray fact or so to back you up."

"Who said I didn't?" snapped the policeman. "Essex was hanging around in the neighborhood of the Millward that night in disguise we know, 'cause the secret service men first picked him up not more than a block away from the hotel, and just about the time that this 'Hodge' business first came to light.

"That's a pretty strong fact, ain't it? Then, too, there's that evidence of the tall man who came down the fire-escape and walked away with a military swagger. Allowing for it being night, and the distance the witnesses were away, there might be a whole lot worse descriptions of Essex.

"But what bears me out more than anything else," he argued, "is the things that happened afterward. You ain't disputin', I suppose, but what the Kid done a second-story job out there at Colonel Hone's last evening, or that when Essex was arrested, the envelope of the stolen report was found in his room?"

"Well? What do you make of that?"

"What do I make of it?" The detective looked at him contemptuously. "And you call yourself an expert on crime. What could any man with half an ounce of brains make of it but that the Kid come there to get the papers which Essex had took from him when the two had their falling-out at the hotel, and that, being hurried or frightened, he leaves the envelope behind him?

"Then what happens? Why, naturally, Essex discovers that the report is gone, realizes who took it, and, starting out after his man, gets him. There you are," he concluded triumphantly; "simple as A. B. C., if one only puts his mind to it."

"Remarkable," confessed Ortle, and he spoke no less than the truth. Really it was remarkable to him, that with such a twisting of facts so straight and convincing a fabric could have been built up.

More than that, it formed an indictment against Essex which could in its essential points be controverted only by himself; and as this reflection occurred to him, a grim smile flickered for an instant across his lips. He held the life, honor, and reputation of the army officer in the hollow of his hand.

"Remarkable, Dennis," he repeated. "But there are one or two matters which puzzle me a bit. For instance, how do you reconcile all this with 'Nighthawk Jack's' story? If the Kid, as you say, escaped from the hotel disguised as a girl, and was re-

ceived at Mrs. Hone's, why should he afterward have had to break into the house? Moreover, would not Essex have known all about his being there, and have—"

Rigney gave a snort of annoyance. "Was there ever yet a the'ry that didn't have a hole or two in it?" he demanded. "There's a dozen answers I could give to them questions of yours, an' I might be right or I might be wrong. But I know a better way than that. I'm goin' to have Mrs. Hone and her sister down to my office in the mornin' and make 'em tell me the truth."

"Ah, I see." Ortle nodded. "Well, I'm leaving you here, Dennis. So-long."

And swinging himself aboard a passing car, he rode out to the neighborhood of Dupont Circle, where he entered a convenient drug-store.

The young woman who presided at the cashier's desk was just taking her place. Across the counter to her Ortle slid a bill.

"Change?" she asked.

"No. I want you to keep that for yourself, and do me the favor of calling up this number on the phone," hastily scribbling the figures on a card and handing it over to her.

"Say, you are Mrs. Henderson Peters, please, and insist on being connected with the boudoir. Then, when a lady answers, give her this message: 'A friend with most important news wishes you to go at once to the nearest telephone-booth, where you can be sure of not being overheard, and call him up.' Give her the number of this store, tell her to ask for 'Mr. Friend,' and then ring off."

The girl hesitated a moment, but the size of the bill overbalanced whatever scruples she entertained, and with a little toss of the head she complied.

Ortle waited until he had heard his instructions carried out; then with a smile pushed over another bill.

"Now," he said, "when the lady calls up for 'Mr. Friend,' ask her to please call up this number instead."

And he gave the number of another pay-station four blocks farther down the street. "If anybody else should ask for me under that name," he added, "just tell them that you never heard of any such person."

Outside the store, he paused a moment on the sidewalk to light a cigarette.

"Rather elaborate precautions," he muttered; "but then it's just as well to be on the safe side."

As he stood there, too, a further precaution occurred to him; for down the street came slouching 'Husky' Artis, a rough-and-tumble negro fighter whose cabin home was on the Rock Creek dump just back of this exclusive section.

The newspaperman beckoned to the negro. "Husky," he said, "do you want to earn a five-case note?"

Husky, with his morning's thirst unquenched, signified that he did.

"Then," directed Ortle, "stand here in front of this store, and when you see a tall, skinny chap, a good deal of the same build as myself, come bustling up to the door, soak him for all you are worth."

So, leaving his sable mercenary on guard, he strolled away.

"I rather think," he soliloquized contentedly, "that Wilkins will be taken care of."

But, strangely enough, it was not the butler but Colonel Hone who appeared at the breakfast table with one eye in mourning and a story of having been knocked down by an automobile while out taking an early constitutional.

CHAPTER XV.

PREPARING A DEFENSE.

MRS. HONE came back from the pay-station, whither she had gone to answer Ortle's guarded call, and, entering Allison's room, stood looking down at the sleeping figure of her sister.

It had been almost dawn before

Allison, shocked and distressed by the arrest of her lover, had closed her eyes, and, now utterly worn out, she lay in a slumber as heavy as that of a tired child.

A soft mist gathered over Mabel's eyes as she gazed, for in the boyishly cropped head on the pillow and the sweep of long, fringing lashes on the rounded cheek there was a startling resemblance to that other member of her family of whose end Ortle sympathetically and tactfully had just told her.

He had been the black sheep, always wayward and incorrigible, a disgrace to them from the time of his schooldays; but death wipes out many resentments and bitternesses, and there was in her heart now only a profound and sorrowful pity.

Often she could recall having looked down at him in his innocent boyhood as she now looked down at Allison—for with her mother dying at the time of the younger children's birth it had devolved upon her as the elder sister to tuck him up of nights and rouse him in the mornings in time for school—and with the rush of memories she could hardly believe for the moment but that the years had swept back and she was standing once more at his bedside in the old home.

Allison lay just as *he* had always done with her left cheek burrowed into the pillow, and the crisp, auburn curls clustering damp above her brow. There was even the same little trick of respiration—four deep breaths, and then a short one, regularly as a clock.

So peaceful did she seem, so relaxed in dreams, that Mrs. Hone hesitated to awake her; but, finally deciding that her news could not wait, laid a hand lightly on her shoulder, and at the touch the girl started and sat up in bed.

"Why, Mabel!" she exclaimed. "You up so early? And with your hat on, too? Where have you been?"

Then, as the other raised the window-shade and Allison caught a better view of her face, she gave a little cry, her eyes dilating.

"You have bad news for me?" Her voice fluttered apprehensively. "Is it that Jimmy—"

"No." The sister shook her head. "I do not believe that any real harm can come to him. It is of Frank that I must speak to you, dear."

"Frank?" Allison stared, an expression of awe slowly gathering in her eyes. "You don't mean—"

"Yes. There are only two of us now, little sister."

Then, sitting down on the bed, she took the girl into her arms and gently as possible told the details which Ortle had already softened in communicating to her.

Still, there was no evading the grim and positive facts of the affair. Their brother was dead, and that, too, in violent and unnatural fashion—struck down by the hand of an assassin. Appalled and shuddering, the sisters—Mabel's brief recital ended,—clung to one another in silence.

With neither of them was there perhaps the poignant anguish that comes from the removal of a closely associated member of the home circle.

The Angel-Face Kid had been practically dead to them for years, his name forbidden in the family by their stern, old father, his personality only a memory. When they thought of him at all it was with a sense of humiliation and as a menace to their peace of mind.

Nevertheless, blood is thicker than water; and with the tragedy practically right at their door the shock of the news and its appeal to their sisterly feeling was probably stronger than if the Kid's taking off had occurred, even under the same circumstances, in some far-away country or on the other side of the globe.

Allison, as the dead man's twin and the one who had most recently seen him, was naturally the more deeply affected of the two.

Since her discovery of the duplicity

he had practised on her at Baltimore her rancor against the scapegrace had surged high, especially after the finding of the empty envelope to Essex's report in the latter's room the night before. And as she had lain sleeplessly tossing on her pillow, trying to gain some explanation for the turning up of that impressive bit of evidence, it had suddenly struck her that the Kid's reported departure by sea had been but another of his deceptions; for since the stolen papers were in Washington, as the presence of the envelope indicated, he it must have been who brought them there.

And, this much conceded, she had quickly ascribed to him the planting of the empty wrapper among Essex's things. It was just like him, she declared indignantly; a piece of wanton mischief that he would have undertaken in a minute, if only to tease and tantalize her.

But now in her softer mood she saw the incident, as by a flash of intuition, in its true light.

"Oh!" she cried reproachfully. "How I have misjudged him! He knew, Mabel—sharp-witted as he was, he must have known—all that I had been through, and in his own way he was trying to make amends. It was he who broke in here last night while we were at dinner, and he left the report behind for Jimmy to find. Why, it's absolutely proven by the circumstances!" she exclaimed.

"Who else could it have been, or with what other object when, as you know, not a thing was touched? No, it was not poor Frank who caused all this trouble," she muttered, her eyes darkening, "but another, and—I think I know who that other was.

"Ah!"—she drew in her breath sharply—"I believe I see at last a way to establish Jimmy's innocence of this infamous charge."

Mabel hesitated a moment. "Dear," she said gently as she drew the girl tenderly toward her, "I have not told you yet all the bad news that I have heard. Jimmy, I am afraid, has something far more serious to clear himself of than the mere theft of those papers. You may as well hear it now as later, I suppose; so prepare yourself for a shock. He is the man they accuse of Frank's murder."

The girl wrenched herself free from Mrs. Hone's encircling arm and sprang to her feet, white-lipped, incredulous.

"Absurd!" she flung out. "Why, it's absolutely preposterous! What reason would Jimmy have for such a thing—what possible excuse? They don't accuse people of crime without some sort of evidence against them, do they? Somebody has simply been trying to impose on you, Mabel."

The elder sister averted her eyes. "I only wish it were so, dear." She shook her head. "But it would be mistaken kindness to deceive you. You must face the fact that Jimmy is in a very grave predicament. Mr. Ortle tells me that the case the police have built up is—"

"Ortle?" Allison darted a glance at her of quick inquiry. "Then it was from him you got all this information? And you have been out this morning to meet him?"

A faint flush showed on Mrs. Hone's cheek. "He telephoned me," she explained defensively, "and asked me to come away from the house in order that our conversation might not be overheard."

The girl's eyes narrowed slightly. "I suppose I ought to have known from seeing you in your hat," she said; "but somehow I had the impression that Ethelbert had told you."

"Ethelbert? How would he have known?"

"Why, from the morning papers of course."

"There is nothing in the papers. Mr. Ortle tells me that all this happened too late for them to get it. Even Jimmy's arrest by the secret-service men is not mentioned. Besides," she added, "Ethelbert would

have no idea of course that Frank's death concerned me in any way."

Allison gave a little gasp. "Mabel," she exclaimed, "you surely do not still hope to keep him in the dark, do you? I acquiesced to your and father's judgment at the time of your marriage that we should conceal the family skeleton, although even then I questioned the wisdom of your course.

"But with an affair like this, where every detail is bound to be raked out by the reporters, it seems to me folly to attempt to suppress the facts."

"Not at all," insisted Mrs. Hone obstinately. "Ortle assures me that he can easily cover up all connection we have with the matter. We will probably be questioned by the head of the detective bureau, he says—in fact, it was to warn me of that danger that he called me out so early—but he has coached me as to just what I must answer, and he is sure that the reporters will attach no other significance to my presence at headquarters than that I am being asked concerning Captain Essex's stay at the house.

"Indeed, he is very confident that we shall escape all newspaper notoriety whatever, for he believes that the colonel can command sufficient influence to keep out any mention of our home as the place where Jimmy was arrested, and I guess that's true, because I heard Ethelbert calling up every editor in town last night, and, as Ortle says, it's not an especially vital point in the news anyhow."

She paused at this point. "He thinks, too," she went on a little less certainly, "that it might be wiser for you to leave town before the chief of detectives has a chance to interrogate you. He says, that once outside of the district, there is no way they could compel you to testify."

"So, that is Mr. Ortle's advice, eh?" Allison frowned. "Well, you may tell him that I shall do nothing of the kind. Of course, Mabel, I don't intend to inflict myself on you if you don't want me—"

"Oh, my dear!" protested Mrs. Hone. "You know it is nothing of that sort."

"But," the girl finished firmly, "I shall certainly remain in Washington, not only to give what aid I can to the man I have promised to marry, but also to see that my brother has decent burial. Have you forgotten, Mabel, in your dread of scandal, that we owe some small duty in that direction? Whatever poor Frank may have done, he was still our mother's son, and we can't let him be put away like a dog."

"But Ortle has promised to attend to all that," whimpered the other woman. "Anyway, I don't see why you should take that tone with me, or look at me as if I were a cold, unfeeling monster, simply because I don't want to be dragged through a lot of unnecessary mire. I'm sure I am just as deeply affected by Frank's death as you are; but what good will it do him to wreck my position and endanger my married happiness?"

Allison, by far the more clear-headed and discerning of the two, despite her sister's seniority of years, hesitated a moment; then gave a little weary gesture of resignation.

Of what use, she thought, to expect a straight course from a butterfly whose instinct was to flit only in dancing circles, seeking ever the sunshine?

On one point, however, she felt that she ought not to keep silent.

"Mabel, dearest," she said gravely, "I know that you are as loyal as steel, as true as gold to those you love, and I don't blame you for a moment for trying to keep your skirts clear of sensationalism and scandal; but I can't help thinking that you are making a terrible mistake when you accept at such a time the assistance and counsel of any man other than your husband.

"Believe me, since you fear it so, I will do everything in my power to help you avoid publicity in this affair, but let me beg of you to make a clean breast to the colonel, and tell him

frankly everything that you are doing."

"Oh, I couldn't." Mrs. Hone shrank back with a frightened face. "Ethelbert is so touchy about everything that would give rise to even a word of gossip. No, no; I daren't do that. You are not a married woman, Allison, or you would understand."

"No, I am not a married woman," granted Allison, "but, just the same, I believe that candor and fair dealing are bound to win, whether one is married or single."

"Yet you certainly didn't tell Jimmy Essex of your experience as 'Mr. Hodge'," cried Mabel triumphantly. "Well, it is just the same way with Ethelbert and myself. I have my little reserves, and so I think has he."

Allison felt that she had lost a point in the argument. It is always so much easier to preach than to practise. Still she rallied as best she could.

"Reserves which are shared by another man are dangerous playthings for a wife," she said disapprovingly. "You know as well as I do that no man occupies that position unless he has ulterior motives."

"You are wrong," declared Mabel with a sudden show of spirit. "You don't like Will Ortle, and you are ready to believe any sort of evil of him; but I have tested him, and I tell you, he is a true friend to me."

What more could Allison say? Metaphorically she threw up her hands; for she knew that Mabel, like many other weak and easily influenced persons, had a will when she chose to show it, that was nothing short of adamant.

She dropped the fruitless contest, therefore, and merely urged that the other would at least keep her acquainted with any fresh advice or suggestions that Ortle might see fit to offer.

"And if I promise that," bargained Mrs. Hone, "will you agree to go back home as I have asked you, and stay there until all this excitement has died down?"

No; Allison would not assent to that, but she would do anything else that Mabel desired.

"Then you must refuse to answer any questions that the authorities may put to you."

The girl looked troubled. "But how can I help myself?" she demanded. Ignorant of judicial procedure, she trembled at the unknown penalties she might invoke by thus setting herself counter to the majesty of the law.

"Easy," Mabel explained, and Allison readily recognized that although issuing from the lips of "Esau," it was the voice of "Jacob" which spoke.

"All you have to say is, that owing to the stay of Captain Essex here in the house there is a possible question whether you might not come to be viewed as an accessory after the fact, and that consequently you decline to tell anything on the ground that it might tend to incriminate you."

It was some time before Allison could equal the facility with which Mabel reeled off this formula; but finally she was pronounced letter-perfect, and then the elder sister recalling suddenly that her husband must be waiting to speak to her before he left the house, rose hurriedly to go.

As she dashed out into the hall, she almost collided with Wilkins, who apparently was just drawing back from the door.

For an instant the butler seemed disconcerted, but almost immediately recovered his composure.

"Beg pardon, madame," he said impassively; "but I have been looking for you. The colonel wishes to know if you can see him a moment or two in the breakfast room."

CHAPTER XVI.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

Colonel Hone rose rather impatiently at Mabel's entrance.

"You have certainly taken your

time about coming," he bristled irritably. "I sent for you fully twenty minutes ago."

"I know. I was in Allison's room," she started to explain; but halted abruptly as she noted his disfigured cheek. "Why, Ethelbert!" she exclaimed. "What on earth have you been doing to yourself?"

He scowled, and cast a quick, suspicious glance at her from under his brows, but, satisfied from her expression that she spoke in all innocence, hastily muttered his story of the collision with an automobile.

"But why didn't you have the chauffeur arrested for such carelessness?" she asked.

"Er—the fellow made off too quickly for me to get his number." And in a way, he spoke the truth, for "Husky" Artis, having earned his honorarium by one quick smash, had disappeared around the corner before his amazed and staggered victim had any opportunity to identify him.

Not that the colonel was seeking any reprisals. Indeed, he was only too well satisfied to find that, so far as he could tell, the episode had passed unnoticed, for as soon as he was able to collect his thoughts he realized that the attack was the act of a hired bully, and having a very shrewd idea as to the identity of the principal, he did not care to start gossiping tongues wagging with any inquiry into the affair, or the motives underlying it.

Nevertheless, as he stumbled home half blinded, the pain in his rapidly swelling eye was not half so severe as the smart of the bitterness seething in his heart.

By merest chance happening to be in the hall, he had answered that early morning call for Mabel, and, recognizing that the voice was not that of Mrs. Peters, had listened on the wire.

Then, certain that it was Ortle she was going forth to meet, he had hurried from the house and around to the drug store in order to be able to corroborate his jealous suspicions.

But, instead of the proofs he sought, he had encountered only a palpable trick to elude him and the battering-ram fist of "Husky" Artis.

Is it any wonder that his rancor swelled high as he reflected that at that very moment Ortle was probably chuckling to Mabel over the manner in which he had been circumvented?

Later her obvious surprise at his injury led him to revise this opinion, but by that time he was so filled with resentment that he did not need any specific cause of offense.

He turned from the topic of his damaged eye as speedily as might be, and reverted almost eagerly to her delinquencies.

"You seem very difficult to get hold of this morning for some reason," he frowned. "I came to your room to see you before breakfast, but was informed that you were out. Since when, pray, did you take to the habit of early morning rambles?"

She shrugged her shoulders with affected indifference. "Not a habit," she corrected him lightly. "Call it merely a passing whim. I was nervous and upset over the invasion of those secret service men last night, and thought that perhaps a stroll in the bright sunlight might pull me together. I am sorry, though, if you wanted to see me, Ethelbert," she went on. "Is it in regard to Jimmy?"

Not a tremor to her lips, not the quiver of an eyelash as her clear gaze met his. He could not but marvel at the hardihood of her duplicity, and he would have wondered still more if he had known how she was quaking and trembling.

"Yes," he said shortly, "it is partly in regard to Essex that I wish to speak to you. I have managed to suppress the unfortunate facts that he had been staying in our house, and that the arrest took place here; but, owing to an unexpectedly sensational turn his case has taken, it behooves us all to be extremely circumspect in everything we say or do.

"You had better warn your sister that it will be unwise to see or communicate with him at present; for he is, I may as well tell you, now charged with murder."

"Murder?" She gasped incredulously. She had prepared herself for this moment, and her simulation of surprise was acted very creditably indeed. "The murder of whom?"

"Oh, some criminal who is supposed to have been concerned in the original theft of the report. I know very little about it, as a matter of fact.

"There is nothing of it in the morning papers, and Major Peters, who telephoned me the news, could give me only the bare details, so I have no way of telling the strength of the case against Essex. But the mere lodging of such a charge is bound to create more or less of a stir, and we don't want to be drawn into it."

He paused, and Mabel, seizing upon this as an opportunity to end the interview, murmured something about "breaking the news" to Allison, and started to leave the room.

"Wait!" he stayed her, a sudden harshness in his voice. "I am not through yet. There is another matter of which I wish to speak."

"Yes?" She faced about, striving to appear calm, although her heart was beating so violently that it seemed to her as if he must hear it.

"Ortle was here, I notice, until almost two o'clock last night," he began with an evident effort at self-control. Then with a sudden flare of anger he burst out passionately:

"That ends it! Ends it, do you hear? By the Eternal, he's got to stay away from this house! More than that, you're not to see or speak to him again. You're to cut him out wholly and entirely, do you understand?"

She drew herself up, white-faced, and surveyed him with a smile of quiet scorn. She was completely in the wrong, and she knew it; but his loss of temper had given her the advantage, and, with a woman's skill at recrimination, she easily turned aside his attack.

"This is your house," she said coldly, "and you have the right to grant or deny admission to any one you please. But when you presume to dictate the limits of my acquaintance you are going a step too far; for, let me tell you, I don't make friends to throw them over, either at the behest of my husband's caprice or, as you have done with poor Jimmy Essex, at the first breath of misfortune."

He winced at that, as she knew he would, since in the days of Essex's good fortune he had been rather prone to boast of his intimacy with the brilliant and popular young artilleryman. But she was not through with him yet.

"Furthermore," she flung out, "your bluster does not deceive me for a minute. It is merely an effort to insult me, as I am very sure you have not the courage to forbid Mr. Ortle the house or to question to his face anything he may do. Why, only the other evening you came charging in upon us in approved fire-eater style, and at one look from him you cringed down like a whipped cur."

She looked very lovely as she stood there in her trim street costume of her favorite topaz shade, her blond head thrown defiantly up, her eyes flashing.

She considered herself ill-used, and resented it; and in her resentment she seemed, with her tawny coloring and gown, like an aroused and vengeful tigress. Really, the tears were very near the surface; she was far more frightened than rebellious.

It needed only the proper word from him at that moment, and she would have melted in his arms, promising him anything that he might choose to ask.

And, vice versa, the proper word from her would have brought the stern soldier, who seemed to her so cold and stiff and unloving, to her feet penitent and contrite.

Three years before, in the most fashionable church in Baltimore, with the aid of a couple of bishops, and a bevy of bridesmaids, and an army of ushers, and flowers, and incense, and "The Voice That Breathed O'er Eden," and military gold lace galore, they had been joined in holy matrimony; and all the world had said what an ideal match, and the press had printed columns of eulogistic comment.

And now, through those "little reserves" of which Mabel had spoken to Allison, they had come to this.

"Don't let your husband know too much," and "Don't let your wife know too much," are after all the rocks upon which the matrimonial ship most frequently comes to grief; for, as the French proverb has it, "To know completely is to love."

And as the two stood glaring at one another the impassive Wilkins opened the door.

"Mr. Ortle is calling, madame," he announced.

She flashed a glance of challenge at her husband. This was his opportunity to assert himself, as he had threatened.

Perhaps the colonel would have won had he done so; but he hesitated, going from red to white and gnawing indecisively at his lower lip.

Then, turning on his heel, he stalked from the room, while Wilkins hurried deferentially after to hand him his hat and stick.

Three years before they had been married; and this was the parting of the ways.

CHAPTER XVII.

A WOMAN'S LOGIC.

As women, from the days of Eve and the Serpent, have made the mistake of doing whenever there is a sympathetic ear around, Mabel promptly carried her troubles to Ortle.

His call, he explained to her, was simply to relieve her from worry or apprehension over the inquisitiveness of the police. Since talking to her that morning he had seen Rigney again, it seemed, and had been able to convince the detective that it would be futile to interrogate either her or her sister, as both were advised of their rights and under the instructions of "counsel" would refuse to answer any questions.

Also, he told her, by dint of promising aid on some of the other features of the investigation, he had induced Rigney to forego with the colonel any reference to subjects which might serve to disturb or embarrass her.

"Everything else—the funeral and all that sort of thing, you know—I have arranged to be attended to as quietly and unostentatiously as possible," he added; then, his mission performed, rose to take his leave.

But she waved him back to his chair. He was so thoughtful, so chivalric, she sobbed gratefully, and she had been so persecuted and abused that morning that her heart was almost breaking. Then, almost before she knew it, she was launched on a tide of tearful confidences.

Allison, coming down-stairs some fifteen or twenty minutes later, closely veiled and quietly dressed to go out, found them so absorbed in one another that they did not even hear her as she parted the portières and stood looking in on them.

Hesitating whether or not to speak, she surveyed them with a frown of disapproval; but after a moment stepped back, letting the curtain fall behind her, and with a shake of the head left the house.

She had already arranged an appointment with Lieutenant Baird, one of the few friends in the army who had remained loyal to Essex in his fall from popularity, and under his escort she proceeded on to the municipal prison, where, after a short wait, they were granted an interview with the prisoner in the counsel-room.

In the presence of the guards and of

one or two attorneys there consulting with their clients, there was no especially demonstrative greeting between the girl and her lover; but as the eyes of the two met and their hands clasped in silence, it seemed to young Baird that no more eloquent expression of mutual faith and devotion could have been given. Considerately he stepped a little aside and left the pair to themselves.

"I am so glad to see you, dearest," whispered Jimmy; "so proud of the trust you show in me; and yet for your own sake I was half hoping that you might not come."

"As if anything could have kept me away!" She flung up her head. "I am not Ethelbert or Mabel—shackled by fear of what people may say."

"But it is not that," protested Essex. "What I mean goes far deeper than anything of that sort. I tell you, an accusation like this sobers a man and brings him up pretty straight against grim facts. I've been doing a whole lot of thinking since I've been locked up in that cell back there, and one of the things that's been made pretty plain to me is that I have no right to ask a girl like you to stick to a fellow in my position.

"I have no right to ask or accept it. Nor is it only this affair that I am thinking about. What have I ever been but a failure, a football for Fate to take a kick at? My finances, my career, everything I put my hand to, goes to smash.

"And what chance is there, even though I get clear of this charge, that things will be different in the future? As Ortle was saying to me only this morning—"

"Ortle?" she broke in sharply. "Has he been here to see you?"

"Yes," he nodded; "and he gave me a lot of valuable advice, too. I know you have a prejudice against the chap, Allison; but, really, he seems the one person in Washington outside of yourself who doesn't regard me as already convicted and sent to the chair.

"I haven't so many friends left, my dear, that I can afford to turn down any partizan, especially one so powerful as he. What has he to gain by it, too? He is absolutely disinterested, so far as I can see; his only motive a sincere belief in my innocence and a desire to establish it."

"Judas!" she muttered with a scornful curl of the lip. "A wolf in sheep's clothing. Why is it that no one except myself seems able to see this man in his true colors? Mabel is as completely under his influence as you, and as rapidly becoming enmeshed in his subtle web."

"Oh, be reasonable, my dear," he protested impatiently. "What possible end could Ortle have to serve by championing me?"

"What possible end?" she repeated. "Why, to cover up his own wrongdoing, to win your confidence and learn your plans, the better to circumvent them. Oh, can't you realize his diabolical cunning, his— Listen!" She broke off abruptly, noting the skeptical gleam in his eye. "Who was it sent you out on the mission last night that has ended so disastrously for you?"

Then, as he hesitated, she gave the answer herself. "Ortle," she declared. "I never had the slightest doubt of it, and now your silence proves that I made no mistake."

"Well, what of it?" he shrugged. "Surely you're not trying to make out, my dear, that Ortle could have—"

"Wait," she interposed. "Tell me, first, if he is willing that you should make the fact public?"

"What fact? That he suggested to me where I might find the Angel-Face Kid—the poor devil who was murdered, you know, and who was supposed to have my report in his possession? Why, no; or perhaps I should rather say he advises me not to bring that point out.

"You see, my dear, as he explains, it would only furnish ammunition to the prosecution, showing conclusively

that I had set out in search of the man and had a distinct cause of offense against him."

"Ah!" her eyes flashed contemptuously. "I might have known he would devise some crafty excuse to gain your silence. He could deny, of course, that he had ever spoken to you, and would no doubt do so if he was pushed to it; but to hush you up was obviously the better plan. That leaves not a possible link to connect him with the bloody crime for which he should now be standing in your place."

"Allison! Allison! You don't realize what you are saying. Much as you may dislike the man, it is simply absurd to think that he had any hand in this affair. How, will you tell me, could Ortle, miles away from the place, have possibly—"

"How? Easily, through the vicious organization which he has built up to carry out his iniquitous schemes."

"Organization?" He glanced up with dawning comprehension. "You must mean— But, no; that's too utterly wild and fantastic. My dear girl, you can't really be trying to tell me that you imagine Ortle to be—"

"Nadie?" She gave a quick, emphatic inclination of the head. "That is exactly what I am saying, Jimmy. And I don't imagine it, either; I know it.

"Do you suppose that, after contending with the murderous wretch for almost an hour, I could possibly be mistaken? What if his face was masked, and his figure padded out, and his voice disguised?

"What if he has since sought to confuse me regarding his physical characteristics? His intangible personality, his evil, wicked self, that I feel intuitively every time he comes near me, he cannot conceal. I know him, I tell you. I know him. I know him. I know him."

Essex laid a restraining hand on her arm. "My dear!" he expostulated. "You are beside yourself!" For it was incredible that she could actually have had any such experience with the redoubtable Nadie as she claimed.

The shock of his arrest, he told himself, must have temporarily unbalanced her reason and made her subject to illusions. Yet he was bound to confess that neither her manner nor appearance bore out his theory. Her eye was clear and steady; she spoke earnestly, but without any touch of vehemence or undue excitement.

She smiled now, as she noted the puzzled, anxious expression with which he was regarding her.

"You think I'm a bit off—eh, Jimmy? Well, I can hardly blame you; for it's few, I fancy, that have met Nadie face to face, even with his mask on, and have lived to tell the tale. Nevertheless, it's the absolute truth I am telling you, and Mabel will verify everything I say. Jimmy dear, since you must know it, I am the mysteriously missing 'Mr. Hodge.'"

He could not doubt her. There was something in her very tone that compelled belief. A dozen circumstances, hitherto unnoted, sprang to his mind, too, to corroborate the story—her impulsive trip to Washington on the spur of the moment, her arrival late at night, her indisposition and nervousness the following day, the unexplained cutting of her hair.

Yet, it was all so foreign to the theory generally accepted, and on which he himself had been acting, that for the moment he was staggered.

"But I thought," he stammered, "that 'Mr. Hodge' was—was the man found murdered last night?"

"The man whom Ortle murdered, you mean," she corrected; "and for whom I intend to see that he pays the penalty."

There was an intensity to the speech, a vindictiveness in the swift compression of her lips, that caused Essex to stare at the usually gentle girl in surprise.

"Why?" he questioned. "What was this man to you?"

For answer she leaned forward,

pushing up her veil, and looked him squarely in the face. "Can't you guess?" she said. "He was my only brother."

"Ah!" Essex drew a long breath. "I understand now." He nodded his head slowly. "It was that which so utterly broke me up and flustered me last night. I had gone to the place where I was told I would find my man, and as I was mounting the stairs stumbled over his prostrate body.

"I saw at once that he was dead, and, naturally, was startled; but I had seen many dead men before, and on the chance that he was the victim of thieves or footpads who would have recognized no value in my report, decided to search him before notifying the police.

"As I struck a match and leaned over him, though," he went on with a shudder, "I seemed to see your dead face staring up at me. It was a ghastly, horrible experience. I broke into a cold sweat and my muscles gave way under me.

"Involuntarily I thrust out my hand to support myself and encountered a pool of blood on the floor, wet and sticky. I rose to my feet, wiping off my fingers with my handkerchief, and clung to the rickety stair-rail to keep from falling.

"There was no longer any question of searching for the report; all I wanted to do was to get away from there. But I was weak and giddy, and had literally to drag myself from step to step, clinging with both hands to the railing all the way down. Then in a panic I fled from the place."

He paused here for a moment or two, but soon resumed his recital. "Afterward," he said, "when I had walked a long way and had grown more calm, I told myself that the thing which had so affected me was a mere hallucination, that I had been deceived by a fancied resemblance, and I tried to screw up my courage to the point of going back in quest of the report. But it was no use. I simply could not bring myself to look upon that face so startlingly like yours, and yet so irrevocably stamped with the seal of death. So finally I gave it up and went back home, and the rest you know. It would have done me no good, anyhow, I realize now"—he shook his head—"since it was to get the report that they killed him. That was taken, of course, before I ever arrived on the scene."

"No; you are wrong," she disputed. "He was killed solely in a spirit of revenge." Then she told him of her belief that the Kid had restored the stolen papers the night before, only to have them filched again by another hand a little later on.

"It may be so," granted Essex, although from what he had heard of the Angel-Face Kid he was inclined to be rather skeptical of any such altruistic action; "but how would the gang have learned what he had done with it? He would hardly be likely to have advertised his intentions."

"Ah, don't you see how it all fits in?" she cried. "Ortle knew of his visit to the house, and, suspecting his purpose, determined to get hold of the report. Why, I myself balked him in on attempt, I am sure, when I found him alone up there in your room.

"He did not give up, though; but later, when some of his agents disclosed to him Frank's whereabouts, he sent you out with the double object of getting rid of you, and also of foisting the murder on your shoulders so as to shield the real assassins.

"Then he himself remained on with Mabel until after midnight, and I have no doubt found some convenient opportunity to slip up-stairs and secure what he wanted, scattering your things about and leaving the empty envelope behind him in his haste.

"Oh, don't tell me that he isn't Nadie!" she exclaimed almost angrily. "Like a mole he works only underground, but every one of his tortuous, subterranean moves leaves some slight indication above the surface by which his course may be traced.

"He poses as the sworn foe of this

entire criminal band, and apparently deals them sledge-hammer strokes in the exposures he writes of their methods and intentions; but, if you will notice, he takes care so cunningly to antagonize the police that out of sheer contrariety they refuse to follow his advice and strive only to prove him in the wrong.

"I spent most of yesterday afternoon going over a file of his articles," she continued; "and, believe me, they are most illuminating. His reputation, I find, has been built up almost entirely on his elucidation of cases in which the Nadie gang is concerned. On other matters he is apt to be as wide of the mark as any ordinary guesser; but with the exploits of Nadie and his men he never makes a mistake. He even has the brazen impudence to 'deduce' what they will do next.

"Of course, though, I don't suppose he ever gives the straight truth," she qualified. "He is clever enough to slant the whole significance of an article, while seeming to bring out every available fact, just as he did in the 'Hodge' affair to protect Mabel, as he told her, although it was really to protect himself.

"And if you still don't believe that he is Nadie," she demanded, "tell me, please, how he came to know so much about that? How, for instance, did he learn by eight o'clock the next morning that I was in Washington?

"How did he obtain a dozen other details that, short of second sight, no one who hadn't been with me in that room at the Millward could possibly have conceived?

"No, Jimmy; deduction has its limits; and I say that right in Ortle's daily column can be found all the evidence necessary to prove to any reasonable person who and what he is.

"For my part, though, I don't need any such proof. I tell you I know that he is the author of all your misfortunes, and that his was the mind which planned and ordered the execution of poor Frank. Why, his very presence in the room, the mere sound of his voice, is all that is required to call up to my memory those awful moments when his cruel dagger was flashing before my eyes, and to see me all atremble with loathing and revulsion."

Essex reached out and caught her hand convulsively between both of his. "My brave darling!" he murmured tenderly. "And to think you went through that terrible ordeal for me!"

She evidently had him wavering strongly in the direction of her conclusions, even if not yet entirely won over.

"And granting that all you say is true," he questioned, "what good is it going to do us? We can't accuse the man on mere suspicion and conjecture; and there isn't so much as a shred of legal proof against him."

"True," she admitted; "but with both of us knowing his real character and on our guard against him, we are not only far less likely to fall a prey to his further machinations, but we may also, by putting our heads together, contrive some way of tripping him up. There is one loophole at least which he has left that I am going to investigate."

"And that?" he asked.

"Well, if you will notice, whenever any of the deviltry in which he is concerned is on foot, he is always very careful to be somewhere else, to have a perfect— What is the word they use?"

"Alibi?" suggested Jimmy.

"Yes, that is it. But there was one time that he couldn't manage it, and that was the night of the 'Hodge' episode. I am going to put detectives on the trail and find out just what account Mr. Ortle can give of himself for the hour or more that Nadie spent in Room 514.

"And now I will have to leave you, dearest." She arose as she saw the guard approaching them. "Don't let Ortle suspect for a minute that you entertain a doubt regarding him, but keep your eyes open and watch his every move. And above all, dear boy, don't

let yourself get downhearted or discouraged. Clever as he is, there must be some way to outflank this wicked man, and you and I are going to find it.

"Yes, Lieutenant Baird; I am coming right away."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RUN TO EARTH.

It is a curious anomaly that those who seem most to fear the pitfalls of gossip will on occasion ride the road of indiscretion hardest and most recklessly.

Mabel knew that walls have ears, that servants talk, and that the wife who seeks a sympathetic listéner of the other sex is treading dangerous ground; yet, heedless to the promptings of prudence, she held Ortle on long after Allison had left the house and continued to pour out the story of her real and fancied woes.

He bent a grave and respectful ear to her tale, as is the fashion with "sympathetic listeners," pitied and commiserated her; and then with a seemingly ungovernable rush of feeling confessed his own long-standing affection and tactfully suggested Reno and a new deal.

But there he ran against a snag. Mabel, wilful, vain, and foolish, had nevertheless an underlying stratum of Puritan principle which would always prevent her from making a definite hash of things.

She had, too, it appeared, conscientious scruples against divorce; and finding these firmly rooted, he ceased after a time to urge her further.

It was not that he gave over by any means his determination formed long since ultimately to win her. It was simply that he had the shrewdness to see he was following a wrong tack.

Accordingly, after that one outbreak, he made no subsequent protestations of passion or seek to do more than simply take her hand when shortly he arose to leave.

Perhaps, though, his restraint in these particulars was due also to a sudden glimpse he had caught of a strained, haggard face glaring in at him from behind the portières and to the glint of something which might have been an "automatic" in the hidden watcher's hand.

Even a man as averse to scandal as Colonel Hone, he reflected, might be goaded a shade too far; while, for his own part, he certainly had no desire to mess up his hostess's rugs with gore.

Therefore he made his farewells as tepid and circumspect as though he were calling on a maiden aunt, and likewise adopted in leaving the house a rather zigzag course until he had reached the corner and security from an impulsive shot in the back.

An hour or so later, however, he walked boldly up to Colonel Hone on the street as the latter was heading toward the Army and Navy Club for luncheon.

"A word with you, please," he said in his usual careless drawl, but there was a dictatorial gleam in his eye, and after a brief pause of hesitation the officer moved over with him to the edge of the sidewalk.

"I merely want to inform you," Ortle went on in the same low, conversational tone, "that a rather significant bit of paper with your signature on it has come into my hands—a note, in fact, written by you to a more or less questionable character known as 'Keno.'"

The colonel started slightly. "Significant?" he repeated, his eyes narrowing.

"Well, yes; quite significant, I think, in view of certain circumstances which I would like to call to your attention. You know the man I mention, of course?"

"I have met him," stiffly. "His brother was a member of my company when I was captain."

"And you have had dealings with this 'Keno'?"

"Hardly that." The colonel

shrugged his shoulders. He and Ortle were eying each other now like fencers engaged in combat, watchful of every move.

"This brother I speak of," went on the colonel after a pause, "when he left the service entrusted certain unimportant papers to my care—a life insurance policy and some letters, I believe—and a few weeks ago sent me word to have them delivered to an address in New York where they could be called for. 'Keno' brought the message to me; that was the extent of our 'dealings.'"

"You carried out the request, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And notified 'Keno' that you had done so?"

"Possibly. Yes, I remember now that I did. I wrote him a brief note telling him that the matter had been attended to."

Ortle fished a slip of paper from his pocket. "Is this the wording of that note, as you recall it, colonel?" he asked; and unfolding the slip, read:

> "I am sending the papers on to New York to-day as agreed, and would advise the Kid to call at the Broad Street address and get them without delay."

The colonel's face was a study. For the first time he seemed to catch a glimpse of what the other was aiming at, and evidently it appalled him.

Still, he was too old a campaigner to betray when he was hit, and in an instant he had drawn himself together. Also, he came right back at Ortle with what was either candor or an excellent imitation of it.

"'The Kid,'" he explained, "was a nickname by which this young Private Dandridge was generally known in the army, and since 'Keno' used the same term in his conversations with me, I naturally employed it when I wrote to him. "That, sir," with a slight sneer, "I gather is the reason for your description of this note as significant.

"You are seeking to establish some sort of a connection no doubt with the unfortunate man who was murdered last night; but for once, in your search for sensation, I fancy you have overreached yourself. The *soubriquet* is not an uncommon one, I think you must yourself agree."

Ortle's cynical eyes displayed a gleam of lurking admiration behind his glasses — the admiration that one always feels for a worthy antagonist. Still he did not hesitate to thrust again, and even more viciously than before.

"Pardon me, colonel," he smiled ironically, "but the note has many more points of significance than the one you mention. 'The Kid,' as a designation, I will admit, has little or no meaning; but when it is used in a note to a man generally reputed to be one of Nadie's active lieutenants, and known to be closely associated with that 'Kid' who unquestionably stole the firing-device report, then don't you think this coincidence of nicknames is just a little singular?

"Furthermore," he drove on, while the colonel strove chokingly to interrupt, "the date of this missive in which you announce that you are sending certain papers to New York is the same as that on which you actually returned the preliminary draft to Captain Essex, and, by another unfortunate parallel, Captain Essex's office is also at a Broad Street address."

The colonel, red almost to the point of apoplexy, reached out with a desperate grab and snatched the slip of paper out of the other's hand.

"You impudent scoundrel!" he burst out hoarsely. "Attempt to accuse me, will you, of—"

But Ortle only laughed at his furious reprisals. "Keep it, if you want to, colonel," he mocked. "It is only a copy. You don't imagine, do you, that I would be handling the original so carelessly as that?"

Colonel Hone drew back manifestly crestfallen and ashamed at his demonstration.

"I lost my head for a moment," he mumbled. "And, after all, how can

the thing possibly harm me? I don't know how you got hold of that unfortunately expressed note—the devil himself must have been guiding my hand when I wrote it—nor have I any idea what use you are planning to make of it; but this I do know, that I can easily establish my innocence in the premises."

"Through 'Keno'?" inquired Ortle.

"Yes; and also through his brother, if necessary."

But the newspaper man shook his head. "I am afraid you are mistaken there," he said. "Not but what—since I have little doubt he is purchasable — you could prove anything you want to by 'Keno,' if you had been able to reach him in time; but, as it happens, I already have an affidavit from him which very effectually punctures your ingenious explanation.

"And as for the brother," with a grin of malicious triumph, "this private whom you say you meant when you referred to 'the Kid,' and whose papers you claim to have had in keeping, why, colonel, you should really be more certain of your facts.

"I have indubitable evidence that Elmer Dandridge, one time a member of your company, died in Arizona six months ago. In fact," he grinned again, "it looks very much to me as if, when you wrote that note to 'Keno,' you rather let yourself in for it."

The colonel, as he listened to these disclosures, mirrored in his expression a passage through various stages of emotion—amazement, indignation, incredulity—but now with Ortle's closing taunt, he was swept by a very tempest of rage.

"Ah, I see it!" he exploded. "This is a trap arranged between you and that miserable criminal, 'Keno' — a frame-up!"

As he spoke his shaking hand was thrust under the skirt of his gray coat back in the direction of his hip pocket. But the other man saw the suggestive movement and halted it with a quick admonition.

"None of that," he ordered sharply. "I've got you covered from my coat pocket, and if you attempt to draw, I'll bore you like a rat.

"And now listen to me," he relapsed into his characteristic drawl as the colonel sullenly withdrew his hand; "I've got you where I want you. You planned the theft of Essex's report and expected to share in the profits of its sale.

"You were the man on the fire-escape at the Millward—the man who murderously attacked the Angel-Face Kid masquerading there as Mr. Hodge, but spared him then on his promise to restore to you the secret he was attempting to negotiate on his own hook.

"For caution's sake, you had him bring it to you under the guise of committing a burglary at your home, and then you planted the empty envelope among Essex's effects.

"Finally, you are the man—or, if you are not, tell me where you were last evening when you claimed to have been at your club — who sought out that poor 'dope' down at Blue Gum Sally's, and having gained all you wanted out of him, treacherously cut his throat.

"In short," he leveled an accusing finger, "if you are not Nadie himself, you are some one very close to him."

The colonel fairly shriveled under the blast of this denunciation. The color went out of his face, leaving it gray and pinched with fear. His head, usually so masterfully erect, sunk forward on his chest. Twenty years seemed added to his age.

Ortle, however, mercilessly went on. "I've got the proofs for everything I say," he declared, "locked up secure in a safety-deposit box at my bank. What use I may make of them, if any, is a matter for me to determine; but mark you this," he spoke slowly and with emphasis, "if anything happens to me, that will be the signal, according to instructions I have left, for the production of this evidence and your exposure as a crook and murderer."

He paused a moment, then added meaningly: "And the same result will follow if I hear of you annoying or interfering in any way with Mrs. Hone."

Under this crowning insult the colonel's head went up for a moment, his eyes blazed with a deadly fire, and his hand almost involuntarily reached for his gun.

But the flash of spirit died almost as it was born. He was cowed and broken by the dread which the other held over him. With the face of a man mortally stricken, he turned and slunk away down the street.

Avoiding all his usual haunts, he took himself home by a route where he was least likely to meet any one of his acquaintance, and there shut himself up in his room, leaving strict injunction that he was not to be disturbed.

All afternoon he remained alone, his only companion a bottle of brandy; yet when Wilkins tiptoed in at dusk to draw the shades and see if anything was wanted, he could not observe the slightest evidence of intoxication, although the colonel was ordinarily a very temperate drinker and the bottle, he noted, was almost empty.

The master of the house sat in an attitude of reverie, his brooding eyes fixed on the fire, which had long since burned itself away upon the hearth. Wilkins knew, somehow, that he had not moved or changed his position all the time that he had been there.

The butler brought fresh wood and relighted the blaze, tidied up a bit, and, removing the empty bottle and glasses, brought in a fresh supply; yet throughout the colonel held that same preoccupied pose.

But when the man had drawn the curtains and, turning on the reading light, brought in the evening paper and laid it on the broad arm of the chair, he saw a sudden change come over his employer.

Catching up the sheet between two trembling hands, the colonel held it close to the lamp, his eyes fairly devouring the boxed-in announcement which Wilkins had folded so as to show uppermost on the front page.

"Don't fail to read to-morrow morning's *Appeal*," it ran. "Ortle will present the story of his crowning achievement. Nadie, the invincible, at last is run to earth."

An agitated exclamation burst from the colonel's quivering lips, and the butler turned, his hand on the knob of the door.

"Did you speak, sir?" he inquired deferentially.

"No, no!" The colonel waved an excitable hand. "Get out, do you hear?" He rasped out an angry oath. "Get out, I tell you; and don't you come back here until I send for you."

And thereafter, whenever Wilkins passed the door, he could hear the distracted officer pacing the floor—up and down across the hearth-rug, back and forth, seven steps one way, then turn, and seven steps the other way, as if he were chained to a treadmill, until at last nine o'clock came and, either from weariness or because the torturing problem was worked out, the tramping ceased.

Who can say what thoughts filled the mind of the veteran soldier in those hours of grim and lonely vigil, what plans and schemes he pondered to extricate himself from his sorry predicament, what recollections came to him of his distinguished and honorable career, what black dejection at the prospect of the disgrace now swooping down to overwhelm him, what regrets for things done or left undone, what softer emotions of pity and forgiveness, what bitter pangs of hatred, malevolence, and rebellion against Fate?

To every man comes at some period of life the Gethsemane where he must meet his soul face to face and either rise up stronger as the victor or else go down in defeat. And whatever Colonel Hone's faults or shortcomings, he expiated them now in the sweat of agony.

Certainly those hours of travail were not soothed or softened for him by the tinkle of the piano rising up to him from the music-room below, where Ortle played Chopin and chatted intimately with Mabel under the rose-colored lights.

At a quarter after nine a sudden, sharp report caused Mrs. Hone to start from her chair with a little scream and brought Allison running down the hall from the library, where she had been poring over a back file of the *Appeal,* to inquire what the sound could be.

"An automobile tire exploding out on the avenue, I fancy," carelessly suggested Ortle, never lifting his hands from the keys. "At least, that is what it sounded like to me. Stay with us now, won't you, Miss Allison? I am going to play the 'Moonlight Sonata.'"

But Mabel was not entirely satisfied with the explanation and, summoning Wilkins, sent him up-stairs to see if anything was wrong with the colonel.

They heard the butler knock twice, then open the door and enter the room. A moment later he came back down the stairs.

"The colonel is no longer there, madam," he reported. "Probably he has gone to the club."

"That's strange," frowned Allison. "I've been sitting in full view of the front door all evening, and I certainly did not see him go out."

Ortle remained on even later than the evening before, for every time that he rose to go Mabel kept urging him to stay until her husband should come in.

"I intend to see the colonel to-night and reach some kind of an understanding with him," she confided, her lips resolutely set; "and I don't want to wait all alone until he comes home. Allison, you can see, is already asleep," with a nod across the hall toward the library, where her weary sister had stretched herself out on a couch and succumbed to slumber.

At last, though, in deference to convention, Ortle insisted that he must go, and as he stood in the hall drawing on his gloves there came a reverberating peal at the bell, followed almost immediately by another quite as loud.

"What can it be?" Mabel turned to him, paling with a sense of impending calamity. "Oh, open the door, won't you, and see at once who it is?"

He complied and admitted Major Peters and another army officer, both evidently so perturbed that they failed to notice he was other than an ordinary servitor; for they pushed right by him without even a glance.

"My dear lady! My dear Mrs. Hone!"

The major took both of Mabel's hands pityingly in his. "May we speak to you a moment? You must prepare yourself for a great shock and try to be brave."

But Ortle, waiting to hear no more, quietly slipped out the door and closed it behind him. At the corner of the avenue he ran into Rigney.

"What's up?" he inquired.

"What's up?" The detective stared at him. "Do you mean to say you haven't heard? For the Lord's sake, don't you ever get onto anything until week after next? Well, if you don't know, there's only one word I can give you to describe what's happened. It's just plain Hades."

"But what sort of Hades?" probed Ortle.

"Every sort. The Nadie gang went after the Twelfth National to-night and cracked her wide-open."

"The Twelfth National," with a startled whistle. "Good Lord. That's where I deposit myself. What did they get? A clean haul, as usual, I suppose?"

"No." Rigney reassured him. "They would have, all right, for they'd got the vault door almost off; but the night watchman they'd tied up slipped loose somehow and, managing to get hold of a gun that they didn't know was so handy, opened fire on

'em. As bad luck would have it, he only got one of them as they broke and run; but that one counts for a whole lot, because it was their leader."

"'Keno,' eh?"

"No, sir. And seeing that you'd never guess in a thousand years, I suppose I'll have to tell you. When we took the mask off that dead crook, who should we find but Colonel Ethelbert Hone, shot through the heart."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COLONEL'S ONE DEFENDER.

THE next morning there was but one topic of conversation in Washington; and mingled with the universal expression of amazement, wonder, and in some quarters almost stupefaction over the night's startling *dénouement,* there was also, it must be admitted, a distinct note of relief that the menace of the mysterious gang-leader had been lifted from the city, and his campaign of looting and murder brought to an end.

For there could be no doubt, in view of the evidence, that Colonel Hone was the hitherto elusive Nadie, who, breaking over for once his long-standing rule of never joining in the direct activities of his organization, had led his men in person, and thus had met his Waterloo.

Indeed, if any proof of this had been required, one had only to consider the talents, capabilities, and character of the man; for to any one who knew Colonel Hone, it was inconceivable that he would occupy anything but first position in any association with which he was connected. For no less would he have risked so much.

At least, that was the accepted verdict, and every newspaper in town shrieked out in headlines that the infamous career of Nadie was closed, and that the city might once more breathe free; since, as was pointed out, it was hardly to be questioned that without the direction of his master mind the band he had formed would speedily disintegrate.

Only Ortle remained silent, his usual column in the *Appeal* appearing simply as a blank. But this in no way detracted from his renown, and really that stretch of white between the column-rules was more eloquent than words, for, from his positive announcement in the papers of the evening before, there were few but believed that he had solved the problem in advance, and now held his peace merely through a desire not to appear as a prophet after the fact.

A widely credited report was current, indeed, although Ortle would neither confirm nor deny it, that absolute proofs of Colonel Hone's double life had been placed the day before by the expert in a safety deposit box at the Twelfth National, and that it was a knowledge of this fact, together with Ortle's announcement of exposure, which had prompted the guilty officer's attack on that institution, and had led him to assume open command of the enterprise.

Even among army men and his closest intimates, there was no attempt to defend or excuse the dead colonel. His offense had been too flagrant, his connection with the affair was too patent to admit of palliation or debate.

Friends like Major Peters, who had known him all his life, could only shake their heads in stunned silence, and say it was beyond their comprehension. The service was overwhelmed with mortification. It was said that his beautiful, young wife was prostrated by the disgrace and humiliation.

Imagine the surprise created, therefore, when on the second day after the tragedy Ortle came out in the *Appeal* with the assertion that Colonel Hone was a deeply wronged and innocent man.

But it must be admitted that the curiosity and interest aroused by this preliminary statement waned with

most readers as they glanced down through the column and followed the labored argument by which he tried to establish his theory.

"Fantastic and absurd," was the comment of the high-brows; "hog-wash" and "piffle," that of the man on the street.

"That guy, Ortle, is losing his grip," was a remark frequently heard that day. "Did you ever read anything sillier than the stuff he put out on the Hone case this morning?"

"Oh, well," the knowing ones would answer, "maybe there's a reason. It's a pretty watery coat of whitewash, but perhaps the widow will take stock in it if nobody else does. Of course, it's for her sake that Ortle has fixed it up."

Even the *Appeal* itself editorially disclaimed the story, pointing out its weakness and inefficacy, and insisting that it represented the views of no one else connected with the paper.

"While usually content to abide by the clear vision of our gifted contributor, knowing that results have always justified him," said the editor, "we are, nevertheless, compelled to believe that either through personal bias, or from some other cause, he has in the present case developed a prodigious astigmatism."

The hypothesis which Ortle put forth was that Colonel Hone had not voluntarily taken part in the burglary at the bank, but happening to detect the gang when they broke in, had been seized and dragged along with them as a prisoner, and thus became by the irony of fate their scapegoat.

But the trouble was that, contrary to his usual custom, he failed to bolster up his presumption with a single shred of fact or even of probability.

How the colonel came to be in the neighborhood of the Twelfth National Bank, far from his accustomed rounds, he entirely failed to explain.

Equally vague was he as to any reason for the robbers having taken their captive along with them, when it would have been much more like them to "croak" him expeditiously and be done with it.

The only reasonable excuse for such self-restraint on their part would be that he might fall a victim to the bullets of the night watchman and thus divert suspicion from themselves.

Indeed, Ortle faintly hinted at a possibility of the sort. But, since this presupposed connivance on the part of the watchman then posing as a valiant hero, it was indignantly repudiated.

Nothing dismayed, though, by the storm of criticism and ridicule he had invoked, Ortle came back the following morning with an even more positive assertion of his claims.

"I am accused of indulging in wild and fanciful conjecture," he wrote, "and am told that the facts incontrovertibly stamp Colonel Hone as Nadie. Very well; time will prove who is right, and that very shortly, for I deduce that the outlaw chieftain, very much alive, is now planning under cover of the public's feeling of security the biggest coup of his career. What will it be? Watch and see if I am right. I predict that within less than a week Nadie will loot the vaults of the United States Treasury."

But the town merely laughed at what it deemed a bit of stupendous vaporing.

As it was in the days of Noah, men scoffed at the prophet of calamity.

Rigney meeting Ortle on the street that day, thrust his tongue into his cheek.

"Sure," he mocked, "the next job ye'll be layin' out f'r this resurrected crooks of yours'll be to kidnap the president and hold him to ransom?"

A peculiar gleam came into Ortle's eye, and for a moment he seemed to ponder the suggestion.

"Well, now that you speak of it, Rigney," he drawled at length, "I don't know but what he may decide to do that very thing."

If the public regarded Ortle and his prognostications as a jest, however,

there was one person who took him very seriously indeed.

Allison, no sooner had she read that forecast of an assault upon the Treasury, than she hurriedly dressed to go out, and in a fever of excitement set forth to pay a visit to Essex at the prison.

The day before she had naturally remained in the tragedy-stricken house all day, striving to be of some comfort to her sister.

But this morning, with the brief, simple services for Colonel Hone over, and Mabel sufficiently herself again to be discussing the details of her new mourning outfit with her dressmaker, the girl felt free to follow her own devices.

And the welcome of the sunshine, the dancing freshness of the morning which met her outside, seemed to her almost an augury. Could it be that with this new idea buzzing in her brain she was metaphorically stepping out of the darkness and shadows which had encompassed her into the peace and beauty of a brighter day?

Her mood insensibly became more hopeful and buoyant as she sped along her way. The parks and squares were green, the flowers blooming, Washington was like a garden.

Then, for a moment, as the car she was on swung around a couple of corners, and she passed the gray, Doric façade of the Treasury Building, her heart sank, and she gave way to a flutter of despondency.

How, she asked herself, could she, an inexperienced girl, expect to cope successfully with the scheming brain and far-reaching power which in boastful insolence declared its purpose of sacking that guarded citadel of the nation's wealth?

But involuntarily her gaze lifted, and down the wide vista of the avenue rested on the white stateliness of the capitol, serenely dominating the city at its feet.

To Ortle that same vision had given rise only to a mocking gibe; but with her it brought a sense of protection and security, the supremacy of justice, the certain triumph of the right.

"God reigns and the Government at Washington still lives!"

Almost as though a voice had spoken, the trite quotation recurred to her memory. She had heard it shrieked again and again by Fourth of July orators without being impressed; but now it was like a draft of wine to her spirit.

What had she to fear, after all? Could the machinations of a sordid trickster and the puny efforts of a handful of thieves avail against eternal justice and the bulwarked strength of the nation?

Comforted and confident once more, she went her way. Nor could even the gloomy, depressing atmosphere of the prison daunt her.

To Jimmy, as he turned in from the corridor, she seemed like a ray of sunshine with the shimmering red gold of her hair and the welcoming smile on her lips and in her eyes.

He told her so fondly as he took her two gloved hands in his. Her tranquil, untroubled appearance was, indeed, a great surprise to him. After the harrowing experiences through which she had passed since he saw her last, he had expected to find her unnerved and overwhelmed.

"Ah," she cried, "but I refuse to be unhappy! No one has to stay in the depths who doesn't want to. No"—she shook her head as he attempted to make some rueful rejoinder—"I will not listen to any gloomy repinings. It's up and at the enemy now for you and me. And we are going to win, too. I feel it. I am sure of it."

The quick flash of her eye, the assured tone of her voice led him to believe that she had learned something which would prove to his advantage.

"Do you mean to tell me," he asked, "that you have found evidence to clear me? A confession left by Hone, eh, or—" He halted before the shocked reproach in her eyes.

"Jimmy," she exclaimed, "can't you see deeper into this affair than to accept the unthinking clamor which condemns an honorable man unheard? Down in your heart you don't really believe that Colonel Hone was Nadie, do you?"

He did not answer, but she could see from his expression what he thought easily enough.

"Strange," she muttered, more as to herself, "that every one should be so blind. I suppose, too, I ought not to blame you when Mabel herself takes his guilt for granted. Yet never for a moment, even when the facts seemed most unassailable, have I questioned the certainty of his ultimate vindication.

"Poor Ethelbert!" She shook her head. "I never had any great liking for him, nor he for me; yet I seem to be his only champion."

"And exactly like you, too," commended Jimmy warmly. "You'll always take the side of the under dog. But, my dear girl, we can't fly dead in the face of the evidence. Why, everybody is agreed that—"

"Everybody is agreed!" She tossed her head in fine scorn. "You should be the last person in the world to bring that up as an argument. And I tell you that Colonel Hone is as much the victim of artful villainy and misrepresentation as you are."

"What do you mean?" Essex stared at her. "A victim of misrepresentation? Surely, you don't take any stock in that silly theory of Ortle's?"

"Why not?" she flashed back at him.

"Because it's wild, foolish, without a leg to stand on."

"Exactly," she nodded; "and that is just the reason I take stock in it. Ortle doesn't have to indulge in conjecture, Jimmy. Whatever he says about this affair he says with authority."

Essex was obviously puzzled. "But what's changed your opinion in regard to him?" he stammered. "The last time you were here you warned me—"

"I haven't changed my opinion, dear boy, and I still warn you to guard against him as you would against a rattlesnake. Haven't I told you, though, that he loves to make game of his readers, to give them truths or half truths, but so distorted and colored as to bear an entirely different significance?

"It serves the purpose, too," she added, "of deceiving his own followers, making them think him an unsparing foe close upon their heels, when he is really the leader who plans their every movement.

"His articles, in short, have to be read like a cryptogram to get at their real meaning; but I have learned that, however much he may wind himself in mazes of sophistry and equivocation, his conclusions go straight to the bull's-eye. So when he says that Colonel Hone was the victim, not the leader of these malefactors, I know that I can rely on it."

"But, Allison," Essex still protested, "you can't go entirely outside of the facts. Hone was there in the bank, wasn't he, with a mask on and without any bonds or fetters of any kind? Neither does the watchman, who ought to have had opportunity to judge, say that he appeared to be under duress or constraint. To say that he was taken in there as a prisoner, then? Pshaw! It's preposterous!"

"Oh, that part!" she assented. "Of course it's preposterous. It was intended to strike everybody as preposterous when it was written. No, the colonel wasn't taken in there as a prisoner. He was taken there dead."

"Dead?" ejaculated Jimmy. "You mean that they—"

"Murdered him?" She shook her head. "Not in any legal sense, although morally Ortle is every whit as guilty as if he had aimed the bullet. No, Jimmy, the shot which killed poor Ethelbert was fired by his own hand; but he was driven to it by a course of

mental torture so cunningly studied and devised that I am convinced that fiend was able to calculate almost to the minute the time that it would come."

She told, then, of that last evening which the colonel had spent alone in his room with the door closed, while the tinkle of the piano came up to him from below and the man he hated sat chatting with his wife.

She told, too, of that sharp, sudden report which had alarmed Mabel and herself, but which Ortle had so readily explained as the bursting of an automobile-tire.

"The rest" — she shrugged her shoulders—"after the removal of the body, which could easily have been done by way of the side-veranda roof, was of course purely a question of clever stage-management."

Essex was manifestly impressed. "If only there was some tangible proof," he frowned. "You heard the report of course, but it is so hard to be certain of the exact character of a sound. Some corroborating link, no matter how small, would give weight and value to that testimony. But we have nothing—nothing."

"You are wrong," she rejoined. "We have this." And, thrusting her hand into the pocket of her long coat, she drew out a small automatic revolver which Essex recognized as having belonged to Colonel Hone.

"I found it," she explained, "in Ethelbert's room. It had fallen or been kicked under his desk."

Jimmy took it from her and made a hasty examination. It was of .32 caliber, he noted, and one cartridge was missing from the magazine.

Sending a guard back to his cell for a newspaper containing an account of the interrupted bank burglary, he glanced hurriedly through it, and then with some excitement pointed out a paragraph to Allison.

It stated that the revolver with which the night-watchman had driven off the gang was a .44.

"By Jove, little girl," he muttered, "if your theory is correct we're in a fair way of being able to prove it; and not only that, but to put this night-watchman in a position where to save his own skin he'll have to deliver some one higher up."

CHAPTER XX.

REMANDED WITHOUT BAIL.

Essex's preliminary hearing was set for that afternoon; and although the more sensational affair at the Twelfth National Bank had rather eclipsed the murder of the Angel-Face Kid in public interest, still the court-room was crowded when the young officer was brought to the bar.

Casting his eyes over the throng, Jimmy saw there many whom he knew —fashionable woman who had been proud to have him at their receptions and dinners, girls and young matrons with whom he had danced many an evening away, politicians, club associates, officers from both branches of the service, attachés of foreign legations; yet in all that assemblage, so representative in its heterogeneous components of the Washington in which he had lived, moved, and had his being, he failed to find one genuinely friendly face.

Eyes were averted as he sought to meet them, or else his glance encountered only the curious, detached stare which one might bestow on a caged animal in a zoo.

Essex understood. They were there merely for entertainment, to watch whether he trembled or flushed, was perturbed or "brazen"; and to-night at various dinner tables his conduct and bearing would form a subject of interested conversation, very much as if he were a circus performer essaying some hazardous feat. In short, he was being butchered for a society holiday.

And at this thought his neck stiffened up, he turned his back on the battery of morbidly curious eyes, and

thereafter devoted himself exclusively to the witnesses and the little squabbles between the opposing counsel.

Essex, knowing that he was bound to be held for trial in any event, had desired to waive examination, but in this had been overruled by his attorney, who said that he wanted the opportunity to feel out the witnesses for the prosecution.

No defense was to be interposed, though, as it would serve no good purpose, the lawyer said, and would only give away their own hand.

"What hand?" Jimmy had inquired cynically.

"Well"—the attorney grinned ruefully—"it would give away our hand, if we had any to give away. By Jove, captain, unless you permit me to call in alienists and tackle it along that line, I don't know what we are going to do! You certainly had enough stress of mind over the disappearance of that report to turn anybody's brain."

But Jimmy had obstinately refused even to listen to the suggestion.

"All right; have it your own way." The lawyer shrugged his shoulders. "But don't blame me for results. Ortle's jeers at the police in regard to your case have made them simply determined to get a conviction, and you'll find that against the stone wall they are building up a certificate of previous good character and your own unsupported denial aren't going to amount to much. As I say, I don't know what we are going to do, unless," with a faint hope, "you happen to have an unsuspected ace up your sleeve."

Essex, since his last interview with Allison, did have an unsuspected ace up his sleeve, but he didn't think best to tell the lawyer about it. He had an idea that the latter would not altogether approve.

So he merely smiled, and said that perhaps it would be better to wait until after the preliminary examination before they settled definitely on anything.

Consequently, the unfortunate barrister was thrashing around now like a man lost in a fog, brow-beating the witnesses, and hammering at them over immaterial points in the hope of turning up something of value to his client, while Jimmy sat back and watched his frenzied efforts in quiet amusement.

Ortle came in late and took a seat at the press table, but he made no notes, and betrayed but little concern in the proceedings, leaning back for the most part with an air of bored preoccupation.

When Blue Gum Sally took the stand, though, he aroused to a sudden interest, and penciling a line on a scrap of paper, passed it across to Essex's attorney.

The latter glanced at the note. "Ask her," he read, "how she came to admit to her establishment a perfect stranger like the Kid?"

The suggestion struck the attorney favorably, since he was trying to make a point of the fact that the prosecution had utterly failed to show how Essex could have known of the whereabouts of his alleged victim.

Also, there was a possible chance that the nature of the Kid's introduction to the place might bring out some new figure or other motives than those so far developed in the case.

But the question proved to be loaded with dynamite. "He weren't no puffeck stranger," contended Blue Gum Sally. "Dis yere man"—pointing to Essex—"brung him to my house two nights afo', all cyahved up an' bleedin' like a stuck hawg, an' paid me to take keer on him."

Thus she established the contention of the prosecution that it was Essex who had attacked the Kid in the guise of "Mr. Hodge," and had only failed to murder him then on account of the surrender of the report.

The implication was of course, too, that, finding the report stolen from him a second time, Jimmy had known right where to go to find the purloiner, and this time had adopted no half-way measures.

Evidently the old negress had been coached for her testimony; and that,

moreover, by some one who wanted to put Essex in the hole.

The lawyer almost collapsed, and a derisive titter ran around the press table over the expression of discomfiture on Ortle's face as he realized the character of the boomerang he had been instrumental in launching.

It proved, indeed, the hardest blow dealt to the defense throughout the entire session; for, under the pounding of Jimmy's attorney, the rest of the witnesses made no very strong impression. As a matter of fact, the animus of the police showed up so strong in the case that the magistrate, in summing up, commented on it.

"Were I a juror trying this cause on final issue," he said, "I should be inclined to question very strongly some of the evidence which has been adduced before me; but sitting here merely to determine whether there is probable cause to believe the defendant guilty, I have very little option in the premises.

"The salient facts that Essex was at the scene of the murder at about the time it was committed, that he came away acting in a suspicious manner, and that the blood-stained handkerchief was found in his possession have neither been rebutted nor explained, and I shall therefore bind the prisoner over to await the action of the grand jury.

"I am free to say, though," he added severely, "that there are manifest ear-marks to me of an undue zeal on the part of the detective bureau, especially in the attempt to establish a motive, which cause me to question whether the affair may not be a frame-up; and I wish to warn the officers concerned that I will not tolerate such methods for a moment."

Encouraged by this expression of opinion, Essex's attorney was instantly on his feet urging that his client be admitted to bail, to which the prosecutor entered strong opposition, demanding that the usual course in first degree murder cases be followed and the defendant remanded.

They wrangled over the point for five or ten minutes, waxing quite heated in their arguments and drawing to themselves the attention of every one in the court-room, until finally the justice brought them to time with a tap of his gavel.

"The usual course will be pursued," he decided, "and the defendant remanded without bail. Officer, take charge of your prisoner."

The guard who had brought Jimmy over to court turned leisurely about, still grinning over the recriminations of counsel; then suddenly his face grew blank, and he stared about him in bewilderment.

The magistrate, arrested by that fixed stare, also looked blank. The two attorneys faced about and followed suit. The spectators, starting to leave the court-room, and the newspapermen, gathering up their bunches of copy, halted and gazed, too, in wondering amazement.

"Why," gasped the guard, "he ain't here! He's gone!"

It was true. The dock stood empty. Essex had disappeared. Nor, although swift search was made, could he be found anywhere about the court-house.

The magistrate banged angrily down on his desk, stilling the rising excitement. Excoriating the luckless guard in half a dozen words, he turned his attention then to the recapture of the fugitive and sent men scurrying out to scour the city, with orders to find him and bring him in at once.

Essex's attorneys, swearing a blue streak, turned to Ortle, who was standing close beside him.

"Now, what do you think of that?" he stormed. "If the headstrong fool ever had a chance, he's killed it by an insane move like this. And he kicked, too, when I wanted to call for a commission in lunacy. He can't get away. They're sure to catch him.

"But what gravels me more than anything else is how he managed to do it. Why, he was talking to me only a minute before. Then I saw everybody

staring, and found that he was gone. How did he ever do it?"

"Oh, that was easy enough!" Ortle grinned satirically. "It's been done in more than a hundred court-rooms. There was a case of the kind pulled off in New York not long ago, I remember. He simply took advantage of the psychological moment when everybody was watching you and the D. A. spouting at each other and quietly walked out."

"And what do you suppose he intends to do now?"

"Search me!" Ortle laughed as he sauntered away. "I can pretty well deduce, though," he muttered to himself; "and I don't believe there's one chance in a hundred that I am wrong."

And with that he started post-haste for police headquarters and the office of the chief of detectives.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHIEF'S CALLERS.

CAPTAIN RIGNEY, just informed of the incident at the court house, was excitedly bellowing orders over the phone to his minions to watch all railroad stations, trolley lines, and other means of exit from the city, when a subordinate interrupted him.

"Captain Essex to see you, sir."

The chief of detectives turned savagely, his wattles reddening at the suspicion of a practical joke.

"Who?" he thundered, preparing to launch his thunderbolts at the head of the daring offender. But the innocent mien of the messenger reassured him.

"Who?" he repeated less menacingly.

"Captain Essex, sir. Him and a lady."

Rigney had made his way up from pavement-pounding largely through a certain mental agility—coupled with a tremendous capacity to bluff—and he turned a series of mental flip-flaps.

"Tell 'em," he grinned, "that I shall be plazed to see 'em." Then he waited curiously to see whether it was a hoax or a hold-up that he was to encounter.

Yet for all his eagerness to secure and restore the escaped prisoner, it was—trust an Irishman for that—the lady at whom he glanced first as the pair were ushered into his office.

She was Miss Marbury. Veiled though she was, he readily recognized the slender, graceful figure and daintily held head; and, reassured by her presence, he unostentatiously slipped back into his pocket the revolver he had drawn in view of possible emergency.

He turned then to Jimmy coldly, with a frown of outraged authority.

"An' now will ye inform me, sir," he inquired, "f'r why ye have took all this trouble an' have stood the entire po-lice department on its head merely to pay a friendly call on me, when 'tis meself would have done you the same courtesy any time you axed it?"

It was the girl, however, who pushed forward quickly to answer, thrusting up her veil as she spoke, and disarming him of his sternness by the sweetness of her smile.

"You will have to blame me for that, I am afraid, captain," she pleaded; "for it was I who urged him to it. We foresaw that in the confusion at the end of the trial there would probably be an opportunity for him to escape, and I have been waiting with a motor car down in front of the court house all afternoon, so as to bring him at once to you."

"But f'r why?" persisted Rigney. "Didn't ye both know that I'd 'a' come to him?"

"Ah!" she explained. "But that would have been different, don't you see? The story of a prisoner to his jailer may be credited, or it may not; but when a man already at liberty voluntarily returns and gives information he is apt, is he not, to receive a fair hearing?"

Rigney nodded his comprehension.

"Not so bad that, f'r an idee," he

granted with a gleam of admiration for her shrewdness in his blue-gray eyes.

"And a fair hearing is what Captain Essex has to have," she went on: "for your lip will start to curl the minute he commences to speak. He is going to tell you who Nadie is, and how you may lay hands on him."

She was not mistaken. At the mention of the name the detective gave a gesture of quick impatience. "Some of that Ortle stuff, eh?" he snapped. "Excuse me, miss, but you'd better take that story to the *Appeal*. The police ain't botherin' any about Nadie these days."

His hand, she saw, was moving along the edge of the desk toward the push-button at his right. She would have to catch his interest at once, or Jimmy's chance would be gone.

Quickly she thrust her hand into the pocket of her coat and drew out an envelope, from which she shook down upon his desk a small, twisted lump of lead.

"Do you know what that is?" she demanded, holding him steady with her eyes. "That is the bullet which killed Colonel Hone; I got it this afternoon from the surgeon who performed the autopsy. It is from a .32 caliber cartridge, as you can easily determine by examining it. Now, you have the revolver here, I know, that was used by Dunston, the night watchman. Tell me, please, what size cartridge it calls for?"

"Eh?" There was no question in her mind now but that she had caught his interest. Then his glance narrowed with a sudden suspicion. "How do I know," he sneered, "but what you have shifted the cut on me?"

"Substituted another bullet, do you mean?"

He nodded. "You are smooth enough to have thought of it."

She realized that he was paying her a compliment according to his lights, and took it without offense.

"I was smooth enough, too, then," she smiled back at him, "to have the character of that bullet fully determined and identified by three disinterested witnesses before I ever permitted it to pass into my hands."

He laughed with warm approval at that, and she knew that finally she had won him.

"All right." He leaned back in his chair. "I'll be the goat. Tell me who Nadie is."

"That is Captain Essex's story," she said. "He can tell it far better than I." And, waving a hand toward Jimmy, she signaled him to begin.

"You must understand, then, captain," Essex began a trifle didactically, "that in arriving at the conclusions I have reached I have been compelled to consider the distinctive features of three separate cases—my own, the so-called Hodge affair, and the killing of Colonel Hone.

"And, although I term these separate cases, I think I shall be able to show you before I am through that they are in reality very closely related, if not actually interdependent—far more so, I am sure, than the police department or yourself have hitherto had any conception."

Jimmy, who had once been an instructor at West Point, had all the manner of explaining a mathematical demonstration to a class of backward students, and Allison, as she listened to him rolling out his turgid sentences, was manifestly on pins and needles.

Rigney's eyes were closing as he sat back in his chair, and his attention evidently wavering. With a quick decision she flung herself into the breach.

"Separate cases, you understand, captain," she interrupted, "but all of them planned and executed by—Ortle!"

Jimmy showed a little touch of justifiable annoyance at having the sequence of his recital thus disarranged.

"I think that might have come out better a little later, my dear," he said disapprovingly.

The toppling down of the story's carefully planned climax, however, served effectually to awaken Rigney. His eyes opened with a snap; he bent forward over the desk, opening and closing his thick fingers; the expression on his face was like that of a cat which has just spied a particularly tempting mouse frolicking within reach of its spring.

"Ortle, 'd ye say?" His voice reverberated deep in his throat like a purr of pleasure. "Ortle, eh?" A glint of anxiety suddenly touched his manifest elation. "But are ye sure that ye've got him cinched?" he asked. "How do ye know it's Ortle?"

It was noticeable that he paid no further heed to Essex, but put his eager questions directly to the girl.

"How do ye know for certain that it's him?" he repeated.

"How do I know, captain? Wouldn't you know the man who had held you helpless, slashing a dirk-knife back and forth in front of your face as he tried to see how near he could come without leaving his mark, and who finally by a misstroke did leave his mark deep enough to draw the blood?"

"What's that?" His brow grew black at the thought of the beautiful girl before him exposed to such an ordeal.

It was a good thing for the expert in crime that he was not at that moment within reach of that sturdy arm and those thick, clutching fingers.

"Ortle drew a knife on ye, ye say? When, ma'am? When and where?"

"Six nights ago, in Room 514 at the Millward."

He stared at her in thunderstruck amazement. "Then you were—" He gasped, failing to finish the sentence.

"Yes," she assented. "I was the mysterious Mr. Hodge."

Rigney closed his gaping mouth and half-dropped his lids to veil the too-patent astonishment in his eyes. A detective should never permit himself to be regarded as other than omniscient; and, like Napoleon, Dennis believed in eternally maintaining his pose.

"Ah, yes." He nodded with an air of profundity. "So, ye admit it, do ye? Well, ye don't surprise me none. That was me own the'ry all the time."

After that, too, he was very careful not to be caught napping again. There were many things the girl had to tell him that took him fairly off his feet: but never once did he betray by even the flicker of a muscle that it was to him other than a twice-told tale —a mere corroboration of his own ideas and suspicions.

Yet, once having caught her lead, it cannot be denied that he played up to the situation in most helpful style, seeming to grasp the points of the case as by instinct, and strengthening many a doubtful issue by means of his shrewd questions and suggestions.

We are all apt to scoff at the walrus-mustached "bulls" of our Central Offices, to call them bone-headed and incompetent; but, after all, professionalism counts there as elsewhere, and the most bungling among them will catch and convict a crook ten times sooner than the smartest college professor in the country. Taking it by and large, one has to admit that the police generally get their man.

Certain it is that by simply talking it out with Rigney, Allison found the hypothesis she had built up amazingly improved and clarified.

What she offered as mere conjecture or belief crystallized in many instances under his skilful handling into legal evidence capable of withstanding the test of the courts. And, moreover, the interrogation to which he subjected her served the further purpose of convincing him.

Skeptical at the start, unwilling to concede that he could so long have been blind to what was practically under his nose, he became, before they got through, as certain of Ortle's knavery and as keen to prove it as she.

"We've got him!" He finally

banged his big fist down like a sledge-hammer on the desk. Nor was there any trace of personal feeling in his evident exultation.

Indeed, as has already been indicated, he had a distinct liking for Ortle as a man; but as a criminal, and especially a criminal who had so flagrantly flouted the police, it was plain that the offender could expect no quarter.

Business was business. With as little resentment, but quite as ruthlessly as a pugilist about to give the *coup de grace* to a beaten opponent in the prize ring, Rigney was preparing to swing on the newspaperman and send him down for the count.

"You leave th' details to me, ma'am," he advised. "I know crooks and how to handle 'em. He's out in the anteroom now, wonderin' what's up; and I guess I'll let him squirm on the anxious seat a while longer. Meanwhile, you two do just what I tell you, and, believe me, we'll have him comin' across with the whole story in less than an hour."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE THIRD DEGREE.

LEAVING the crowd in the courtroom still mystified and bewildered over the disappearance of the prisoner, Ortle had proceeded direct to headquarters, never doubting for a minute that he would find Essex there closeted with the detective chief.

Yet, to tell the truth, there was nothing particularly marvelous in his prompt solution of the fugitive's whereabouts. Jimmy, never an adept at dissimulation, had, despite Allison's warning, betrayed pretty clearly in the past two days to the sharp-sighted newspaperman that he was no longer so supremely trustful of the other's disinterested services and counsel; and with this clue to guide him, and a recognition of those same considerations which had led the girl to urge a visit by Mohammed to the Mountain rather than the other way around, it was not hard for Ortle to fathom just about what had happened.

Nor was he in any way perturbed over the lodging of the accusation against himself, which he felt certain Essex was up to. As he pictured the reception which poor Jimmy was due to encounter when he opened up on Rigney with a new Nadie revelation, it was all he could do to keep from laughing aloud.

You see, his deductions did not quite carry him to the point where he foresaw that Allison would also be in the conference; and, even if they had, his estimate of her powers was not such as to cause him any disturbance.

He had still to learn evidently the great mistake of undervaluing any opponent; it is the little foxes that gnaw away the vines.

Serenely confident, therefore, and smiling, he nimbly mounted the steps at headquarters and swung down the corridor to Rigney's office.

Entering the anteroom, he gave a nod to the Cerberus in charge. "Dennis inside, eh?" he asked, and with the familiarity of a privileged character tried to pass on into the private office.

But for once he found his way barred. "The chief's engaged just at present, sir." A blue-sleeved arm shot out between him and the knob for which he was reaching. "You'll have to wait."

Ortle, with a touch of indignation, attempted to argue the question. "What's getting into you Tom?" he demanded. "You know that 'engaged' stuff don't go with me."

But the cop was not to be moved. "All I know," he grinned, "is that the chief told me he was getting tired of your bolting in there on him all the time like you owned the place, and that hereafter you'd have to take your turn like the rest."

"Oh, he said that, did he?" sneered Ortle. "Nice comedy, ain't it, you grinning chimpanzee? Well, you just tell him that I wait for nobody."

And with that he started for the corridor. But the chief's new restriction disquieted him a bit, especially in view of the fact that Essex was evidently still inside, whereas, by all proper calculation, he should long since have been ignominiously rushed out and back to his cell.

So, on second thought, he turned back and plumped himself on the bench to await the pleasure of the autocrat.

The slow minutes passed. Occasionally he could hear the rumble of Rigney's deep voice from behind the closed door; but, strain his ears as he would, he could not make out what was being said, and the presence of "Tom," of course, prevented him from playing the eavesdropper.

More and more uneasy he became. Dusk had begun to fall by this time and the anteroom was becoming dim and shadowy; but the policeman lounging back in his chair before the forbidden portal made no move to put on the lights, and when Ortle finally suggested that a little illumination would make things more cheerful, merely shrugged his shoulders and said that the switch was out of order.

In order to relieve the nervous tension, Ortle sought to engage the doorkeeper in conversation; but the latter —whether by orders or not—proved surly and uncommunicative, and, after several ineffectual efforts, he was compelled to give it up.

And then, just as he was beginning to think that unless he saw Rigney soon and learned what was in the wind he would have a fit, the door from the corridor opened and in came Mrs. Hone, escorted by a detective.

Taken aback at first by the unexpected appearance in that place of the somber figure in her weeds and widow's veil, Ortle, recovering himself, would have stepped forward to speak to her; but the detective who had her in charge thrust an impeding shoulder in his way and ushered her hurriedly on into the inner office.

As the door swung open for a moment, disclosing the lighted interior, Ortle gazed eagerly after them; but all he could see was Rigney seated grim and portentous at his desk, and in another second the door closed again, and even that view was cut off.

He started to return to his bench, but hesitated, raised his hand to his chin with a sudden suggestion, and then stepped quickly over to a telephone booth in the corner of the room.

Not long did he remain inside, however, but soon reissued and going back to the bench sat drumming with his fingers and impatiently watching the door of the private office for Mabel to reappear.

Some ten or fifteen minutes passed in this way; then in from the corridor came another detective, and beside him walked Dunston, the night watchman at the bank, handcuffed to his wrist.

"Tom" had lighted one feeble gas-jet over in a far corner of the room by this time; but even in its faint, sickly glow the fellow's guilty pallor and fear-wide eyes were plainly perceptible.

Stumbling, almost in a collapse, the officer dragged him along, and, like the other pair, they passed into the private office.

Ortle shifted uneasily in his seat, took off his hat and put it on again, snapped his finger-joints, crossed and uncrossed his legs; but never for a moment did his questioning gaze lift from that door behind which Rigney was so evidently conducting a searching inquiry, except when from time to time a detective would come through from the hallway with a new witness to be interrogated by the chief.

In this way there passed by the elevator-boy from the apartment-house where he lodged, a girl whom he recognized as one of the operators at the telephone exchange, the old woman who scrubbed out and emptied his waste-paper basket at the office of the *Appeal;* and at each fresh appearance Ortle became manifestly more nervous and concerned.

But if it was guilty apprehension that stirred him—if he was indeed, as Allison charged, Nadie, arch-thief and murderer—he had a still greater strain to undergo; for at last the door from the corridor opened, and in there stepped, without an accompanying detective this time, a single figure—a slender, delicate, boyish form, wearing a long coat and with a soft hat drawn slightly down over the pale face, with its exquisitely chiseled features and luminous brown eyes. In appearance, in walk, in manner, in every detail, unmistakable. The Angel-Face Kid to the life!

In the dim, blue glow cast by the single gas-jet the figure halted a moment at the entrance, then stepped forward; but instead of passing on to the private office, as the others had done, advanced directly toward Ortle, with eyes fixed upon his face, one upraised arm pointed accusingly toward him.

Allison—for of course it was she—had vigorously opposed this spectacular idea at the outset, but had finally yielded to Rigney's representations that it was the only way completely to break down Ortle's nerve and bring him to the point of confession, and now it seemed that the policeman, speaking out of the depths of a greater experience with human nature, had been right.

For as she came on Ortle shrank back farther and farther along the bench on which he sat. His eyes dilated; his arms were upraised, as though to ward off the apparition; his face was a picture of terror.

Then suddenly he sprang to his feet with a choking scream and dashed across the floor, to fling himself in at the door of the private office and collapse in a chair beside the desk, shaking and trembling, his face buried in his hands.

Rigney, rising, stepped around to his side and dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"I guess you've got something you want to tell me, haven't you, Bill?" he said.

The newspaper man straightened to his feet, not a trace apparent of the emotion he had been exhibiting a moment before, and laughed with light mockery in the other's face.

"Something to tell you?" he taunted. "Sure I have. I want to compliment you on your 'third degree' methods. Old Inspector Byrnes of New York never staged it better, and as I didn't want to spoil your satisfaction, I did my best to play my humble part up to expectations.

"And I give you credit for another thing, too," he went on. "You had your facts right. It was Nadie who figured in the 'Mr. Hodge' episode. It was Nadie who directed the murder of the Angel-Face Kid. It was Nadie who arranged the affair at the Twelfth National, and temporarily bestowed his mantle on Colonel Hone, so as the better to carry out his greatest project, the looting of the Treasury. In short, Dennis"—again his derisive laughter rang out—"you made only one mistake. You picked the wrong man for Nadie!"

"The wrong man?" stammered the chagrined policeman.

"Exactly. Now if you had consulted me—"

He paused abruptly. In the open doorway stood Wilkins with an automobile coat over his arm. "You telephoned me, sir, to bring this down for Mrs. Hone."

Ortle glanced toward Rigney; then, raising his arm, pointed at the butler.

"There," he said quietly, "is your man."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BLUE PENCIL.

As he voiced his accusation Ortle whipped out a revolver and covered the man.

"Up with your hands there!" he

ordered tensely, and in the same breath muttered over his shoulder to Rigney: "Grab him quick, Dennis. He's as wicked as a wildcat."

Then for one brief moment those in that room saw a wonderful transformation scene. The impassive, deferential demeanor dropped from Wilkins like a mask and there crackled into action before them a savage, desperate outlaw.

The downcast eyes swept up, glowing with a menacing fire; the expressionless face grew hard and defiant. Heedless of the weapons leveled upon him, he reached swiftly for his own gun; and had he been unencumbered, there would doubtless have been some lively shooting.

But his sleeve caught in the automobile coat he carried over his arm, and before he could extricate himself two of Rigney's men flung themselves on him and made him prisoner.

Then immediately he resumed his customary pose and pretended that he had been so taken by surprise a moment before that he scarcely knew what he was doing.

He carried a revolver, he explained, because of the recent burglary at Colonel Hone's, but he doubted very much if he could hit a barn door with it.

As to being Nadie, or indeed a crook of any description, he entered strenuous and indignant denial, and called his years of unblemished service to bear witness to his character. Tearfully he appealed to Mrs. Hone to know if she had ever missed so much as a spoon since he had been with her.

But Ortle broke in impatiently on these protestations. "Oh, what's the use, Wilkins?" he said wearily. "Do you suppose that I have been trailing you for a year and haven't got the goods on you? Why, man, I even have an affidavit from Olaf Anderson, telling how long years ago you started your career of crime by scuttling the yacht Zerelda after you and he had murdered her owner, Orlando J. King, and everybody else on board."

"It's a lie," declared Wilkins. "Olaf Anderson died in South America in 1897, and he never said such a thing in his life."

"You mean," sneered Ortle, "that you thought he was dead in 1897, when you left him after treacherously stabbing him in the back and then fled the country, bringing back with you to America the Spanish nickname you have used in your nefarious operations.

"But you are mistaken, Wilkins. Those Swedes have a wonderful vitality, and Olaf Anderson lived to search for you far and wide. Lucky for you, my man, that he was mortally injured in the smash-up of a freight train while hoboing it to this city; for he had finally struck your trail, and if it hadn't been for that misplaced switch you might not be here to-day.

"He died in the emergency hospital eleven months ago; but before he went he told me all about the scuttling of the Zerelda and left with me a sworn statement detailing your responsibility for that wholesale slaughter.

"It was a big newspaper story, Wilkins, but I suppressed it and held it back, because with that as a clue to guide me, I thought I could get hold of a bigger one.

"I knew that the man who could plan and execute such an atrocious butchery when a mere boy would never rest content with that one achievement; but as he grew older and more subtle would branch out into wider fields of crime.

"And then for the first time it dawned upon me that you must be the mysterious Nadie. I saw the advantages your obscure position gave you for such a rôle.

"Who would ever suspect that Colonel Hone's strictly honest, sober, and reliable butler was the master crook who had placed an entire city under tribute and was turning Rigney's powerful department here into a joke? I realized, too, that by keeping your identity concealed under your butler's mask, and by communicating

with your forty ruffians only through trusted lieutenants and by means of telephone calls from an impeccable private house you could almost indefinitely evade detection. Only through some such accident as that which had placed your early story in my hands could you ever have been smoked out.

"I set to work to confirm my suspicions in regard to you. I made myself an intimate visitor at Colonel Hone's for that purpose. I took every possible opportunity to listen on one of the branch telephones when you were answering or making a call.

"It was in that way I learned of the Angel-Face Kid's whereabouts on the night of his murder and was able to send Captain Essex out to search for him. If I had only been permitted to hear a little more of that conversation I might have prevented that tragedy and have saved Essex here a most harassing experience.

"I did thwart you on a dozen occasions; but I had in the main to let you go unchecked, because I did not yet have my evidence in shape to nail you, and also because I was waiting for the one big raid which I knew you had in anticipation, so that I might gather in not only you, but all the members of your band.

"You have simply forestalled my *coup* by a few hours, for on Thursday night when you were planning to assemble your cohorts for the attack on the Treasury you would inevitably have been arrested.

"You try to tell me that you are not Nadie, eh, when I can furnish proof of orders that were issued by you to members of the gang in at least a score of cases? Listen."

And he began rattling off a bunch of facts in regard to various obscure and unexplained crimes which caused Rigney and his men to prick up their ears.

But before he had proceeded far Wilkins, all the mettle taken out of him, had wilted and was beseeching Rigney for an opportunity to confess.

Everything charged by Ortle, he admitted, was the truth. He was an outlaw, and the source from which the members of the gang received their orders. But he still persisted in denying that he was Nadie and claimed that he was only a link in the chain which led through many more persons up to the fountain head of authority.

Instructions came to him, he said, from some one he did not know, and he transmitted them on to others lower down, as carefully concealing his own identity from them.

That was all he could tell, he declared; and after many efforts to gain some further disclosure Rigney had to let it go at that.

"He'll talk more to-morrow," Rigney gave assurance as he was led away. "They always hold back something the first time."

"Why, yes; what he says is ridiculous," broke in Jimmy Essex. "If one were to take any stock in it, you'd have your work cut out for you, Captain Rigney—running down an endless chain of Nadies and never able to be sure that you had come to the end. Except, of course," he added thoughtfully, "that we know the real one was the fellow Allison encountered that night at the Millward."

"And I guess there can be no doubt now that he was Wilkins," Ortle spoke up quickly. "Eh, Miss Marbury?" He glanced about a trifle blankly, surprised to find that she was no longer in the room. "Why, she was here just a minute ago."

"She slipped out to change back into her skirts," explained Essex; and since he did not know it, failed to add that she had also taken occasion to do some telephoning while she was away from them. Anyhow, he was far more interested in the revelations which were being made.

"Tell me," he questioned Ortle curiously—"you seem to know all about the various operations of the gang—just how was that report of mine stolen? Was the stenographer in on it?"

"Not consciously." Ortle shook his head. "You see, it was this way. Wilkins knowing all about the report from his association with Colonel Hone, had imported the Kid to handle that end of the job on account of his gentlemanly appearance and general smoothness, but naturally without disclosing to the Kid that he was Mrs. Hone's butler.

"Well, acting under instructions, the Kid took desk room in an office adjoining your own, and took pains to be out in the corridor a good deal and make himself solid with the sentinel.

"He knew, of course, exactly when the report would reach you, and was in readiness; so when the stenographer came out of your door he managed to be there talking to the sentinel, and distracting the attention of both of them with some fool question, he slipped in a thin strip of metal before the door quite closed.

"Then, having given the signal to start a fake fight which drew the sentinel off down the corridor, all he had to do was push open the door and—

"Ah, there you are, Miss Marbury," he broke off abruptly, noticing that she had returned and was whispering to Rigney over at one side of the room. "I was saying only a moment ago that there could hardly be any doubt now as to who it was gave you the terrifying experience in Room 514."

"Yes," she granted; "that, I suppose, may be considered definitely settled."

While they were speaking Rigney had edged unobtrusively around the edge of the circle and now leaned over with his hand on Ortle's shoulder, as if about to ask the latter some question.

Suddenly, though, the hand shot down Ortle's sleeve, there was a metallic click, and the newspaperman found himself handcuffed to the arm of his chair. At the same moment the chief relieved him of his gun.

Ortle looked up in amusement. "What is this, Dennis?" he asked. "A joke? Or have you got another bug in your brain, telling you that I am a crook?"

"It means, Bill," said Rigney gravely, "that the game's up. I don't go much on private sleuths, as you know; but the little lady here has had a couple of 'em at work for the past three days who seem to have struck pay-dirt.

"She put it up to 'em, she tells me, to locate you and Wilkins and Colonel Hone, all three of you, between the hours of eleven and two on the night that she was playin' 'Mr. Hodge' at the Millward. Well, it struck her just now to telephone for a report, and the same happens to come in right handy."

"Skip what she learned about Colonel Hone and Wilkins," directed Ortle evenly, "and tell me where they say I was. Then I can judge just about how far off they are in regard to the other two."

"I don't think they're off at all, Bill," expostulated the detective soberly; "and the reason is that I had a couple of dips in here to-day who spill just about the same line that these tin-star dicks hand her."

"A couple of dips, eh?" Ortle sneered. "Come, come," impatiently. "Tell me where these highly veracious witnesses say I was."

"You was seen, Bill, comin' out of Room 513 at the Millward, and—"

"By whom? A couple of dips?"

"No, Bill; by Senator Claypoole and Representative Yardley. And Room 513 was taken that night—taken, but not occupied—by Charlie Ingraham, the faro-bank dealer; and Charlie Ingraham, so the dips tell me, was the man who gave 'em the high sign that they could beat it after they'd trailed 'Mr. Hodge' to the Millward and had notified 'Keno' what was up.

"That's a pretty straight chain, Bill, from the hound who slashed Miss Marbury direct to you, especially since we know that Colonel Hone was roostin' on the fire-escape and that Wilkins was callin' on his girl.

"And now," he suggested, "with all the rest that's against you I guess

you'd better come across—that is"—with a note of contempt—"unless there's some other poor devil of an underling that you want to try and shift the blame off on, like you did to Wilkins."

Ortle hesitated a moment; then his mouth set in a little line of resolution.

"I could probably beat you out yet, Dennis," he boasted; "but what's the use? To-day, to-morrow, some time, you'd be sure to get me. Bungler though you are, you'd get me, because the crook ultimately always makes a mistake. Besides"—and he was probably thinking of Mrs. Hone as he spoke—"I am queered in the only quarter that means anything to me, and nothing else seems to matter."

He fell silent a moment, but, as with a sudden suggestion, glanced up again at Rigney, a twinkle in his eyes.

"To the victors belong the spoils," he quoted lightly. "Dennis, reach your hand in my inside coat-pocket, will you, and hand Miss Marbury the envelope you will find there? It is the firing device report, and I may mention parenthetically that she is extremely lucky to get it, as I was to deliver it at ten o'clock to-night to a certain foreign representative with whom I had just concluded satisfactory negotiations.

"Also, I am giving back more than I took," he added. "It sounds like raw fiction I know, and how it ever happened I can't conceive, unless the Kid inadvertently slipped some old-time loot in among the papers; but in the packet you will find a perfectly good note for $50,000 made out to Essex's father, and evidently stolen just about the time of the old gentleman's death."

It must be admitted, however, that Jimmy seemed far more overjoyed at the recovery of his report than at even such a stroke of almost miraculous good fortune.

He gathered up the envelope with shaking fingers. "Come, dear," he cried to Allison, "I must lose no time in placing this in safe custody and reporting the matter to the department."

Ortle watched them with quizzical eyes as they went out together. "He isn't much as a hero of romance, is he?" he observed speculatively to Rigney. "But, after all, if she's satisfied, what's the odds? And what would most any man amount to if it wasn't for his wife?"

Rigney rose suggestively and put on his hat. "Ye'd better stand up and let me search ye now," he remarked, "and then we'll be takin' a walk. And, by the way," he questioned curiously, "speakin' of searchin', what was that big hunk of paper I felt in your coat when I went after the envelope? It must have slipped under the lining."

"No," corrected Ortle, "I put it there on purpose. It is the story of myself which I have written for the *Appeal*, and which I always kept by me. I wonder"—he glanced up at Dennis with an odd little gleam in his eyes—"if you would do me the favor of letting me sit here to revise it a bit and bring it up to date, so that I can send it in to the office before we take our 'walk'? I won't be longer than fifteen minutes at it," he promised as the chief hesitatingly gave assent.

As a matter of fact, he was not more than five minutes at it; and he spent more time then chewing at the blue pencil he was using than at the actual work of writing.

"Done," he announced at length, and there was that in his voice which caused the chief to spring quickly to his side and stare down with quick question into his face.

"Yes," Ortle nodded. "The blue pencil was a deadly poison I carried for that purpose." He sagged down for a minute, then with an effort raised his head to smile at Dennis in the old ironic way.

"I don't think I will take that walk, after all, Rigney," he said. "I am going to ride—in a hearse."

THE END.

A Son of the Ages

A Complete Novelette

by **Stanley Waterloo**

INTRODUCTION.

A WASTE of waters heaved sullenly beneath a dismal canopy. Thin, sliny masses floated here and there about the shallows of a little cove or clung to its sodden beach.

The cove led into a bay, which opened in its turn upon a vast and soundless sea. But a single reach of land—gray flat and lifeless, and encircling partially the cove—was all of earth there was in sight.

Close above and all about the huge and silent mystery and extending outward far into space was a steaming world of vapor, condensed into enormous clouds beyond; an enshrouding curtain over all beneath.

And ever this was smitten fiercely by the distant sun, whose rays could not yet fairly pierce the tremendous depths, yet shone through wanly here and there upon the somber scheme—somber in its awful lifelessness and silence, but with a promise, indefinable and yet assured, of life and light to come in the tremendous future.

And eons followed eons. Men had not yet measured time. The dateless ages passed. The vibrating waves of light, of heat, of electricity, of magnetism, the forces of attraction and repulsion, all the agencies and mysteries of nature's law, labored ceaselessly within and without the forming world, making for life.

The dense, exuding vapor became but a warm yet ever present mist, through which the sun's rays drove or filtered and reached the earth abundantly. The world had shrunken, yet the outlines of the bay—and even of the little cove — were there, though otherwise the scene had changed.

The floating protoplasmic fragments had developed into a higher and far-extended life. No longer lay the waters flat and motionless; no longer was the land a dead and drear expanse. There were waves upon the seas and movements showing life there, and the land was green with an infant vegetation.

And the new planet rolled through its allotted orbit, while upon it were wrought the endless processes of growth and transformation.

The constellations of the heavens slowly changed and shifted into the forms and places which were in coming ages to be marked and named by the sons of earth.

Suns flamed and faded while this globe strained toward its prime. Life advanced with an overwhelming rush. There might be check, but never pause to the plunging growth from the primal cells which had floated by the sea until they had developed a looming vegetation and almost brainless monsters in that lush and growing time.

The warm waters teemed with the myriads of life. Strange creatures swarmed the seas devouringly or nosed and hunted along the shores, and others of other forms ranged and floundered and fought in the depths and glades of the gigantic fernlike forests. It was a time of heat and moisture and of fierce development—terrible, vast, imposing.

The time, uncounted, yet brought relentlessly its transmutations. The mottled, changing ages still trod upon each other's heels; reaction and condensation came into the law of life.

The warm seas became in area, though not in place, much as they are to-day. On land the vast fernlike forests lay buried deep beneath the covering surface made by another and different vegetation.

The reptilian monsters of the sea and land had almost gone, and in their place ranged the great creatures of another sort of type, as well of more timid life, the grass-eaters, upon whose bodies fed the savage beasts of the new epoch.

At night the leaves rustled beneath the tread of murderous things; the air resounded with the roar of the great cave tiger, the growl of the cave bear, or the cries and snarls of hyenas and the yelpings of the wolf-packs.

The green plains were dotted with herds of little wild horses, the aurochs, the urus, the ancient elk, and a host of other grazing things; wild hogs were in the thickets.

All was life, as before; but life of another kind, one of pursuers and pursued — fierce, strenuous, bloody — but with more to the brute intelligence.

There were vast upheavals and fiery rendings, but life insisted, persisted. Gnawed by tooth of glacier, seamed and ridged by abysses and upheavals, the planet reeled through space.

Life, animal and vegetable, retreated or advanced as nature played or labored with the crust she was fashioning and refashioning into its present shape, even as she still makes and unmakes continents or islands or blots them out at her will.

But life went on. New creatures—tree-climbing ape-creatures — had developed from one of the lower stems of the dim past and had become distinct from other living things.

Without expression, save by scream or roar or chuckle, helpless as yet as against the dangerous beasts, they still developed, and one group among them by some mysterious happening outstripped the rest.

Of all the creatures, these tree-climbers, far from the strongest, possessing not greatly more than instinct, were yet the most perceptive.

Mind was in growth, slowly, uncertainly, but still in growth. Reason fluttered within dull brains; the climbers could think a little. Nature had begun upon her masterpiece!

CHAPTER I.

THE LINK.

Scar, the Link, tells of his life in the tree-tops, and how he came to use man's first weapon. He describes his meeting with It, his mate, and tells of his life of primeval days when the whole earth was still in the mighty throes of volcanic upheaval, destruction and reconstruction.

I HAD broken my thumb. It was a long fall, and not only was my thumb broken, but the fingers on the same hand were crushed backward and so sprained that they were useless, and when I tried to climb the tree again, to renew the fight, I could not.

I do not know what made me slip

and fall, for there were few among the tree-top people more certain upon a limb than I. But that upon which I had stood was old, and it may be that the one to which I clung was rotten, and so I fell, though I was gripping the other hardly with the fingers of both my feet.

The Brown One—I call him that now to distinguish him, though we had no names—was a strong creature, the biggest ape in all the forest; but it could not have been possible for him to throw me from the limb, even when its slighter upstanding branch which I was clutching with one hand proved weak and faithless as I lurched and slid.

I should have clung easily with my other hands—those I now call my feet—and uptwisted myself and grappled him about the legs.

Yes, it must be that the bark came away. That was why I fell far, head downward, with arms outreaching to break my fall, and that, so, my thumb was broken and my fingers on one hand bent backward and sprained into hurting uselessness.

It had been the start of a good fight. It was all because of It, as I will call her, the she-thing who was the child of an old pair who had a nest in the fork of the tree with the noisy leaves.

We both wanted her, the Brown One and I, and so we fought for her on the big limb while she screamed shrilly in the branches above and her father and mother crouched chattering together in the nest of sticks and leaves in the great crotch of the tree.

He was very old, the father of It, and could no longer climb well for either fruit or nuts. He was forced to eat such ripened things as fell to the ground and the grasshoppers and the little creatures which came out of holes.

But he was most crafty and still could climb the tree with an effort, and so continued to live. He was not quick, though, and some day one of the hungry, growling creatures of the forest must catch him on the ground, and that, it seemed, must be the end of him.

My own tree, with its nest, was in an open glade of the wood, by the river, not very distant from the tree of the Old One of whom I have told; and before this time I could have taken It, had I but known, for she was full grown, as was I, and once when I had met her in a tree-top we had chattered together, and she had not appeared to be afraid. I gave her fruit, and she ate. I could have taken her with me then. I wonder why I did not.

Then, days later, I went howling through the tree-tops toward the home of the father of It, for the hunger for companionship had grown upon me. My own kith and kin were dead, and I was grown big and strong, and I wanted this one she-thing to be mine and in the nest with me.

It was a very good nest. I had made it carefully and solidly with sticks laid across and interwoven with tough withes where big limbs joined the tree-trunk until they were quite a platform with a deep hollow in the middle, and I had brought twigs and leaves to cushion the hollow, in which I could curl myself down and sleep most comfortably, far out of the reach of growling beasts which came beneath at night.

The tree stood alone in the glade, and this was good, for no creature could reach its top save by coming up its trunk. All we feared in the top of a tree which stood by itself was the rare great serpent, which could climb and could even pass from one tree to another, though not so swiftly as we.

But sometimes he would surprise one of us asleep, and what happened then was something of which I do not care to tell.

So, my nest was a fine one, and the tree was near a great river and in

a wood in which were fruit and nuts and many birds and where the roots of weeds in the ground were sweet and tender, and where the wild ducks and geese laid eggs in nests by the water—where all about were many things to eat.

I scrambled on all fours from the trunk of my own tree and from the glade and so up into the tree-tops, and swung from limb to limb toward the house of the Old One, where I could find my mate.

As I neared the place I checked myself, clinging to a limb and listening, for I had heard from afar that which I did not like. There came from where stood the tree of the Old One sounds which told their story well.

There was a combined roaring and whimpering and squalling, and I knew that the squalling came from It. I could not tell where was the roaring. I was in the tree itself before I learned.

It was the big Brown One who was roaring in anger because he was baffled in what he sought. My It stood upon a limb of the tree, clinging to a branch beside her, while he clutched another and strove to tear her away.

In the nest the Old One and his mate were crouching whimperingly. The Old One could not fight. He was too weak.

I was strong, very strong. Once when the dun jackal—the half-wolf thing which follows the big tiger and bear and leopard, and gnaws the red bones after they have killed and eaten, went mad as he often does, fearing nothing, though a coward at other times—sprang at me when I was on the ground. I caught him by the throat as he leaped, and, with the other hand gripped on him, tore away one of his fore legs, shoulder and all, clear from his body.

He raged no more; and it was good for all of the creatures of the forest, since all feared him when he went mad. Yes, I was strong, but I was not stronger than the Brown One. I did not know that yet.

The rage which came upon me when I saw the Brown One trying to carry away the she-thing I wanted is something of which I do not know how to tell.

I would have her myself and I would kill him! I roared and bellowed and clambered downward until I dropped upon the limb whereon he and It were struggling.

He turned in a second and came snarlingly toward me, while It, still squalling for a moment, then chattering wildly, fled upward among the branches and then into another tree and so out of sight deep into the forest. We were alone to fight it out.

We did not wait. His eyes were flaming and his teeth shone white and whetting as he swung toward me, and we met each with one hand grasping the nearest branch for support, and the other free with which to fence and clutch and tear.

I caught him fairly by the skin on the back of his neck at last and pulled his head toward me, and with my teeth tore away one ear and a strip of skin and flesh, though he bit me deeply and tore me on the shoulder.

I should have rent at his neck and killed him before he could have hurt me had all gone as it should have done. But the slight limb clutched by my supporting hand broke at its base, and I was swirled off and hanging by my unprotected feet.

In an instant he was down upon the limb, biting and tearing at them. They were slipping, and I could not lift myself, and it was beyond endurance. My grip relaxed in agony, and I fell far to the ground—fell to tear a deep gash in my face from eye to jaw, to leave a ghastly, lasting scar, to crush my arms beneath me, and lie there stunned and with the fingers of one hand helpless, as I have told, and the thumb so broken that it lay flat and distorted across the palm of my hand.

The Brown One did not come down to finish me. He scarcely looked at me. He clambered higher up the tree

and leaped into the next one and was off into the forest crying triumphantly. He was in the chase of It.

I lay helpless for a long time. The Old One and his mate paid no attention to me, but crouched there, frightened and gibbering foolishly in their nest.

At last I tried to rise, and got to my feet with many liftings and stood by a little tree, supporting myself with my uninjured hand.

Then it came to me that I must get back to my own tree and nest at once, and I tried to climb, so that I might travel through the tree-tops, but I could not do it. My injured hand was still so weak and lame that I could not use the fingers. The blood flowed through the great gash in my cheek.

But I must get to my own tree, somehow, else I might be killed. I started on my hind legs, bending and supporting myself by my well arm and hand, but it was not easy, for I was sorely bruised; and, though all of my kind walked sometimes upright, or even ran for a distance leapingly, it was not our common mode of travel.

Through the tree-tops we could pass most easily and swiftly. I do not know why it was, but I think that I had somehow acquired the habit of walking erect more frequently than any other ape I knew, though forelegs and clasping feet —or arms and hands, as I call them now —were sure, and the tree-tops were a splendid highway, while upon the ground it was rarely safe.

I reached my tree at last, almost crawling, and weak and sore, and tried again to climb, but it was useless. I could not grasp the trunk and lift myself, though at other times it had been but play to clamber up to where the great limbs and my nest were.

I became afraid. Any of the fierce beasts of the night might find me lying there and kill and eat me. I crawled to the shore of the river and crouched beside it, and let my maimed hand dangle in the cold water. That seemed to make the pain less.

Then the darkness came, and with it I was more afraid. I crawled to where there uprose a mighty heap of tumbled, broken rocks and wedged myself in one of the deep, narrow hollows, where I could not well be seen from the outside, and where none of the great, devouring things could reach me save the big serpent and, it might be, the slender leopard.

A bear came smelling about and growled in his hunger, but the passage between the rocks was too narrow for his huge bulk. Finally, tired and suffering, I went to sleep.

I must have been near to death from exhaustion, for when I awoke the sun was shining and the birds were singing. There were many birds.

The prowling night things had gone away, I knew, and I crept out into the light and stretched myself. I was very sore, but my hand did not pain me so much; and after I had drunk deeply and held my hand in the water again, I felt a little of my strength come back.

I started slowly toward my tree, and on my way found berries, which I ate. I tried to climb the tree, but failed again at first. I waited, and then I growled and crunched my teeth together and forced myself to use the fingers of my injured hand, though it hurt sickeningly, and I gained my nest at last.

I was safe, but I could not rest nor lie still in my refuge. My broken thumb was throbbing and full of pain. It still lay crushed across my palm, and was swollen and distorted.

I licked it carefully and tried to press it back into its place, but it would not go. I sat upright in my nest, and was afraid and suffering and weak—I, who had been so strong!

My ears were strained for any sound. There was little to fear, for only the great snake—or the Brown One, should he seek me—could harm me where I was.

But all the time I listened, and it seemed to me that there were many things about. I think now that I may

have heard sounds that were not, for my head was queer. Still, I listened all the while, and at last I heard that which I knew was real.

There was a rustle among the leaves and the breaking of a twig in a tree-top across the glade. I peered forth anxiously to see what could have made the noise. I did not like it. I did not know what it might be. At last I saw something. A face was looking at me from between the leaves. It had big eyes.

Then the face disappeared, and I waited long and watched for it, and at last it came again, and in another place. The light reached it more clearly now, and I could see the face of It. Then something happened that was very strange.

I forgot my aching thumb; my head was clearer, and I was no longer afraid of anything. I was suddenly glad and brave, and almost like myself again. I do not know why that feeling came.

I called aloud to It, making the sound we all did when we wanted another one to come. She did not answer at first, but stayed where she was, peering upward and backward through the wood.

Then she called softly, but still clung to her safe place, still looking and searching back and above and all about her. At last she seemed assured, and then the slim creature swung from her perch and slipped to the ground, and ran across to my tree, and was in the top so swiftly that it was wonderful.

I could not climb like that. There was no other ape in all the wood who could catch her in the tree-tops, where the slender branches intermingled.

She was there in my own tree and near me, but she did not come to the nest. She ran up and peered down at me from a great limb above. I tried to climb to her and could not, and crawled back into my nest again and licked my swollen thumb and mumbled sickly.

She sat perched there, and looked down at me and said nothing, but her eyes—they seemed so much larger than the eyes of others of us—opened more widely still.

Then she made sounds like those I had been making and went back slowly to the body of the tree, and came down to the limbs where my nest was, and raised herself and stood there with one hand on the tree, looking at me where I lay so nearly helpless.

It came but dimly to me, but I knew then, more than ever, that in all the forest and in all the hills there was no other she-thing ape like her. I had never thought of that before.

Her hair was short, but brown and glossy, and she was oddly slender, with a less protruding stomach than had we other apes. It was her head, though, which was most unlike the others. Her ears were not much outstanding, nor were they ever twitching and turning; her under jaw did not protrude so much, and her upper lip was not a bank of a thing extending downward from almost no nose at all.

My own big jaw did not protrude so much as did the jaws of many of my kind, and my upper lip was not so huge and wide, but I was a monster compared with It, and my upturned face, I think, more like the glaring countenances which we saw when the big swimming beasts in the river sometimes thrust their nozzles out of the water.

And her eyes, the big eyes, were as dark and deep, I thought, as the water in the spring with ferns about it behind a rock where I often drank; and when she chuckled and chattered at anything, there came light and twinkles in them, just as there came to the deep spring water when the breeze blew upon it and made it ripple and change in the sunlight.

Of course, I did not dream this out very clearly; I did not know enough; but even before this the eyes of It had made me think of the spring by the rock. I do not know why this was so. Our eyes were not like the water.

I once saw an ape poke a sharp stick into the eye of another, and the eye went away. But I had poked sticks

into the water, and it did not go away. Why should the eyes of It make me think of the deep spring by the rock?

She was never gloomy, nor sat and moped as did many of us when the cold and mist sometimes came suddenly and we others but crouched and huddled in our nests for warmth.

Ever alert and alive when it was cold, she still sought nuts and the dropping fruits and other things we ate, and brought them to her home nest. It was well for her father and mother, who were so very old. They were dead even now, but I did not know that, nor did It.

So I wanted It for my mate, and it was not because she was so swift and wise, and could gather so well the nuts and fruit, and the shell things which clung to the rocks beside the river, and which, when we had cracked the shells with stones, were good to eat. I did not consider that.

I wanted her, I think, as I have said, because her eyes were like the spring by the rock, but that must have been a foolish reason. I had wanted her much, and now, as she stood there, I wanted her more than ever, sick and crippled as I was.

She looked at me, but made no sound, though I mumbled and called and beckoned to her and reached out for her to come. She was still for a while; but at last there came that look into her eyes like the ripples I have told about, and then I knew that she would be my mate.

She came out slowly along the limb and sat on the edge of the nest, and reached out and stroked my thumb very gently. She lifted the hand and looked at it, and then licked it and looked up at me and made a clucking, sighing sound.

We could not talk, we apes, then; but we could make many different sounds that we understood, and I knew that she was trying to tell me that she pitied me.

I tried to tell her, too, that I was glad, and she understood me surely. I put out my well arm and drew her into the nest with me.

Then she looked up and laughed in our way, and chattered, and then suddenly broke from me and ran to the tree-trunk, and the sounds she made meant food. She was down in an instant and slipped into the forest, but she was not gone long.

When she came back she had a branch, which she carried between her teeth as she climbed, and on it was much fruit, which I ate, for again I was weak and hungry. And again and again she went and brought me many things to eat, mostly fruit and soft, round roots; and at last, by great fortune, a large bird she had caught upon its nest.

It was what I needed. My strength came back. Then we cuddled down together. Those were great days while I was growing well, with It beside me. She cared for me faithfully, and soon I could clamber down the tree, though not yet swiftly. I have the memory of those fair days yet. But they were few.

There came, one afternoon, wild howling from the forest, not more than four or five trees away, and I could see the Brown One coming toward us. He had found the refuge of It, and was coming for her.

I must fight him now, weak as I was. I rose in front of It and grasped the upright limb and was ready, but it did not count. My mate slipped by me and ran to the trunk, and was on the ground and running for the forest on the other side of the glade and in the tree-tops there almost before I knew that she was gone. She knew that I was not yet fit to fight the Brown One.

She called from far aloft, and I knew that she would come back to me when she could. As for the Brown One, he did not stop to climb my tree and try to kill me, though I gibbered and roared at him challengingly.

He swung through the tops circling the glade, and I could hear his threatening cries as they died distantly away in the forest beyond. He was in chase of my It again. Somehow, I did not

fear for her. As well pursue the silly shadows which fly across the tree-tops when the white things up in the sky come floating across the fireball there.

One so light and slender and sure-handed could pass along the slender, outreaching branches where none heavier could follow. But I gnashed my teeth, for I wanted to follow the Brown One and try to kill him.

I slept at last, and when I awoke I was like another creature. I was almost well. I scarcely ached, and my fingers were all strong. The thumb still lay stiffly and pressed crookedly down upon my palm, as it had been broken, but it was hardening and knitting. Well was it for me that we apes recovered quickly from our wounds. When hurt, we either died or were soon ourselves again.

I had none to help me now, and it may be it was good for me. I clambered down from the tree and wandered forth, and found a little food, and came back and waited for the return of It, but she did not come.

I waited, and it seemed to me that, in my craze, I was some other creature. I climbed down and ran about in the forest senselessly. Then at night I came back again to the nest and slept.

I seemed to know more in the morning. I had my senses. I went down beside the river and ate many of the shell things, and I ate fruit I found.

I would find It now. I searched the forest; I even went to the nest of the Old One, but it was vacant, and the gnawed bones of the Old One and his mate lay on the ground beside his tree. I could find It nowhere. I did not believe that the Brown One could seize her in the tree-tops, but he might have chased her far away.

I did not know what to do. So the days passed. Meanwhile I became all my mighty self. My injured thumb was strong, though crooked forward against my hand. Then, one day, a strange thing happened!

I had wandered far along the river bank and was sitting idly upon a rock and playing with a piece of wood which had floated down and stranded. It was a stout thing, larger at one end than the other, and very heavy.

The crook of my broken thumb, as it lay with its end pressed against the palm, left a space beneath, and through this space I idly thrust the small end of the wood.

Thus my fingers were above on one side of the club and thumb upon the other bearing hardly when I chose, for I could press the thumb down strongly, though I could scarcely raise the end.

It was a new sensation which came to interest me suddenly. I could clasp the stick with my fingers clutching the other side, and I could do things with it. I whirled the club about my head and smote the bushes and broke them easily. It was wonderful.

Never before had fingers and thumb of ape accomplished a grip together. The club was hard and heavy, yet in my strong grasp it was but a plaything. It delighted me. I would take it with me. That was well.

I started toward my glade, for night was coming, and I had eaten enough. I took a path which ran through hollows and beside a long, rocky upheaval in which were many abruptly ending defiles where, sometimes, I had caught small animals which could not climb the smooth, steep sides. I heard a rustling in one of these and thought that I had some prize assured.

The entrance was but a few feet wide, and the passage, as I knew, ended in a sheer height. I followed the defile to the end, but could find no living thing. The sound which had attracted me may have been made by some large bird which had flown before I entered.

I turned toward the entrance again, but stopped with fear in my heart, from what I saw. I knew that death was close to me. I yelled aloud at first in my terror, and then became suddenly quiet.

That was the way with most of us

big males of the apes in great emergencies. We became, when fatally at bay, but sullen, desperate things. I would die fighting. The hair upon me bristled.

It was the great wolf. A gaunt and fearful creature was the wolf of the time, one we tree people fled from when we met him in the forest, and when he and others of his kind gathered sometimes and ran in packs, even the urus or the mighty aurochs ran fast and far, for few animals, even among the greatest, could face the onslaught of the pack.

As for one of us apes, when we met a wolf singly, grapple as he might and tear with his shorter teeth, the wolf's jaws ever, somehow, found the neck, and that was the end. For me there was no escape. The great wolf rushed upon me and leaped high at my throat.

I know not why nor how I did it. In the past I would have tried but blindly to seize upon the grizzly brute, and so die grappling and seeking to bite, but some new and sudden impulse, some fierce, unconscious repetition of what I had just been doing in mere wantonness, impelled my tautened nerves and muscles, and, even as he sprang, I swung the club with all my recovered strength and, there in mid air, it crashed down upon the fearsome head.

It crashed as do the trees when the winds break them, and the wolf's big body dropped as it came hurtling against me and felling me — but the jaws seized not. I leaped to my feet for flight, but the monster only lay there heaving.

Then I went mad—mad as the sick jackal. I swung the club again and again and brought it down upon the evil head until the skull was crushed.

I was my old self no more. I ran out from the gorge and leaped up and down and howled across the waste and the river and toward all the forest in wild triumph.

I was the king of the apes! I could kill as never ape had killed before! There were fewer things to fear in all the world. I had learned to use the club. It was wonderful. I howled daringly all the way homeward to my nest, and smote many things with my great weapon as I passed.

I climbed the tree, carrying it in my teeth, and could scarcely sleep for exultation. I was a new creature. I had found that which made me so.

I came down in the morning, bearing my club with me. Ever after that I carried it, and I may tell now, that as time passed, since I could not hold it constantly in my mouth, this club-carrying made me walk more and more on my hind legs until it became unconsciously a habit with me.

But all was not yet well. Now I know what it was. I wanted It.

Still, I was jubilant over my club. I was vain and drunken with the power I had. Another ape rose in the path ahead of me, an ape as big as I was, and I roared and ran at him.

I was not angry, and did not want to hurt him, but I wanted to smite something alive. It had been good to hit the wolf. The ape stood his ground until I was almost upon him, then, amazed and alarmed by the whirling of the club, he leaped for a tree trunk and I struck him furiously on the haunches as he scrambled upward. He fled shrieking through the tree tops.

But there came, stronger than ever, the hunger for It, and I ranged through the forest for many days and into places strange to me.

At last from my wanderings I turned again toward my own region. I was nearing there when I heard a distant cry, and I knew in a moment what it meant. My It had returned to seek me and was again in peril. I bounded forward and saw it all.

In a great tree-top was my It, and beneath her was the Brown One. I did not know it then, but he had killed her old father and mother, even before he found her with me, and when she fled from our nest, he had chased her far away, but vainly.

After days of flight and hiding she had eluded him and had come back seeking me, and he had come back as well, thinking, in his dim way, thus to find her. He had found her, indeed, but he was about to find, too, what was not well for him.

She was above him, where the branches were weak, and where he could not clamber to her easily; but she was shrieking loudly, as well she might. I made no sound at first. I ran to the tree and climbed, with my club between my teeth, until I reached a limb on which was fighting room, and then I roared aloud. The screaming of It changed in an instant to shrieks of joy.

The Brown One glared downward and saw me, and scrambled, with a snarling roar, to the limb upon which I stood. He ran close, and we stood as we had in the other fight, scarce a yard apart, each sustained by the grip of our long toes and with one hand clutching an upright branch, leaving the other free. In his free hand was nothing; in mine was the club. He thrust forward to clutch and pull me to him.

It was his end! I swung my club aloft as he lurched toward me savagely, and smote down fairly upon his head with all my maddened strength. Like clay, his brute skull caved in, for the blow was devilish. He did not even scream.

His fingers and toes clung to the limb for an instant and then he dropped, silently, far to the ground. He drew his arms and legs together quiveringly once or twice and then lay still. He was dead!

I danced upon the limb and roared and yelped and mocked. The Brown One was dead! In all the world there was none other so great and wise as I. What other knew the club?

My mate came to me wonderingly and chattering, and we caressed each other. We went down the tree and I beat the head of the Brown One as I had that of the wolf, but there was no need. Already the little insects were running over him. He was dead. In the night something would come and eat him.

We sought our own tree and our nest and were unafraid.

Sometimes we went far from the tree, for always I had my club, and It imitated me by walking on her hind legs and, at last, carried a little club herself, though she could not use it very well at first.

We had adventures and sometimes scant escape, but my club was heavy and I was strong, and when too hard pressed there were always the tree-tops for our refuge. But we did not venture far out on the great plains, where were the grass-eaters and the fierce things which devoured them, nor did we venture forth at night.

Sometimes, for I feared none, we visited the nests of other apes, and they came to visit us. And because of this a great change came.

There had been rare quarrels with other apes, and I had smitten them sorely with my club, and they had wondered at it and feared it. They saw my boldness, too, and how I killed for food things which I crept upon, and which I could not have killed with my bare hands, and soon they, too, sought clubs and tried to imitate me, for imitation is ever the way of apes.

They could not do as well, for they had no such grip as I with my maimed thumb, but, with its use by their finger grip alone, the thing became a weapon, and soon our kind, of whom there were not great numbers—there were other apes of other kinds, whom we hated, because they were so like and yet so unlike us—carried each a club, and so began to walk erect as I did.

And we learned to band ourselves together, even more wisely than the wolves, and we could surround one of the wild horses in a gorge or beside a bluff and so get much meat at one time for all of us. We acquired new sounds and cries, too, with our increasing

need for speech, and soon all began to recognize them.

There was one wild cry sent out in emergency which meant "Club! Club! Bring your club!" and so it was with other calls. We had no names yet, but something like the beginning of a language was at hand—a tongue of clucks and cries and yelps, but yet the seed of language.

All our world was becoming different. The other creatures began to fear us. The smaller, once unafraid, now fled when we appeared; but the great flesh-eaters sought us more fiercely than ever, since we were more careless and conspicuous. But, if we were more daring, we had become more cautious also, and they seldom caught us.

And there came before all this a time when It stayed in the nest and I brought her food. And one day when I came back with eggs from the nest of a river duck she held in her arms a tiny ape which was our child. It thrived amazingly, for well cared for were the child and It, my mate.

And, strangely enough, from the beginning the child could press its little thumb against its palm and fingers and so use them in the grasping of things. I roared with pride when I saw that.

There would be a giant with a club, in time. And he was but a child indeed when he ran about erect and smote things with his little stick. So it was in a way, too, with the children of other apes of our kind. They also learned, though more slowly, to run about on their hind feet and to wield the little clubs they carried.

But sometimes all we apes were in mortal terror, not of the bears and tigers and other dread things of the wood, but of that which came suddenly and made even the fierce beasts themselves fly, whining, to their dens and hiding-places. Nothing could help us in those awful hours, for there would be rumblings and growlings in the earth beneath us, and it would lift itself up in vast, heaving waves, and would sometimes burst open in long rents, and flames and deadly fumes would issue, and great reaches of forest would disappear and all within them perish, and when the thundering and roaring ceased the look of all the world about us would be changed. But these things would pass, though there would be left great fissures through which came sheets of fire which burned continuously; and when the cold came, as it did at times, we could go as near the fire as we dared, and then the cold would seem to go away.

And the days went well for It and me, and other children came and were soon full-grown, as was the way, and they took mates and there were many homes in the tree-tops. We became a strong people, my family and its kind, for we alone had the club.

We yet lived much on fruits and nuts and roots and eggs and the shellfish, but we ate more flesh now, for, as I have said, we had learned to hunt together, and that brought an abundance.

But there was ever the thing we should have dreaded more. Away to the north high mountains upreared themselves toward the sky, and through a mighty gorge in these the river came. Beyond the mountains was a vast lake. Sometimes the mountain crests would redden and they would vomit up fire when the upheavals we so feared came and the ground lifted up and split and the forests fell.

Then afterward would come great storms, and the river would be wider and deeper and darker and rush down fiercely, bearing tree-trunks and the floating carcasses of wild things. But still we thought little of all this. We lived for each day, as it came, unknowingly.

It was late one afternoon in the hot time, when the leaves were heaviest, and I was in the nest with It, for there was still another child and we had done much climbing throughout the day and were curled down and resting, half asleep.

Something at last aroused me and I looked about. The air was heavy, but soon began a rustling of the leaves and then a shaking, but it seemed to come from far away and only the tremor of it to reach us.

Then, all at once, the sky darkened and the earth heaved. It sprang up screaming, with the child held to her, and we both clung desperately to the limbs above us as the trees thrashed back and forth.

Then came the fearful thundering, blasting sound we knew so well, and flames burst from the distant mountains as they seemed themselves to lift and sway in air. Then followed a roar as of all the sounds of earth together, and I saw the great walls torn apart and rise and fall again by the light of the awful flames in the darkness far away.

The earthquake ceased, but not the dreadful roar, stunning and deafening from afar, but coming nearer and nearer with each instant. Something enormous, black, with a great white-foaming crest, uprose and lifted higher than all the forest.

The mountain had parted and the great lake was so hurled down upon us! It came, itself a mountain. I saw It for a moment, with the child held in one arm, then something struck her and she fell.

I could see the crest of the coming mountain towering far above me; then I was swept from the limb and—stunned, gasping, strangling—was carried away in the black waters.

CHAPTER II.

THE AXMEN.

After uncounted ages have passed, Scar lives again, a Cave man in the ancient Age of Stone.

I AWOKE lying on a stretch of turf in an angle of the rocks by the river. It was almost midday, and it seemed to me that I must have been aroused by the sunshine on my face.

I rose to my feet and stretched myself dazedly, for my head hurt me. I reached for the club which lay near me and examined it curiously. It was not my club at all, and when I looked about the rocks and earth and trees appeared as unfamiliar as the weapon.

I swung the club joyously, for it was a better one than I had ever seen—strong, well balanced, and heavy at the end. I tried to think, but only mists would come to me.

Had I ever another club? Then I perceived that there was something tied around my waist, a broad belt of hyena skin, doubled up one side into a sort of pocket held together by knotted sinews.

In this pocket was a thin flake of flint nearly as broad as my hand and with sharp edges. How came I to have such a thing? And then I noticed suddenly and wondered how it was that the hair all over me was thin and scant. I was frightened. I could not understand it.

I strode out from my place in the rocks and looked across the river. Its banks were new to me. I turned toward the north and there were mountains, though unlike those of old; and when I passed around the ledge even the forest trees and the rocky passes appeared changed. Had I ever seen other rocks or forests?

Then I heard a shout. I turned and saw two great apes—at least I thought them such—each beckoning to me and calling. The cries were followed by loud clucks and gurglings, a kind of talk. And I understood it. How could I do that?

I went toward them slowly, alert and with my club grasped in all readiness, but I was not much alarmed. I felt, but dimly, that the two great creatures were my friends. Each bore a club like mine, but neither lifted it as I advanced. They but pointed up the river and jabbered noisily.

What creatures they were! Almost straight they stood, with no more hair upon their bodies than had I, and

their thumbs closed readily and easily upon the fingers, making the grip of their club secure.

But it was their faces and the expression upon them which most astonished me. They were quite unlike the dream of apes still somehow with me. They had noses more distinct, their ears were rounded, there was less repellent expanse of jaw and upper lip between the mouth and nostrils; and the teeth, which showed as they chattered, were not so long and sharp.

Their eyes, though, were their striking feature, since in them appeared a look of understanding which I recognized. They were of my kind.

I made no answer to them, and as I came near they looked upon me pityingly, putting their hands to their heads and pointing toward the place where I had awakened.

Then, for the first time, I began to realize things. They were saying that I had been hurt. Instinctively I lifted my own hand and there came away a little blood.

Who had struck me? I swung my club furiously, but they only chattered the more and made motions, one of them running to the ledge and pointing upward to its top and making a sound which I knew.

I had been with them on some sort of an expedition, and a stone had rolled down and hurt me as I slept. That was why my head ached, and why I could at first remember nothing. I was no longer angry. I listened eagerly to what they were trying to tell me.

One of the two, as they pointed up the river, made a repeated bleating, as of an animal in distress, and when he said "Stag, stag!" I knew that there was good hunting close at hand. I shouted and waved my club and we dashed away together.

The pathway near the river led but a short way before it opened out upon a little low-lying grassy plain, extending to the bank, with marshy places here and there, and upon this natural meadow half a score or more great, splendid antlered things were feeding.

They grouped nearly together, with the exception of a single cow, walking round and round one of the marshy pools and bleating piteously at intervals. We shouted when we saw her. We knew that her fawn was mired and helpless and we should kill it and have food.

We entered the tall reeds and grass of the lowlands and stooped low, slipping through noiselessly until we were near the distressed mother. Then we uprose and rushed and yelled together.

The startled elk leaped and ran swiftly for a distance; then, as there came the sound of struggle and plaintive bleating from the quagmire, she checked herself and turned to charge. Then came an awful interjection.

There rose from the forest edge, though far away up the river, a roar so fearful and appalling, so dreadful and far-reaching, that all the world seemed dazed from the moment the sound tore across the valley and, even before these echoes died away, the herd of feeding elk leaped forward together in frantic bounds and swept close beside us in their flight, carrying with them the mother cow.

The great cave tiger was abroad, though not yet near, and before him all living things must flee! We were shaking ourselves with fright, but we knew the monster had doubtless just now slain because of the cruel roar which told it, and so we were in no danger for the moment.

The elk calf, a great thing nearly a third grown, was standing helpless near the quagmire edge. We ventured in a little way and crushed the thin bones of its head with our hard clubs, and together dragged it to the firm earth and so hurriedly across the valley and up among the rocks.

With one on watch we attacked the body of the calf with our sharp flakes of flint and with much toil and many strokes made openings in the skin

and hacked and hewed and wrenched until we had the beast divided into three parts.

Then, each with his burden of skin and flesh upon his back and his club thrust in his belt, we went, straining hurriedly across the lowland and up the path among the rocks whence we had come until we were another long distance away, where, climbing upon a huge boulder, we ate ravenously. It was a feast. Very good to eat is the flesh of young stag.

Rested and full of strength, we took up our march again until we turned into the opening of a long gorge, almost a valley, which lay not far from the river and nearly parallel with it.

I knew that in this gorge our homes were, but I could not yet remember much about them, though each new scene as we advanced became familiar. I recognized the place where I had once killed a hare with a well-hurled stone.

Suddenly one of my companions gave utterance to a long-drawn cry: "*O-o-e-e, O-o-e-e,*" far-reaching and sustained, until there came an answer from further up the valley: "*O-o-e-e, O-o-e-e.*" Then, in the distance, seeming to issue from the solid rock, came three figures, and I knew they were our people.

In the lead were two women, and behind them was a child, a little girl. The woman first to reach us was of middle age, and, chattering joyously, she took the load from the older of my companions and trudged along beside him, as did the younger woman with the other man, and I knew that the women were their mates.

All together, we went on to the place from whence the women and child had issued, and there was the entrance to a cave, not very large, but which rose and widened out inside into what was a vast chamber, fifty feet across, at least, and nearly as many high.

Away off in one corner of the floor there gleamed a tiny light which indicated a smoldering fire, and about it, tending it, an old man tottered. There were heaps of leaves and grass, too, and upon the floor were a few skins of animals and many bones and roots and the shells of nuts, all scattered heedlessly about.

The women chattered continuously, for they were delighted with the meat. Each was eating torn strips, raw, but soon one ran out and brought in an armful of meat, stuck firmly upon long, sharpened sticks, and this was thrust into the red flame until it was burned and blackened and then eaten with greater gusto.

The child devoured her share like a young hyena while the elders sucked and mumbled. The women seemed to know me and be glad that I had come.

One of them pointed, laughing, to the burden I had carried, and then toward up the valley, and I knew that my own cave was there. Soon, refreshed, I took up my own burden of the meat and left my friends and followed the path southward, knowing instinctively each rise and turn.

I reached a place where the rock sloped sharply down, and where, half way up, appeared the dark mouth of a narrow opening. I had reached my home at last.

Up the steep ascent of thirty feet or more was a twisting way, worn smooth. Long traveled must have been that path. I entered the cave and found it very like the other, save that it was not more than a fourth as large. The one I had just left was the largest in all the region.

There were embers still alive where was a spot of red at one end of the cave, and I cast down my load and threw on fresh wood, which was at hand, and then lay down to sleep, for I was tired.

But I could not sleep. There were flames and light in the cave, and now everything came back to me. I remembered the two days before I went away with my companions. I remem-

bered the pleasures and perils of my life, and all the horrors of the discovery, not long ago when I, returning from a night spent with a hunter in another cave, found all of those I had lived with dead and nearly all devoured, all slain in the cave together, surprised, sleeping, by the wolf pack which had found swift entrance through the opening, for once left carelessly unblocked by slabs of stone.

Then, all at once, with my clearing mind, came to me the thought that I was not a solitary creature inhabiting that cave. I ran to its mouth and my "*O o-e-e*" went forth resoundingly.

Again and again I called, and at last there was an answer, nearer and nearer with each reply, and a man came running easily. I was glad.

It was Woof, my hunting mate, who now lived with me in the cave. A great companion was Woof. He had left his own people to come and live with me, for we had known each other a long time.

He was almost as tall and strong as I, and could run almost as swiftly as the little deer. He loped up the pathway to our home, saw the meat, and shouted aloud in satisfaction and began to roast and eat. He had not been over fortunate in his hunting in my absence.

We talked long in our clucking way until the day was late. Then we heaped up the stone slabs until the entrance to the cave was filled nearly to the top, and threw ourselves down to sleep. As my eyes grew heavy, I dreamed again perplexedly. Again I was in the tree-tops, swinging easily along and hearing familiar cries. And there were flames and roaring and tottering forests.

I would waken at times and look upon the smoldering fire and toward where Woof lay breathing deeply and realize the present, and then a fog would arise and Woof and the cave side would disappear.

Had there been something before? I could see at times a face, but to whom it belonged I could not tell. I knew it now; it was a face of another time, the merry impish face of an apelike creature with whom I had had comradeship. I awakened and groped hungrily in my mind, but could remember nothing. At last I slept contentedly.

With the flood of the fair morning light came still greater clearness to my thoughts. I forgot for a time even that I had dreamed and was, like Woof, eager for the outside.

It was a good thing that there was yet meat enough to finish in a great breakfast. As things went we were well-to-do young men. Club in hand, we tumbled down the pathway and swung up the long ravine.

We finally clambered to the summit of towering rocks and looked up and down seekingly; it was a way we had, and with reason, in those death-laden times, never to travel far without ascending a tree or some eminence and search the entire country in sight.

Now we saw nothing moving save two black spots in the direction from whence we came. We knew what they meant and the long-drawn call for them went forth, "*O o-e-e! O o-e-e!*" The two men running were Gurr and Hair, my companions of the day before. They were soon beside us there on the rock pile.

Strictly speaking we had yet no proper names, though we had the result of an effort toward them. We could indicate an absent one, but in most cases only by a sort of mimicry. Thus Woof was so known because of a trick of his in imitating well the "woof" of a startled beast.

Gurr was so designated because of his husky voice, and his wife was Goor because her call was similar to his though not so harsh. There was another man with a split lip and singular utterance, and we said "Chu-Chu" when we referred to him.

Hair was so called because he was the most hairy one among us. We must have known more than a hundred

different sounds for different things. Names or sounds we had for fire, water, food, the sun and moon and trees and rocks and clubs, and for most of the great beasts.

And certain other words we had, too, that had to do with actions, such as fighting and the hunt. We had indeed the inception of a language which lifted us above and beyond all other creatures.

Of some personal names, mostly imitative, there were Gluck-Gluck, Blink and Limp, and there was one big cave man, Ugh, who grunted savagely at times, and who was very strong.

His jaws were heavy, his mouth was armed with great teeth, and his thumbs and great toes were very long. He could climb better than most of us, but was dull-witted and not any more successful than others in the hunt. Once he built a great nest in a tree-top but abandoned it and returned to his hollow in the rocks, because it was warmer there.

Not long had there been fire in the caves, and in some of them they had no fire at all, and ate flesh raw. Once the old man, Hair's father, tried to tell me what his father had told him of how they first learned that they could bring fire with lighted brands from the fire mountains.

It was a wonder that he could remember so much. Now, when the fire failed us we went to the burning places miles away and lighted fagots and journeyed back, building frequent fires on our way, so that each of us could keep his torch alight until we reached the caves again.

It was rarely, though, that this was necessary for we had learned to keep our fires by covering giant brands with ashes when we went away, and when, at times, a failure came, the fire could usually be renewed from another cave.

Always some of the old women or old men remained at home to keep the fires alight. Our life was fierce and simple.

We thought little, and cared not, save for the moment. We were hungry and must eat; we were cold and must seek warmth; we were in peril and must flee or fight; we had the elementary passions and must mate; we had rages sometimes and sought to slay. There were not many of us in the long gorge or valley, though nature had made it a place abounding in caves everywhere.

We were but a dozen or two in all, doubtless all related or descended from a single family, and the nearest creatures of our kind were another group living in the hills far to the southward.

These people we seldom met, and when by chance there was a meeting, it was with a somewhat sullen watchfulness on either side, though we had never warred. Such were we, hungry and gorged alternately, alert, watching the other creatures, seeking some, fearing some, chasing or fleeing, and having the vast advantage of being almost omnivorous in our feeding. And there was a fierce joy to it as well. Hoo! It was a life!

We four trooped onward together, for we had made a plan, and when we neared the cave of Ugh we howled together and he joined us, grim as the great-jawed hyena.

We wanted him along because we might have need of one who could deal strong blows, and his club was heavy.

I envied him that tough club of blackened wood, the more so because it chanced that I alone among us might not find the thing too mighty for the arm.

We needed force that day, for ours was to us a mighty prospect. There were urus, which Woof had discovered a day or two before, now pasturing in a not distant lowland, and the slaying of the urus was a great event comparable only to the rare killing of the aurochs, the mighty bison of the time.

Woof had discovered a band of urus a day or two before feeding in

a narrow valley which ended in a precipice some thirty feet in height as it neared the river. In this valley were various small mounds, and could we, by utilizing these, get the urus between us and the river, by loud shouting and a sudden rush, drive them in a panic to their deaths? This had been done once in the past and might be done again.

We went eastward through the hills until we could see the urus feeding below, and then crept down into the valley, ever keeping the little mounds between us and the grazing beasts, Ugh in the lead. Then something happened.

There was a threatening bellow as Ugh crept by one of the mounds between us, and he sprang back, with abundant reason, for, within twenty yards of him was a huge bull feeding apart from the herd.

For a moment the beast stood still, then, with lowered head and glaring eyes charged savagely upon the hunter, while the rest of us fled, yelling.

Not a moment too soon did Ugh leap and crouch beside the mound, but even his mortal peril did not destroy his hardihood. Even as he eluded the rush, he swung his club and brought it down with all his might as the brute swept by, seeking, by some chance, to stun him.

It was not to be, nor, because of an amazing happening, was Ugh in further peril. It was the strange chance in a thousand, but the club, driven so hard by that enormous muscular arm, came fairly down upon the sharp point of one of the great horns, and, dense and tough as was its fiber, it split and empaled itself and was wrenched from the grip of Ugh as the beast crashed by. And then followed a grotesque spectacle.

Stunned, dazed, crazed with the pain of the benumbing blow, the urus galloped blindly about in circles, bellowing and almost bleating and shaking its great head.

The empaled club was flung off at last, flying a score of yards, and, a moment later, the beast, regaining his senses, went dashing off in the direction already taken by the flying herd. So ended the urus hunt. We had failed, but that hunt, in its indirect results, was vast in its effects upon the future of the cave men.

Ugh regained his weapon, split at its end, and as we gathered again, stood gazing upon it ruefully. We wandered away to where the creek of the valley entered the river and found crayfish and the eggs of waterfowl and feasted merrily and lay there resting in a place where the sun shone on the rocks.

But Ugh could not keep his eyes from his split club. It was rent fairly down the middle of its heavier end for a length of more than a foot from its head, and he, with his strong hands, could pull the sides an inch or two apart.

Woof stood beside him and as Ugh thus strained the wood until there was an opening, Woof, in sheer sport, dropped into the inviting space a great flake of flint which had parted from the rock and lay there ready to his hand.

As Ugh, surprised, released the parts they clashed together upon the flint and held it there, for the wood was tough of fiber and had a vicious springiness. There, held strongly and tenaciously in the jaws of the cleft club, was the broad, heavy flint flake, its sharp edges outstanding inches on either side. In the hand of Ugh was a rude ax, the first whose handle was ever clutched by man.

We all stood looking curiously at this strange mingling of wood and stone, when Ugh, with a hoarse cry, swung it aloft and waved it above our heads in mock threatening and shouted "Kill!"

Well might he yell out "Kill!" We knew it could do that were the stone but firmly fixed and we alike yelled, but wondered at it. The stone was left in the club just as it had been gripped and so was carried back with us.

More than it did the others, the stone and wood so seemingly grown together in what might be a mighty weapon, fascinated me. In exchange I gave Ugh my own fine club and my new possession I carried with me to my cave that night.

A dim idea of something great was forming in my mind. Could the stone be held there always what a weapon I would have! I smote with the rude ax and unshattered and unmoved it bit deep into deep tree bark.

With repeated strokes the ax stone loosened a little in its accidental socket and I was troubled. I strained it into proper bearing in the cleft again and studied how to make it permanently firm.

The problem was still with me when I reached our cave with Woof. It came to me to tie the ax, as we tied other things, with sinews—for we had somehow learned how to make a knot—and with sinew I toiled long beside the fire until I had bound, with my utmost straining strength, and firmly fastened together the intersection of the rugged flake of stone and the tough wood.

Then I ran out and down the path in the moonlight and tried the ax recklessly upon a tree trunk and found the stone immovable. It could not be wrenched nor sprung from the cleft club. I had an ax! The ax, mightiest weapon and implement in the hand of a man for thousands of years to come, had been invented by chance and rudely, in a single day. The age of wood and the club alone had passed. The Age of Stone had come!

So I alone had the ax and soon, in our hunting as in the littler things, like the getting away of a vine in our paths through the forest, as compared with the ax, the club was a feeble thing.

The sharp stone could shear the little things and the sharp and heavy stone driven deeply, could bring death when the club might only stun or bruise. With the ax I could readily open a way along the thick skin of a slain thing, making easy the stripping for the flint flakes, and with the ax I could divide the body.

We must all have axes! With my own I split the ends of other clubs and flint flakes were sought to bind in them and so, soon, all grown males of our kith and kin bore axes as did I.

But oddly enough, there was no ax possessed in all the clan quite so hard and rightly shaped and keen as mine. Nature had made, accidentally, a better ax than we, in our crude and bungling way, could fashion at the time.

Yet we were better equipped now than ever before for either hunt or fray, though there came soon a miserable time when we almost lost our courage and were fearful of our coming and going.

There was a broad and pleasant wide open space, almost a plain, in the near forest which was our nearest and favored hunting ground. It was acres in extent and upon it were hosts of berry bushes and little nut thickets in which harbored many hares and small game of all sorts and also birds that ran upon the ground where were nuts, which were good to eat.

Food, of some kind, we always found there. In the midst of this small plain uprose, as if all out of place, though near the mountains, a long, huge rock, perhaps some twenty feet in height, and with sides so sheer that none except a man or other climbing animal could reach the top. But some great upheaval had split this monster rock crosswise and so there gaped through it a passage way, broad at one end and narrowing at the other, the space between the walls filled with soil up to the level of the land about.

There stood this strange split rock, almost in the middle of this little plain, of so much importance to us, but which now, we dared not enter. There had come there one of the things we feared and had made it his chosen haunt.

What brought the cave bear to our hunting place no one could tell. It

may have been the berries or the roots or some whim of the savage brain.

We had, shudderingly, to hunt around, but not near the little plain, and in my own heart a great anger was growing. "Why? Why?" I said in my dull brain.

Whatever the cause, there he was, and one day, when two of the cave men had ventured a little way in the bushes, one of them was smitten down by a huge paw and the other heard but one gasp in the bushes as he fled.

Daily, watching from the tree tops which fringed the place, could we see the hulking monster as he ranged the open spaces or went toward his lair to be lost there for a while. And near that thicket lair rose the vast rock.

One night we were together, a company of us, in the great cave of Hair and Gurr, and we were hungry because we had come from bad hunting toward the north. We could have found more had we not feared to invade the bushy plain, and I could have howled aloud in anger for I was half famished.

I thought of the purple berries and the sweet nuts and the sucking roots and the little things to kill, and I sulked off alone and dared and ventured in my mind, and there came the thought, a thing so dreadful that I gasped in the thinking of it, yet which clung to me as fiercely as cling the vines which bear the blood-red blossoms on the rocks.

And my dreams came to a red climax the next day, when one man, venturing into the borders of the plain just narrowly escaped the monster. All through the night I tossed fitfully and again the desperate fancy gripped me.

I leaped to my feet and swung my ax and yelled out "Bear" and "Kill," and Woof awakened and leaped in alarm, but laughed when he saw that I seemed raving. Sometimes cave men had madness.

But the craze was on me and the next morning I ran up and down the valley and howled aloud and screamed and yelled that I, I alone, would kill the monster in the plain.

The others heard my ravings and came out, but they only grinned and chuckled, though all followed me as I turned and ran southward and toward the woodpath which led through the forest to where was the little plain—and death. I did not linger, and my following tribe ran close behind me until I reached the very edge of the dangerous ground, when, as monkeys climb, they swarmed into the tree tops while I slipped forward among the bushes, a crazed and yet contained thing, half demented, strong and unconsciously, blindly, seeking what seemed suicide, but—with the ax.

I crept into a little pathway and saw nothing, and so slipped along unhindered until I reached the rock. I climbed it, tremblingly, for another mood had come upon me now. I was afraid.

I threw myself down upon the stone and shook all over as the leaves shake in the aspen tree which the wind owns. So in awful terror I tossed about for a time, until, in my very desperation, the rage came back again and I cared for nothing in all the world, for the blue sky or the people in the tree tops or myself or death or mangling.

I leaped to my feet and danced up and down and whooped and swung my arms. Then, in a near thicket there was a rustle, and "Woof," the huge cave bear rushed forth and gazed about.

Slowly at first, looking up toward me, the monster came shuffling and shambling into the open. He saw me plainly now, and there was another great "woof," a growl, and he lurched forward with astounding swiftness.

And then just when the dread was most appalling the awful sickness, which had come again, left me and I became cold of blood and insanely crafty and blood-hungry. Then I, the Axman, dropped to the ground, not a score of yards before the approaching beast!

The monster uprose, for a moment, apparently astonished, then plunged

forward with a growling roar as I dashed in flight between the gaping jaws of the split rock.

Not twenty yards through the rock did the fissure run, but I was near that fearful paw-stroke when I leaped through the farther narrow opening and fell panting to the ground.

And even as I sprawled, the great body hurled and wedged itself into the tapering space and the "swish" of the paw passed close beside my head. I lay just out of reach. I could see the red jaws and grinding teeth and wicked, glaring eyes and hear the rush of the foul breath above me.

Straining outward with his one free arm the brute struck savagely and his great strokes fairly whistled through the air as they swept within a hand's breadth of me. For a moment I was faint again with the sickening fear, and then once more the change came. I leaped to my feet and yelled.

There, pushing, gnashing his teeth and striking, clawing blows in vain was the monster who had been our dread. I became a sudden demon. I roared as roars the tiger. I danced about closely as the beast strained out with lowered head and then I leaped as the paw went by and whirled my ax aloft and struck.

What a blow was that! When had even the strong arm of the cave man delivered stroke as mighty as that which sent my ax clear to the haft into the bone and brain of that huge head? Clean to the haft the blade was driven and there it stayed as I leaped backward wrenching in vain at the tough handle.

I shrank aside to avoid another stroke, but that was needless. There was a roar, a wild, helpless clawing, and then the huge head in which the ax was buried sagged downward and the monstrous thing was dead! I, single-handed, had slain the great cave bear! Never before in all the happenings of time had so great a thing been done!

The shuddering, breathless people in the tree tops were the insane ones now. Their frenzied shoutings filled the wood at first and soon they were around me, but wondering and awe-stricken and silent again.

Their demeanor toward me was such as they had never shown before. I was greater than they! The huge body of the bear was hauled out and the skin taken, toilsomely, and ever after I slept upon it in my cave.

The world had changed for me. I was another being and I could not help it. I had been called "Scar" because of the great scar upon my face straight up and down from eye to jaw, but they changed my name and called me "Bear," and like a bear I must have grown somewhat as time passed.

The news of the great slaying went about among the creatures of our kind as far as our world extended and I became an awesome man apart. Even Woof, my comrade, seemed half afraid of me and, at last, following the mating instinct, took a mate and went away from me to live in a cave far up the gorge.

I had it in my mind to take a mate myself, and resolved upon an almost burly woman of the cave people I had met afar, who feared nothing and who hunted, sometimes alone, as did the men. I went to get her but she had disappeared. She had hunted once too often recklessly.

I might have taken another but, I know not why, the mood to do so never came again. I still joined with the others in the chase and my ax stroke was the heaviest and none surpassed me whenever there was danger to be met.

And the seasons and the years passed and all men had the stone axes and we fed well and children were born and the people of the long gorge grew in number. Then came a pall. The world was going wrong.

Creeping as creeps the snake in the grass and bushes down where the rocks shelve off into the lowlands had come, with the swiftly passing seasons, a

dreadful something. The sun, the big blazing thing up in the sky, seemed growing old and helpless and did not warm us as he had before. And down the sides of the mountain came crawling those wide blue-white cloaks of ice, never stopping, always crawling.

The seasons had been changing steadily. Each year was unlike the one before it, with skies more lowering and chillier blasts and less of sunshine. And in the cold time, the snow fell and stayed longer than in the past and did not leave the mountain tops at all in summer, and the days of the seasons when the sun shone and there came the fruits and nuts, were not so many.

Even the grass upon the plains grew less and the creatures feeding there became less in their numbers and it was not good hunting. There was a constant thinning of the creatures which felt the change and ever they turned toward the south, the south above which the sun seemed to shine less coldly.

The chill came even to me, and I thought dimly that it must be because I was no longer young, for I had seen the old men shudder when the cold came. But it was not that, it was the world itself, the ice sheets pushing themselves down from the North.

Sometimes the hunters venturing too far away, hampered in snow, would become exhausted and go to sleep, and when they did this they never woke. When we found them they would not answer, and we but took their axes and left them.

It came to me at last that we must do as had done the beasts and flee southward, where, perhaps, it would be warmer. Why had I not sooner seen the need? Why had our clan alone been reckless fools and failed to join the birds and beasts and other apes?

The cold became more dreadful. The wind howled and swept away the snow, leaving bare the ice masses on mountains, down which swift streams had once run. The great river was ice-locked and silent.

An awful stillness came upon the world about us, so that our own cries sounded hoarse and loud. We were cold and starving, and, at last, we were forced together in the cave of Hair and Gurr, where there was room for all who remained of us.

We gathered much fuel and kept up a fire, about which we huddled, famished and desperate. The end seemed very near.

One night a storm, fiercer than any we had ever known, raged down the valley. From the mouth of the cave we could see but the swirling drifts and hear only the roaring and shrieking of the wind. But at midnight it seemed to me I could distinguish another sound amid the unearthly clamor. It was different from the other noises—a bellowing in which was a note of fear. I had heard the trumpetings of the great mammoths once, and this somewhat recalled the sound, but it could not be.

This was no haunt of the monster things, yet from somewhere up the gorge the sound continued, now higher or lower and sometimes moaning and most pitiful.

Near morning it ceased entirely, but I must know what it meant. At daybreak I started up the gorge with four companions.

We did not have far to go. Fighting our way through, we came to a mighty hollow in which the snow had drifted to a depth many times the height of a man, and there, plunged deeply, almost buried, was an enormous, brown, hairy mass.

It was incredible; it could not be that there had come to us such salvation, but it was true. Here was a strayed mammoth, last of his gigantic kind in the accursed region, caught helpless in the pass and dead now to our hands!

With shouts of joy that were near to madness we hurled ourselves down upon the mountain of flesh, hewed frantically with our axes and cut out great chunks of meat and bore them to

the cave, and there the whole starved company of us roasted and ate until we could eat no more.

We could but eat and lie about and sleep and eat and sleep again throughout all that day and night. And the next day, with much hewing and many burdened journeys, the whole of the vast body was stored within the cave. We were prisoners, but we had food and warmth. Soon all were strong again, and there was almost merriment, for we were foolish.

We fed, for we were not many, and the body of the mammoth was a monster thing. We fed and lounged before the flames for many days, but we did not think, though the wind still roared outside and the drifts were becoming deeper.

I, who should have been wiser than the others, fool that I was—remained as dazed and warm and sluggish as the rest. Surely the trials which had come upon us must have changed me. But at last I woke to an affrighted, half-understanding.

The heap of mammoth flesh was growing smaller, and warmth, it seemed to me, might never come again. The storm ceased and a cold sun appeared, and we could see the way, at least, along the silent valley. We must go or die.

I became a furious thing. I leaped about and shouted. I whirled my ax and threatened overmasteringly. I made all left of the following burden themselves with what remained of the flesh and so drove them out before me to the southward.

All day long we plodded, and when night fell we harbored shiveringly in a vacant cave, and with the next morning took up the journey, though some fell fainting as we struggled. We left them as they fell, for we could do no more. And then, toward the evening of the third day, I caught my foot in a rock crevice and wrenched my ankle as I lurched, so that I heard the bones crack, and I, the strongest, became in a moment the most helpless.

I plunged and floundered ahead in agony. I bellowed as does the bull to his dun following, but my companions did not heed me. We were past all helping and I was left alone. I fell prone in the deep snow and the cold crept upon me.

It was bitter cold. And then to me it became less cold and the snow began falling heavily and softly again, covering me with a warm blanket. I was tired and I could but sleep, restfully, too, as often I had done after some long chase.

And I but barely slept when there came to me dreams like the pleasant memories of a thousand years. There were soft skies above me, and waving boughs and a fragrance in my nostrils. And a laughing, apish face peered at me from between the branches bright with blossoms.

And then came other visions, but dimmer and more senseless, and so I slipped away into all dreamlessness.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOWMEN.

Scar of the Stone Ax after many centuries awakes among the later Cave men on the shores of the ancient sea now known as the Mediterranean. His mate, Otter, is attending him in his recovery from an almost fatal wound, received while hunting. He begins this story with a description of Otter.

OTTER was a splendid creature. Tall she was, and her long hair thrown back uncombed and tangled, swung down below her slender waist. She moved with the swift grace of the tiger or leopard kind. Her mouth was large, and her teeth gleamed sharply, but it was a fair mouth nevertheless, and her eyes were dark and deep.

Her only garment was a soft robe of coney skin passing over one shoulder, and leaving half the full bosom exposed. The robe was held close to her body by a belt of some sort and extended to her knees. Brown she was indeed, a creature of the sun and air

and storm, yet her skin was smooth and soft. But it was her eyes I saw. They spoke to me.

The appearance of the woman did not surprise me. It seemed a matter of course that she should be there, and my heart leaped as I looked upon her. I was still dazed but I knew that she belonged to me. There was a sense of protective ownership of her and of a need of her, this savage beauty whom I might smite if she displeased me, but for whom I would battle to the death.

She was beside me in a moment, kneeling with a pitying look in her eyes and beginning at once to unwind the strings of inner bark which held in place a huge bandage around my leg, not far above the knee.

Very gently and carefully she removed the mass of green, wet leaves covering others nearest the flesh. These were macerated into a pulp. Cautiously she lifted the mass and there, in my thigh, I saw a gash which had ceased to bleed but which was raw and open.

Not deep nor dangerous was this wound, but evidently I had lost much blood and so had fallen weak and senseless. As gently as she had taken it away the woman renewed the bandages with new pulp and leaves and, the binding finished, she looked at me happily.

"The boar," she said.

The boar, the savage boar! Yes, I dimly remembered now. There had been a chase somewhere, and the wild boar had charged me, but where were the rest of my tribe, those I had led away from the devouring of the mammoth, to take up the desperate southward quest?

Where were the drifting snows and the fierce winds and bitter cold and awful loneliness, the drowsiness and dream of death?

The bandage in its place, the woman sat beside me and stroked my face softly, but only for a little time. She came quietly, went a little distance away, curled herself down upon the green turf and seemed to fall asleep on the instant.

Then I realized what it meant. She must have been alert and watching throughout the night, and how much longer I could not tell, and so was wearied, if not near to exhaustion.

My own strength I felt returning to me, though when I sought to rise to my feet I failed miserably because of the pain the effort brought to my wounded leg. I crawled to the foot of the tree, and, leaning my back against the trunk, sought to collect my scattered senses and realize, if I could, the situation. Where could I be? Who, indeed, was I?

As my glance wandered about it was drawn to certain objects upon the ground not two yards away from me. Only one of them was familiar; it was a stone ax, but the haft was of a different wood and color from that of the ax with which I had slain the great cave bear, and the heavy blade was polished so that it shone in the sunlight.

It was a beautiful ax and I resolved that I must have it, if it were not mine already. Beside the weapon lay something which greatly puzzled me, at first. It was a long shaft of some tough wood; but its head was of stone like that of the ax, though of a different shape, long and sharp and pointed and held in the shaft's split end by knotted sinews.

At last I comprehended, it must be a spear, but the only spears we had ever known in the land of cold were long sticks sharpened at the end and charred and hardened in the fire. They were but trifling things compared with what this must be in the fight or hunt.

But it was what remained that most aroused my curiosity and perplexed me. This was a stout, springy length of ash, as long nearly as my own height, with the ends bent toward each other and so held by a strong sinew cord which stretched between them.

Lying beside this curious thing were a number of very slender shafts; each notched at one end and bearing at the other a little stone head shaped like that of the spear.

I could not understand them and finally gave up the problem. I crawled back to the skin bundle which had been my pillow and lay down and slept again.

It had been mid-forenoon when my latest sleep began; when I awoke it was almost night. I was aroused by the call of a pleasant voice beside me, "Scar! Scar," and the continuous patting of a hand upon my shoulder. I was wide awake and with my mind all restored in an instant.

"What is it, Otter?" I answered.

She laughed joyously, "You know again; you will soon be well. He struck hard, but the cut is not deep. Soon you will run. Your arrows killed him. We will go and eat."

All this she said in short, chattering words and with much gesticulation. It was an odd sort of incomplete speech. She helped me to my feet and I found that I could stand without much difficulty.

I managed to hobble along by her side, leaning on her heavily. My wound had ceased to pain me and my strength was fast returning. As for my dreams of cold and of other things, such as the great beast buried in the snow, they were but dreams, assuredly.

We came out upon a far extending shore and there, magnificently colored in blue and crimson by the sky and the setting sun, extending beyond all vision, heaved the mighty sea. How great was then the later-named Mediterranean!

Far back where now the desert is, lay its unseen southern shores and the strand upon which we stood lay farther to the north than when existed kingdoms of later ages. The spectacle was wonderful but all familiar to me.

We passed slowly along the shore until we reached a rocky place wherein was a little hollow in front of which was burning a fire replenished by my anxious mate while I had slept.

Brands for the fire had been brought from our distant cave before my hurt had been received. Otter led me into the little opening and brought flesh of a boar from a hiding place in the rocks and roasted it in the fire and fed me to repletion.

Then, having eaten herself as eats a healthy, omnivorous animal of the wild, she coiled down beside me in the little recess, after leaning logs and driftwood against the opening, as some defense against all prowling things. My weapons she placed at my hand.

I awoke in the morning astonishingly refreshed, and could limp about without the assistance of Otter, and with little pain. We must go inland to where were the ledges and where was our cave among the others. There I could rest easily until all my strength returned.

So we took up the slow journey and entered the forest, plodding doggedly along the paths within its depths. We had with us some of the roasted boar's flesh and ate of it when we were hungry.

On the journey we came upon a little open space where were great birds, the bustards, moving about, and I killed one with an arrow, rejoicing the while that I was so good a bowman.

Otter carried the huge bird lightly, saying we should have the best of food when we reached our home. My dazedness of the day before, when I failed to recognize my weapons, was all gone now.

Was not I Scar, the greatest archer among my people? Was not Otter, my mate, the greatest in the water of them all? Yet, as to Otter, it had been but a little time since the Cave people had learned to swim.

Like the monkeys, which we sometimes shot with arrows in the woods, the Cave men had ever dreaded the

water. It was in the days of our great-great-great grandfathers, so the very old men told us, that the change came, and then by accident. It was good not to fear the water.

A great advantage was this in the hunt or on a journey of any kind. And among us all, at this time, my mate, my slender Otter, was swiftest in the water. So her name had come to her.

We traveled far this day and crossed many streams and I was nearly spent when, after nightfall, we came upon ledges of tumbled rocks uprising near the river and in the midst of a dense wood, and there entered our own cave without arousing any of the people in the other caves.

It was not a large cave, but was most comfortable. There was a great bed of moss covered with skins beside one of the brown walls, and from an ash-filled hollow at one side Otter uncovered still glowing embers.

In front of this hollow were a lot of stones laid carefully, whereon meat could be roasted. Just inside the cave's entrance, but not large enough to entirely fill it, was a round rock of sand stone, not too heavy, which Otter alone rolled into the opening. We sought the couch of moss and skins and slept at once, for each of us was weary.

I awoke, it seemed to me, almost well, for from flesh wounds we Cave men recovered swiftly. I awoke with a fragrance in my nostrils. Otter had already risen and a bustard, cleanly plucked, was roasting on the stones before the fire my mate had built.

We ate most of the big bird at that one meal, for we had slept long and were hungry. Then, with Otter beside me, I took my bow and bark quiver of arrows and limped outside the cave. We had hardly come into the sunlight when there came to our ears a shout and the twanging of a bowstring and, a moment later, around a turn in the ravine, appeared the Climber, often my companion in the hunt. He was shooting arrows upward and catching them as they fell, in mere sport, shouting meanwhile to arouse me, for he did not yet know that I had been lamed by the boar.

We called to him and he clambered up to us and heard the story of my hunt, laughing only when he heard its issue, for we did not sympathize deeply in that age, though we would sometimes fight for each other valiantly enough.

The Climber was armed as I with bow and spear and clad in the same way, with only a clout of skin about his middle. Despite his careless demeanor he had news to bring. Some of the Hill men had been seen lurking about at the foot of the wooded mountain slopes to the westward.

The Hill men were our natural enemies and had been so since a time beyond which none of the old men could remember. They were unlike us in their ways, existing chiefly on fruit and nuts and roots, which they stored in the mountain caves, where they lived, and they had no bows, carrying only stone axes and long spears.

They hunted less than we but were extremely strong and savage and their numbers made them dangerous. Many a wanderer of the Cave men had disappeared when these hairy savages of the hills had sometimes invaded our side of the river and word of a threatened raid by them was but a signal for more than ordinary caution.

In a few days I was well again and the fight with the big boar something almost forgotten. But for old Fang, the arrow-maker, there would have been a pleasant enough monotony to our existence. Fang was more vicious than any of the beasts in the wood; he seemed like the Things we had never seen, but dreaded, the Things which whispered strangely when the wind blew through the forests at night and which roared and bellowed when the great storms came. He was not like the rest of us. He was the first

monopolist, too, the world had ever known.

Our arrows were excellent, not rude chipped things such as our ancestors had known, but smoothed and polished and keen-edged and deadly when launched by a strong arm from a strong bow.

A task it was to make an arrow such as one of ours, for there was first the rude chipping and then the weary polishing of the flint by rubbing it upon wetted sandstone. Few of us had patience for all this and old Fang, who lived alone in a cave in a thicket close beside a little waterfall of the brook running down to the river, was arrow-maker for most of us.

We paid him for the arrows by bringing him meat and skins and all the means for living, and his wicked eyes would gleam when we brought them to him.

He was a misshapen creature, with one leg so distorted that it made him half a cripple, teeth which protruded viciously and eyes like those of the snakes which sunned themselves upon the clogged driftwood beside the river banks.

A great archer he was, but he seldom hunted, for he could but limp, with his twisted leg. At last came a time when he never went abroad at all. It came curiously and in a wicked way.

The fall in the little brook which ran beside the cave of Fang was but three or four yards in height, but the water dropped sheerly and strongly and had worn a little hollow in the stone beneath, a broad bowl a yard across, in which, in a miniature whirlpool, the waters swirled round and round as if aboil.

One day a hunter who had brought to Fang some arrow-heads to be polished, accidentally dropped one of them in the water as he leaped the brook above the falls and, counting it lost, paid no attention to it.

The keen eye of the arrow-maker had seen the thing, and knowing that the arrow-head could be easily recovered, he said nothing. He would get it for himself.

The old man, busied at his work, forgot the arrow-head for a month, then one day he remembered and found it at last amid the swirling pebbles and looked upon it in astonishment as he drew it forth.

Not with all his labor of rubbing the flint heads upon coarse sandstone could he polish an arrow like to this. The sand and pebbles in the foaming bowl had done the work far better than could he.

An idea came to him. The pool should be his and his alone and the water and the little pebbles should do his polishing. So he put chipped arrow-heads into the bowl and, after that, the hunters for a time wondered more than ever at the perfection of his work.

One day on old woman leading a child and seeking nuts came close to the edge of the falls and peered over the bank curiously. Her body was found there later, and it was plain that an arrow had passed through it, though the shaft could not be found.

The child, which had fled shrieking back to the cave, could but tell what the old woman was doing when she fell down. Later, a hunter who lingered carelessly near the pool was shot as ruthlessly but lived long enough to reach companions to whom he could give no account as to whence the arrow came.

But all understood. There was little justice then, and there were no attempts at punishment. The old demon owned the waterfall. As for me, I paid slight heed to the matter. For that I nearly lost my Otter.

One day I had shot an arrow into a wild pig in a wooded height just beyond the cave of Fang and, as I pursued it straight forwardly through the bushes, Otter ran around through an open space to intercept its flight and pierce it with another arrow, if she might, for she shot almost as well as I, though far less strongly.

She was near the pool when the pig dashed from the thicket and shot at it almost as I broke through. Then, of a sudden, she shrieked wildly and dropped her bow and I saw her bravely plucking at an arrow which had pierced her arm. It had come from the cave of Fang.

I called to Otter, who had already darted into the bushes, and she came running to me. I drew the arrow forth with little difficulty, for it was not a dangerous wound, though through no fault of the murderous archer. Only Otter's swift backward step as she shot at the pig had kept the arrow from her body.

We went back into the wood and there I left Otter while I circled about to regain the cave of Fang. I saw him close beside the pool and shot, though it required a long arrow-flight. The shaft lowered with the distance, but pierced him slightly in the thigh, and, with a snarl, he glided into the bushes and behind the trunk of a great tree.

A moment later an arrow tossed my hair and then I, too, went into hiding. We sought glimpses of each other as we circled about, but there was no fair chance afforded until my quiver was emptied and then—for Fang could not run as could I—I rejoined my mate in safety. I knew that either Fang or I must die.

There was little thought of Fang after we had reached the cave. There was heard all about us the cry: "The Hill men! The Hill men!" and the alarm had reason. A great band of the mountain savages had just been seen by a hunter, going up the river on the further bank.

Well we knew what that portended. They outnumbered us five to one, but the Hill men could not swim and they were going up the river to the first shallow where they could cross in safety. The fording place was where a gorge entered the river through a rock which rose in a long precipice on either side. Into and up this gorge, if they could, must the Hill men come. All the Cave people were now together and we held anxious consultation. It seemed to me that there was but one thing to do and, in the end, all our fighters agreed with me.

We must assemble at the mouth of the gorge before the Hill men reached the place and there dispute the crossing to the end; there, with our bows and upon firm ground, we might have some chance against them despite their overpowering numbers.

Soon all those capable of fight were on the hurried march, including over half the women. Only the old men and women and the children were left in the caves, since all lives were at stake. Even the vengeful old Fang, who had been summoned, was limping with us, for he was in equal danger with the rest.

All night we wound our way along the forest paths and by dawn were in the gorge, where we rested and ate of the dried food brought with us. No Hill men appeared in sight until a little after noon and then they came in what seemed to us a host.

There were of us Cave men and women some seventy-five, of the Hill men at least four hundred, fierce looking creatures, armed with spears and stone axes and terrifying to look upon.

Yet our fathers had once beaten them and why should not we? We had a vast store of arrows and good bows, and better spears and axes than had the foe.

They came, bellowing like wild beasts, and we went down the sloping bank to meet them at the crossing. The leader, a huge creature, shaking his spear threateningly, plunged in first and I yelled with delight as I saw, when he reached the middle of the river, that the water rose to his armpits.

As he gained a shallower part and upreared his hairy breast, I drove an arrow into it, and his spear fell and he toppled over and was swept down stream.

My comrades were doing as well, since there was room for nearly all of us to shoot; and the slaughter was fairly on. The Hill men seemingly knew no fear. They plunged in from behind by scores and one or two had almost reached our banks when they were speared, one after another, by Bull, the most gigantic of the Cave men, who had rushed in to meet them.

Still they came in a desperate, roaring mass. So I have seen a herd of the great aurochs cross a stream mightily. There were not enough of us to do the killing. The waters of the river were red. More than half the Hill men had been slain, but the pack came howling on now, still more like monstrous wolves.

We shot until there was no more time to notch our arrows and then we waded in a little way and met them with our spears and axes. I had no fear; I was but a raging, bloodthirsty, killing thing.

We held them at bay for a time and so many of them were slain that now they did not more than twice outnumber us, but those of us in front were exhausted by the struggle and the remnant of the Hill men were still fresh.

I staggered back, as another Cave man took my place, and went a little up the slope and refilled my quiver and stood there breathing heavily for a moment with others as spent as I.

That breathing space did us good, and well that it was so, for it saved the Cave men. There was a wild cry, a yielding, and our comrades lower down came pressing back upon us.

The Hill men had gained the shore. We rallied to the fight, but there could be no more arrow-shooting. It was spear and ax work now.

Ever raging in front was the leader of the remaining Hill men, a giant whose spear seemed irresistible, and more than one of the Cave men fell before him.

The sight drove me into a still more murderous craze. I was rested now. I leaped forward to meet the grisly savage and in a moment we were facing, with spears clattering together. It was death for the Hill man. He was stronger, but not so swift as I at this deadly fencing, and, as I turned his spear aside, I leaped in and drove my own cleanly through him.

He toppled with a roaring growl, like that of a bear dying, and with that a panic came upon the Hill men and they turned and fled, pursued and speared as they floundered in the waters of the river. The fight was over.

And then, just then, as I lifted my hand to my streaming face, something smote me fiercely in the back and I looked dazedly at an arrow-head which protruded from my breast.

I turned, tottering, to see the stone ax of the Climber crash down into the head of the glaring Fang, who crumpled weakly to the ground, and to see Otter running toward me, screaming and with arms outstretched. Then I pitched forward upon my face.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLANSMEN.

How the Cave men brought fire from the sky, and other feats of Scar and his comrade, Six-Toes. Again, after ages of rest, Scar lives and tells of his wild adventures among the Cave people of the North.

It was dark, absolutely dark, and I could hear no sound. I could not remember who I was nor where I was, and there came upon me something like a feeling of alarm, though I felt that to be afraid was most unlike me.

Furthermore I was in pain; there was a hurt in my breast and, instinctively, I clutched at the place with my hand. Ah! I knew what it must be! —a protruding arrow-head—and I strove to get such a hold upon it that I could pull it forth in the hope that so relief would come, but I could not get my grasp upon the thing.

I fumbled still at my breast seeking the arrow-head and found at last what I had mistaken for it. It was but a jagged piece of flint which had slipped in between my flesh and the rough skin coat I wore and which, as I had borne upon it, turning in my sleep, had pricked me sharply and awakened me. There was no arrow-head nor trace of wound. I could not understand it, but I no longer feared; I only realized that I was cold.

I lay upon the floor in a sort of niche in a cave. Weapons, as I judged them to be, leaned against the wall opposite, and away beyond them, close to the wall lay a gray heap over which I puzzled.

I studied it at first dreamily and then curiously, as the light grew stronger from the narrow arched entrance, then started half upright, for the gray thing seemed alive. It heaved uneasily and I forgot my own perplexity as to who I was or where I was in watching the mysterious thing.

All at once the mystery was solved. The mass separated, part of it upheaved and then I understood. There had been but a man sleeping there, like me, beneath a heap of wolf skins.

As he arose, he turned his face toward me and called out hoarsely but cheerily enough:

"Oo-ee! Scar!"

"Oo-ee," I answered back instinctively. I knew that his call was but to learn if I were awake and I knew, too, that I was his friend and comrade.

I became instantly another being from the one lying dazed and dreaming amid my skins the moment before. The thought of all that dim vision, of some fight at a ford and my own awful hurt there, passed as the smoke goes when the wind sweeps over a fire, and swift, keen memory of all that related to my present relations and surroundings returned to me at once.

Why, there we were in our cave, Six Toes and I, and it was morning. I called out to him:

"I am hungry, Six Toes, let us eat."

He grinned, went over to the back of the cave, drew forth strips of dried meat from a store heaped up there and I, getting to my feet at the same time took from the weapons by the wall our two stone axes.

We sat down together, hacked away fragments of the cold, hard meat and ate as ravenously as two wild animals.

It was all simple enough. Why had I so awakened still dreaming of a river and a fight in the region warm and pleasant? Certainly in such a country I had never lived, though dreams of it had come to me before and I was in such a country now.

Here was I with Six Toes, at murderous odds with others of our kind and with a prospect ahead of us as dangerous as uncertain. Not that it worried us much. We were only less reckless of what was to come than the prowling creatures of the swift, ever-fearing grass-eaters of the plains.

Six Toes was tall and strong, and so, indeed was I, though not so great of bulk as he. He was a huge man, though, springy as the reindeer, and the crush of his hairy arms was something to be feared in any grapple.

We were garbed nearly alike, each in a single garment made of skin reaching from neck to knee, with holes for the arms and belted at the waist with a thong of rawhide. The garment of Six Toes was of a single bearskin; mine of wolf-skins, well stitched together with long sinews.

In each of our belts whenever we left the cave was a stone ax and each bore, as well, his bow and arrows, and sometimes his flint-headed spear. In a skin pouch hanging from the belt in front, we carried the smaller things—the stone, skinning and cutting knife and, it might be, dried meat.

Our arrows we carried in skin quivers slung across our backs. We had no other clothing or weapons or gear of any kind, but our axes and our arrow-heads and knives were sharp and polished and our bows were strong. The Cave men had learned much.

We were outlaws. I, Scar, and Six Toes, a greater personage than I, and all because of the deadly enmity between my companion and the head man of our clan.

We had been driven from the great galleried cave in the cliff beside the river a mile above us where all had sought refuge together for the harsh winter, and thus forced to fare alone had, after some perilous wandering, found shelter in this smaller and less pleasant and safe abode.

We were cold, but in this respect, not so greatly worse off than the body of the clan who, through rare misfortune, were, temporarily, nearly as unfortunate as we. The winter was upon us.

Long ago, so the legend of the story-telling old men ran, our people had drifted to the south where was a warmer climate, but something had driven them northward again and they had long lived, a roving, sturdy and fierce community in a country of rock and plain, fruitful in season, it is true, and with good hunting, peopled as it was by many grass-eating brutes and furred beasts of prey, and warm as well but hard to bear in winter because of the breath of northern glaciers.

Now, the clan had been for a time in a strait such as was never known before. Venturing, because of an unaccountable influx of the deer and the little wild horses into a ruder country than our ordinary haunts, we had lost our fire.

There were no fire mountains here, and despite the finding of the big cave, living had become uncomfortable. We had not yet learned the art of making fire ourselves and when the clan moved as a body, carried it always with us, moving slowly and making fires ahead on our way as far as the runners could go with brands.

Now, it had, for once, been neglected by the keepers in the cave and become lost, and we must half freeze and live on roots and nuts and our dried meat until we should visit some distant clan, or the fire from the sky, as it sometimes did, should smite some towering dead tree and make it burn for us.

But no such good fortune had come and those of our own kind of whom we knew were far removed from us, and sometimes hostile. We must endure until the warm time came again.

The little cave in which we—Six Toes and I—he was called Six Toes because he had when a youth, left four of his toes in the hands of a savage river fish, though the hurt did not impair his strength or swiftness—were harboring was close to the edge of a declivity which overhung the river valley. We were savagely restless and discontented, and not without great reason. Not only against the bear and wolf and prowling tiger of the time must we be on guard, but against even the creatures of our own kind and clan.

The deadly enmity between Six Toes and the chief among the Cave men was all because of Laugh, the shrewd and swift and always merry daughter of old Hairy, desired by the huge leader, Wolf, and desired also by Six Toes, my friend, he who had found me a child abandoned by some wandering tribe and who had reared me as his younger brother, teaching me all his craft of field and fight and making of me one not lightly to be encountered.

With him and beside him fiercely in all stress I would always be. So it had come that we were one in our unpleasant and watchful exile.

The time had come in the history of the Cave men when a woman could scarcely be taken by force and, next to Wolf, Six Toes was the most important man among us. Then came the craft which was our undoing.

Wolf and his immediate and obedient following accused us of a great crime—forever I was counted one with Six Toes—of having stolen and hidden in the wood for our own use, a store of weapon heads, than which there was no more valued possession in the community.

Of the rarest flint, polished and keen, were these arrow-heads and spear-heads, fashioned with infinite care and toil by the men too old for hunting, and counted, rightly, among our best possessions, for arrows were often lost in the hunt or carried away by wounded beasts.

To steal of these, preserved as they were, to be dealt out fairly from the common store, at need, was death. Boldly had Wolf made the accusation against us, though, as the end proved, he had hidden the arrows himself, so inflaming all the men, and we had escaped the stern penalty only by sudden flight. As craftly as he was fierce and vicious was the big Wolf.

We had found the little cave in which we were now concealed, and it was intrenched, for none could force the narrow entrance; had found good hunting and so, gloomily, but healthily enough we abode together, planning, it seemed vainly, some scheme of retribution.

We chafed and raged, thus helpless, like the great wild elk with antlers caught in the thicket, or the huge bear sometimes imprisoned in a pitfall of the rocks. The life we led was trying; in some unguarded moment we might be stolen upon and slain by Wolf and his followers, and besides, our little cave was colder than the other.

And, when the change came, it came swiftly—in a single hour—with the holding of a new power in our hands, something never known before and bringing great happenings with it. It was a simple thing, but wonderful and most mysterious.

One somewhat cold, but glittering afternoon, having eaten lightly, for they did not much invite us, of our stored raw meat and nuts, we were lounging in the sun in front of the cave, where it was warmer than inside. I was moving about listlessly, noting the tracks made in the snow by lurking beasts and calling once in a while to Six Toes, who sat upon a little rock enjoying the sunshine and fumbling idly with bits of shining stone which he had found beside him.

One of these bits he held for some time in his hand, turning it carelessly about. It was thin at the edges, roughly oval in shape. In the center on each side it rose outward, smooth and even.

It was somewhat like a transparent arrowhead and I remember that, as I came to the side of Six Toes, I wondered if we could not put it to some such use. A flake of stone just like it I had never seen before.

Then, as Six Toes turned the stone in his hands a darting yellow gleam fell on the snow, and he laughed as he found that by moving the flake he could shift the shining spot at will. At last he turned it upon one of his own bare feet and in sheer curious foolishness held it there in one place steadily. But not for long.

Suddenly he leaped up with a howl and flung the thing away as alarmedly as if it were one of the little adders we did not like but sometimes found hidden amid the leaves where the nuts were on the ground. Something had bitten or burned his foot.

I ran to where the stone had fallen and picked it up and examined it closely, but could find nothing strange about it except its odd shape and clearness. How could I know, how could Six Toes know that he had stumbled upon the first natural burning glass that men had ever known, a flake of tourmaline brought perhaps with a boulder from the far north in some ancient glacial move of tourmaline, the only stone which flakes in such a way!

If we had little wisdom, we had at least unbounded curiosity. We played with the curious thing and the yellow spot it made, and, finally, I held the spot upon the stalk of a dry weed. I held it so for quite a time and then the wonder happened!

There came a darkening of the weed's fiber, next a faint smoking and then, suddenly, a flame. We yelled aloud our amazement and triumph as we danced about. We were

beside ourselves with joy. We had Fire!

We wasted no time then. We gathered armfuls of the stout dried weeds and laid them carefully upon the one now burning and added such fagots of dead wood as we could find. Soon we had a bonfire and we kept it going.

Fire, fire in abundance! We could not contain ourselves, for we knew all that it meant — warmth, always warmth, and the fragrance and rich taste of the cooked flesh.

I dashed within the cave and brought out great slabs of the cold meat and we sharpened long thick weeds and thrust the meat into the glowing embers until it curled and browned and the odor and savor of it were in our nostrils, and then we ate!

We ate, as if famished, for never, it seemed to us, had been so great a feast before. It brought new life and courage.

Gorged at last, we had yet energy to go out among the reeds and gather more armfuls of them and stack them near at hand for use, and then we clambered down the precipice to a place not far distant where we could reach the river bank and brought up driftwood, and so we worked furiously until nightfall and until we had a great store of fuel.

Then we made another fire inside the cave and warmed it and there we ate more meat. In all that region there were no others so fortunate as we. We were boastfully merry.

Outside, we renewed our fire upon the very edge of the precipice—for that we had a reason—and throughout the night we fed it in turn, one while the other slept, and the light leaped high in the darkness, a flaming defiance to our enemies. What would they think of it, they in the great cave? It was not long before we learned.

They had seen the flash of fire, as the night fell, and their amazement could not be told. Then came a rage. Six Toes and Scar had fire and Wolf and all the band had none and were cold and ate raw meat! The thing was unendurable!

The outcasts should yield up their great possession, and with early dawn, half a score of the Cave men led by Wolf would come storming down the valley, to kill the outlaws and bring fire to where it was most needed.

As morning broke, we saw them coming, for they could not remain concealed against the snowy background. We knew their errand well, and Six Toes laughed loudly, but the laugh was as ugly as the cough of the lank hyena which cried sometimes in the wastes.

We heaped on more fuel and made the fire blaze merrily, but we saw to it that it was at the very edge of the shelf of the rock. Six Toes brought out his spear and I stood beside him with my bow, an arrow clutched on the string.

They came rushing toward us, armed and fierce, and we waited until they were not two hundred yards away. Then Six Toes, with shoves and sweeps of his long spear, hurled every particle of fire from off the ledge, to be utterly quenched in the deep snow of the far depths below.

We leaped for the cave's shelter and stood inside with notched arrows and drawn bows. Eager for a sight of them we were, but could not get it. Even Wolf would not venture fairly in front of that dark narrow entrance. Death was waiting to leap out.

We called to them and jeered at them, but there came no answer. Finally I, venturing to peer forth cautiously, saw our enemies gathered just out of bowshot.

They stood there, baffled and raging, and we came into sight and howled out insults. We yelled taunting allusions to those who hungered for the taste of roasted flesh but not for the taste of sharp arrows from a cave.

We gibed and mocked, until maddened, they started toward us and then we sought the cave again with its advantages, only to come forth once

more as they moved, and yelp out things concerning those who had no fire and must eat raw meat and shiver all the time.

They could but shake their weapons and threaten, and at last they stalked away sullenly.

The sun was shining, and later in the day we built a fire outside again and laid on wet leaves to make a towering smoke which they in the great cave might see. How they must marvel we thought, and so we later learned.

Where did we get our fire? Was it possible that Six Toes had become a wizard—for of such beings there were stories even then—a medicine man such as had been heard of, one who was familiar with the strange things in the water and in the forest and, above all, with the Black Things in the clouds which sometimes made streaks of fire when the storms came? Yes, it must be so; and there was perplexity and apprehension. But we must have revenge for having been ostracised.

We jabbered bitterly together and our rage increased. We devised a plan of vengeance.

As I have told, the slight ledge in which was our cave projected out upon a narrow shelf which overhung the valley. This tongue of rock held the cave almost at its very end, the opening extending back, but a few yards, while the walls were of slight thickness.

Because of these thin walls there came to us a great idea. We would cut holes in them and thus have a view on either side, up or down the valley, and from them too, send murderous unexpected arrows. The stone was soft and the openings were soon chipped through with our hard flint axes. We hunted stealthily and at night only, for we feared a possible surprise, and slew one of the little wild horses and a deer and hacked them apart and stored away the meat, and ever carefully within the cave we nursed a slight fire, for the wonderful stone, we had now learned, would not bring flame in the darkness nor when the sky was dull.

I must tell here of what I learned afterward. There was new trouble in the great cave. Wolf had again demanded Laugh for his wife, and her father, the aged and feeble Hairy, could not protect her if he would.

She was in a desperate strait, but a most resolute maiden and a daring one was Laugh, and she at this time resolved swiftly and desperately. She had watched longingly the distant smoke.

She would flee to Six Toes, who was, at heart, her choice. Besides, had he not fire and roast meat—and oh, how good roast meat was!

Little preparation had the girl to make. She wrapped her few belongings tightly in a skin which she fastened to her back with thongs, and then, one morning, just as the light was coming and the dangerous creatures of the night had sought their hiding-places in the hills and forests, she glided from the cave, at first unnoticed, and began her run.

The sun was shining all over the snow fields and down the valley now, but she relied upon her swiftness. A fourth of the way she had gained when Wolf, suspicious concerning her and ever watchful, seeking her early, found that she was not with her father, and, rushing from the cave at once, perceived her in the distance.

He knew what her flight portended. He seized his weapons with a bellow, shouted to his immediate followers, and bounded forth in hot pursuit.

Fleeter of foot than most of the Cave women was Laugh, but the fall of snow had not been light and she was not as strong and tireless for such hampered run as were the angry ones pursuing her.

They gained upon her almost from the first and her flight became more straining, though she did not falter. Bravely, if even gaspingly, she ran; but when she attained the slope which led upward to the awaiting shelter the

rushing Wolf was scare a dozen yards behind, though here on the wind-swept ascent, the snow became lighter and Laugh almost held her own.

Then she did what alone saved her. She yelled as only a Cave woman can yell, which meant much, and Six Toes, leaping to the porthole saw it all. He rushed to the cave entrance. I at his heels.

It was a close finish—there could be no doubt of that. Wolf's final swift rush told as they neared the cave; his hand was outstretched to reach her and barely, only barely, did he miss in his clutch at her brown ankle as she dived as recklessly into the opening as does the little wood rat into its sheltering hole.

Six Toes caught her in his arms as she came and I sent an arrow whistling outward, but Six Toes was in my way and Wolf leaped aside unhurt. Then came a few moments' pause. Laugh was safe within the cave.

Wolf and his followers, who had by this time joined him, were gathered just aside from the entrance, in noisy council. We waited alert and hungrily, for we knew that our time of vengeance was at hand, I guarding the cave opening, Six Toes at the porthole on the left.

As they conferred excitedly the party of Wolf moved farther to the side and I crept nearer and nearer to the mouth of the cave. I knew there would be happenings. Then I heard the voices moving more to the side and ran back into the cave again and looked over Six Toes' shoulder.

Suddenly the men outside moved again and there now they stood, not six yards from the point of Six Toes' arrow, Wolf with his broad back to it, waving his arms and commanding violently.

Never was fairer mark offered a Cave man and never a deadly opportunity seized upon more eagerly. Slowly Six Toes drew the long shaft backward until the stone head touched the great bow, which creaked and groaned beneath the strain; then he released it!

There was a tearing thud; Wolf threw up his hands and stood wavering there with but a short length of the knotted wood jutting from his neck. For a moment he swayed so and trembled and then he pitched forward, as dead as the deer and little wild horse stored beside us in the cave.

With a yell of terror, his followers started up the valley and I bounded out from the cave and sent an arrow after them as they ran clustered. I could hear the "*thut,*" and one of them began to run waveringly and laggardly. It was a fine shot.

It was good to see Laugh eat. Little cared she what we were doing. The smell of roasted meat had assailed her, and she was gnawing greedily at a bone with cooked flesh still upon it as we turned to look upon her, still flushed from the race.

She looked up at Six Toes and laughed happily. Then he, too, laughed and sat down beside her. They were mated now, and were content.

So, for a few days, there were no happenings of note. Six Toes and Laugh were cheerful in their end of the cave and I only less so in a little alcove at the side where I slept now dreamlessly. Laugh helped in the skinning of the game. We brought and cooked the flesh and kept ever a sharp lookout up and down the valley.

Did Laugh become lax in any of her duties, Six Toes, as a husband should, admonished her with a strip of hide, but she rarely needed such corection and his strokes were light, for were they not newly wed?

I alone became, finally, somewhat restless. I felt that there was more to come; not that I feared it, but I was curious. The half-freezing tribe would soon be heard from.

We had not long to wait. Following the death of Wolf there had been much debate in the great cave. Evi-

dently Six Toes was a wizard, and evidently a great wizard was a good thing for a clan to have. Besides, Six Toes was a famous hunter and a man of might, and why not yield to him?

They came, one day, a straggling group, including even older man, and I, who guessed their mission, as I saw them in the distance, conferred swiftly with Six Toes and advised him.

They halted at a distance from the cave and yelled forth the nature of their visit and then, assured of safety, laid down their weapons and came forward. Six Toes, I standing beside him, received them somewhat gruffly. They said that they were cold and that he could make fire for them; that they were leaderless, too, would he not return to them?

Six Toes was stern but not unfriendly. He said they were right. He was a wizard and could make fire. They were leaderless, because he had slain Wolf. He could slay others.

He had been driven forth from the band, he and his brother Scar, but he would not remain angry with them if they would take him as a wizard and as the head of the clan and so obey him. If they disobeyed, well, he could burn all enemies.

The sun was shining and he drew forth the fire stone from his pouch and set into flames the bundle of dry reeds I brought. The sight startled and appalled them and some of the old men even grovelled at his feet.

All yielded wildly and blindly and, the young men carrying our belongings, Six Toes and Laugh and I in the lead, we took our way to the great cave of many galleries where the remainder of the band received us with mingled fear and joy.

One day it chanced that I was creeping upon a flock of ptarmigan, feeding in a thicket where were many berries. Already, in another place I had killed a burden of them, and cared little whether I shot more of them or not. Glancing about as I so crept along, I saw what interested me. Upon one of the bushes with a foliage darkly green, hung great clusters of berries not scarlet, like those the birds ate which we ate ourselves, but of a purple such as I have never seen before.

They were wonderful. Surely I thought, they must be better than the smaller red things, richer and more luscious. I tasted them and found them sweet and musky and fragrant, and, yielding, I gorged myself from their aboundance, and then lay down upon the dry grass in a little open space, to rest and dream, and, it might be, sleep, for there came a sort of languor over me and sleep seemed good.

I lay there dozing when I heard a fluttering of birds about me and reached for my bow and tried to rise, but could not. My legs refused to aid me and my arms seemed heavy. There came a doubt upon me.

We had learned that there were poison things, though never had I known them in this region, and surely berries so luscious could not be harmful. But I seemed in another world.

I lay there helpless; but in no pain. The drowsiness, which deepened, brought curious scenes and fancies.

Steadily all faded. It was done! Not for me was it to hunt or fight with Six Toes to the end. Not for me to take my mate and live in the full Cave man's life; not for me to be with the brave clan as it waxed in numbers and in strength until it became the greatest in all that changing region of what men call the Dardogne Valley, where our spear and arrow heads are sometimes dug from deep in the earth, and where little children prattle in the vineyards!

CHAPTER V.

THE BOATMEN.

Scar in the time of the water caves, centuries after his adventures with the people of the great cave, tells of new ventures and inventions.

WHEN it is warm, there is no sound sweeter to me than the sound of plash-

ing water. It was such a sound that came to my ears as I awoke from my sleep on a little leaf-covered mound beneath the boughs of a thicket-surrounded beech-tree on a gently sloping and wooded hillside.

I knew that near me a brook came hurrying down the slope, and that it was its rejoicing that I heard as it tumbled in little cataracts along its stony bed.

I still seemed to hear the songs of beautiful dream-birds.

I knew that I was content and sound and full of vigor though only half awake as yet; but, somehow, I was puzzled. Of what had I been dreaming, and which was the real and which the unreal? I seemed at home where I was, and yet it seemed but an hour ago that there were birds—birds which were good to eat, about me, and that there were sweet berries, and that I had eaten them and then had gone to sleep.

But there were no birds about me now, and there were no berry bushes. The beech-tree was familiar, and so were the singing and laughing of the water. I was in my own place and well. What foolish things are dreams!

There came a long call, "Co-ee! Coo-ee!" from a distance below me, and the sound was most familiar. It was the call of Droopeye, close friend and companion of mine. And I was glad to hear the summons of Droopeye—he was so called because he had a hurt in his youth such that one eyelid drooped and gave him an odd look—since there had come to me strange dreams as I slept there beside the brook which tumbled down the hillside into the lake.

I wonder why it is that I have always had strange dreams? Queer and singular they have been; not like those dreamed by my tribesmen, as they have told them to me. They dream of the hunt or the fishing or of the men and women among us; but I do not dream of such things.

My dreams are such as I cannot understand; for they are of places and people and ways ever different from what is all about me, of men and women and lands and beasts I have never seen, of countries of hot sands and mighty deserts, or deep, steaming jungles, or cold lands of ice and snow, or of mighty forests where were no men at all, but only fierce, wild creatures upon the ground, and, in the tree-tops, other creatures looking somewhat like men indeed, but living in lofty nests and ever fearful of the beasts below. I do not understand these dreams, and they make me wonder with almost a little fear.

So when I awoke to the call of Droopeye, I answered lustily and leaped to my feet, and met him as he came running up the slope from the shining water. He held in his hand a wonderfully bright shell, which he had found upon the shore, and which he showed to me laughingly.

It is hard to say why I, so different in all my ways, should care at all for the companionship of such a man as Droopeye, who was not the best aid in the hunt, and who could not run as fast or far as I, nor send an arrow from his bow so surely and so strongly.

But I liked to have him with me in the forest or in the hills, despite his uselessness in the hunt, and cared for him as I have seen some great, wild beast endure and seem to care for a lesser one about him.

Ever ready was Droopeye to build the fire with the hard-pointed stick twisted with the bow-string into the dried, punky wood, and he was ready in the skinning and in carrying his burden of whatever might be our spoil to the distant camp.

It was Droopeye who first learned to make sounds upon stretched skins, which drew to him the younger men and the girls, and made them utter odd singing noises and want to skip about. Very curious was this thing.

We had been at work upon the skin of a ground-hog, one time, scraping it clean of all flesh and making it fit for use as some sort of pouch; and when

we had done this Droopeye stretched it across the end of a short, hollow length of log which chanced to be lying near his hut, that it might dry there, flat and firm, until he should take it off to knead and stretch into softness, as was the way. It was pinned tightly with strong thorns driven through its edge into the wood, and there it dried, flat and taut and firm.

Then, one day, when I was with him, Droopeye remembered the skin he had left out in the sun to dry so, and brought it to the entrance of the hut, where he took a seat beside me, preparing to pull out the thorns and make the skin soft again by kneading.

We were talking, and he forgot for the time about the skin, playing with a short, hard stick he had chanced to pick up as we talked. At last he lifted the short length of log—it was light and thin and very dry — and, but in idleness, hit the skin a smart blow with the stick he held.

The sound made us both leap to our feet, it was so loud and odd and booming in a queer way. Again and again did Droopeye hit the skin, and each time came the booming sound, and others came running to see what it was.

"I will not take off the skin," said Droopeye then. "I will keep the sounding thing to play with."

And this he did; and it came at last that he fastened a skin across the other end of the little, dried, hollow log, and the booming was increased, and a great thing finally came of this, for in time a bigger length of hollow log was taken, and chipped and scraped smooth inside and outside, and when other skin was stretched and fastened tightly across the ends, and the thing was beaten, the booming drumming could be heard from afar, and we had a means of summons for all the tribe, should any time of peril come.

But the sounding upon the skin was not all that came of this queer discovery of Droopeye. It so pleased him that he tried stretching more skins across hollow things, making still different sounds, and other sound-making things he tried.

Finally he stretched a bowstring of sinew above the half of a great, dried, wild gourd upon which a skin was stretched, and it made a twanging which pleased him much, though the sound was not at all like that of the beating upon the drum.

Then to Droopeye came another fancy, for he was ever different from the rest of the tribe in thinking of that which might be strange and new.

There was a boy so pinched of face that he was called the Rat, and this Rat was so charmed by the noise that Droopeye made with his new things that he was hovering about constantly when the sounds were made.

Him Droopeye taught to strum upon the sinew stretched across the gourd, and soon they would make the new and strange noises together, and at night—that is, in the early night, when the hunters and others had returned to camp and had eaten, there would always be a swift clustering around the players, though I cannot tell why this was so.

The strumming noise seemed to touch the feet of those who listened, and they moved uneasily, and would often shout when the sounds came swiftly and regularly together in some way I had never heard before.

Very odd it was to see them thus swaying together, sometimes clapping their hands as the sounds came; and at last they would caper and circle about, stepping as came the sounds, and all were delighted with it. So came what Droopeye said was the first music, as he called it; and, whatever it may be, it assuredly was marvelous.

Never before, so the old men said, had the cave people been more quiet and prosperous; for we had a good region in which to live—the winters were not so white and hard as they were in the times of which the old men say their fathers' forefathers told, and there were fewer of the great, man-eating wild beasts.

Very huge and dangerous were these beasts once; and even at this time it was not good to meet the great bear, or the tree leopard, or the wolf-pack, or even the huge lone wolf which sometimes crouches by the woodpaths at night and springs out upon and tears the throat of the unwary.

Once such a wolf sprang out upon me; but I throttled him, though my arms were torn, and I was sick and weak for many days. The teeth of the old wolf are very long; but I am strong, and my grip is crushing.

We had not been at war with any other tribe since I was but a youth, and we had not been driven away from the camping place by the great floods which sometimes came in the past times, and so we had thriven here, and had done many things. There were the boat and the barb!

Very well do I remember how the first boat came. It was after a great storm, before which I had been hunting with One Ear far up the river which runs to the sea, and to which one now paddles through the lake from which the creek runs to our smaller lake about which were our huts and caves.

The water had come in a vast flood, and had caught us in the distant valley, and we had climbed into a tree that we might not drown, and there we crouched and clung throughout the night.

When morning came we could see nothing but the tops of other trees and the great waters. We were weak and hungry. We must leave the tree or die, and when a log big enough to carry us both came closely by we dropped down upon it together.

We were swept into the deep water and tossed about in eddies, and tangled and delayed, but not for a very long time. We were going straight toward a little island I knew well, though only its bare crest now showed above the waters.

We stranded against the island's shore, and crawled up a little way and rested, lying very still, for there was little life left in us. At last I rose and looked about, and then I shook One Ear by the shoulder and shouted loudly.

There was game upon the little island, game imprisoned by the flood. There were hares, a score of them, and we slew them with our axes, for they could not escape, and fed upon them, for we were famished.

Then we slept, and it was night when we awoke. We were hungry still, and ate and slept again until the morning came.

The storm was ended, but not the flood. We could see no land except the little space on which we were, and even that was lessening. What should we do?

We ate more of the hare, and sat down upon the sand, and One Ear became sad, and howled as the lone wolf sometimes does. The sound was not good to me, for it made me sorrowful, and I threw my ax at him, but did not hit him. But he ceased his howling.

It was mid-afternoon when I saw coming down the river what seemed to float higher on the water than did the other things. As it neared us I recognized it as something I had seen before. It was only a log, but it turned up at the ends, and rode high in the water, because it was hollow throughout most its length and nearly to its bottom.

Often had I seen that curious log in my hunting far up the river—a big, charred, and hollow thing, at the look of which I had often wondered. But I had thought it worthless. Of what use a charred and hollow log?

It floated so high that, as it grounded on the beach of the little island it came easily within reach of our hands, and we pulled it ashore.

We chattered foolishly over it, and then, all at once, to each of us came the thought that the thing might carry us more easily than the heavier log which had brought us to where we were.

We must leave the island or starve. There were no more hares. We put the log in the water again and I held it by an end while One Ear waded out and got astride it.

Then a new thought came to him, and he lifted his legs and dropped squattingly into the great hollow the fire had made, and looked up at me, and cackled excitedly.

The log floated, and yet he was away from the water! I clambered in beside him with a shout. The current caught us and carried us away, and then we yelled together in our exultation. We were floating, warm and dry, and resting.

It was wonderful! Never had men floated thus before, and we were great men indeed! Swiftly we were carried toward the promontory afar down where were the caves where we and our people dwelt.

Close in, just at nightfall, the current swayed us, and we leaped out as we reached the shallows, and dragged our prize ashore, while the clan gathered about us, all chattering and wondering. We had what we came to call a boat!

We ate much and slept soundly after this, our great peril and great discovery. In the morning followed another gathering of the Cave people about the strange thing which could carry men safely upon the water; and he who could draw pictures of wild creatures on the rocks, and who could chip spear-heads most wisely of us all, was the one who looked upon the fire-hollowed log longest and most earnestly, though he at first was silent.

Then finally he came to me. A boat seemed to be a good thing. Why not have another boat? What fire had done, fire could do!

Not far from the caves, and close by the shore of the currentless lagoon which reached in from the river, lay the trunk of a large fallen tree. Our stone axes were good, so Thin Legs said, but might not suffice to make a boat like that brought by One Ear and me; but surely we could in time hack off a log, and then make the fire which warmed us and cooked our food do the rest.

So we fell to work eagerly, all the strong men of the clan coming to aid in turn. It was long work and wearing, and there were tired arms and blistered hands, but within two days the log was hacked away from the trunk of the fallen big tree, and then Thin Legs alone took leadership, and fire was brought.

Very wise is Thin Legs. None of the rest of us can think as he does; none of us can so tell what is going to happen after things have been done.

Upon the top of the great log we had cut away he built a little fire, and supplied it with dry fuel as it ate its way into the wood. When it threatened to reach too far toward the end or sides he dammed it with wet mud, and so made it eat this way or that way, as he would have it, until of the huge log there remained but a thin, hollowed and charred with thin, strong sides and bottom.

We pushed it into the water and it floated high, carrying half a score of us at once. So came the first man-made boat. Now we could fish throughout the whole lagoon.

With long poles thrust to the bottom we guided the boat here and there about the shallow waters, and had better fortune than ever before, spearing the fish at all their feeding-places.

Sometimes, too, we would guide the boat into the depths of the wild rice which grew in the water and lie in wait there for the water-fowl which came at night. So our fortunes were bettered.

It was a wonderful boat, one we could pole through the water far more swiftly than we could the other, and it seemed as if there could be nothing better. But we did not know.

Not a great time passed when a strange thing happened. It was that I saw foolish boys make the clumsy boat we had before move in the water with-

out a pole. We could make a boat move in the water only when we thrust down a pole to the bottom and leaned against it and pushed; but the idle boys, playing in the one lying by the bank in the still lagoon, began pulling a flat stick through the water beside them, and the boat moved out, and then they were afraid, and yelled loudly, for they could not get back to shore.

We got them back, poling with the only other boat we had. It was all most foolish, but I wondered. I saw the boys pull the flat stick through the water, and saw the boat move. I myself saw it.

After that I sought the flat stick the boys had used, and looked upon it and all over it carefully. It was but as any other flat stick.

When all were gone into the caves or the wood, I took the stick, and got into the boat myself, but I carried the pole with me and laid it in the boat, lest without it I could not get back to shore.

Then I took the flat stick and thrust it into the water, and pulled backward with it, and again the strange thing happened, for the boat moved on the water as it had done with the boys.

Farther and farther it went from the land, and I took up the pole with which to push myself back, but it would not reach bottom. The flat stick had carried me too far. I was frightened. I knew not what to do. I yelled, but there was no one to hear me. I was afraid of the water.

Then, in my desperation, I took the flat stick again, and pulled with it in the water, and the boat went farther, and soon, as I looked about, I saw that I was close to the wood on the other side of the lagoon. I pulled with the flat stick again, and the boat touched land again, and I climbed out and lay down upon the ground.

Long I thought. Could the flat stick make the boat go back? I would try. I clambered into the boat and turned it about with the pole, so that it pointed toward the other shore, and then took the stick and pulled with it in the water again, and was carried back to very nearly the place from which I had started.

I sprang upon the bank, and yelled and leaped up and down. I wonder why it is that men always dance up and down and yell when they are happy? The other creatures do not act in that foolish way.

So I danced and whooped, and then finally I became tired. But I was the greatest man in the tribe. I, alone, had the flat stick, and none should take it from me. There was another flat stick lying on the shore, and I took it up in sport, and got into the boat with it, laughing, because I knew it would not make the boat move.

I was wrong. I pulled with it as I had with the other, and, behold! the boat moved as it had done before. Other flat sticks I took then and pulled with them, and the boat obeyed them all. Any flat stick would move the boat if it were only pulled with the flat side against the water.

I was no richer than any other man of the tribe. Then I tried to move the boat with round sticks—many of them—but it lay still. The sticks but glided through the water and the boat would not heed them.

I shouted again, still more loudly, because I wanted to tell about the flat stick, and Thin Legs came running from the wood where he had been gathering nuts and roots. No game had he, for Thin Legs does not often hunt, though he alone can chip the best arrow-heads and spear-heads.

I told him of the wonderful flat stick and all it had done, and there came the thinking look in his eyes which I do not understand, and then he tried the flat stick himself in the boat, and then climbed ashore and leaped and shouted almost as wildly as I had done.

After a time he sat down upon a little rock, and sat there long, saying no word, holding the flat stick in his hand and looking at it. He could think long. It did not hurt his head as it

did mine and the heads of others of the Cave men if we thought too much. Then we went to the caves together.

Thin Legs carried with him the flat stick, but he said nothing.

When I left the cave the next morning the big yellow thing that makes the light had not yet come up above the great forest to the east.

I could not wait. I was too eager to try to go upon the water again with a flat stick to move the boat. I ate but a mouthful or two of the flesh of the little deer I had killed in the ravine in the hills, and then I ran to where were the boat and the flat sticks.

I took my bow and arrows with me. I would get across the lagoon and go into the beech wood, where many birds fed on the nuts and where it was good hunting. There was no boat there! Then there came to my ears a yell from the other shore.

I called aloud in answer, and from the shadow of the distant bushes across the water came out the boat with Thin Legs kneeling in it, and digging the water, as it seemed, with a flat stick again, and the boat was coming toward me.

But far more swiftly and straight it came than it had done the day before, and I knew in a moment that Thin Legs, the wise, had been at work in the night—at work by his fire in the cave—and that somehow he had given more strength to the flat stick.

It was the same flat stick at one end, but not at the other. The day before it had been hard to grasp and hold, because it was so broad and I could not get my fingers round it. I could hold it only with a hard clutch, pressing on each side, and so could not pull it through the water without a strain.

Now it was another kind of stick. All night long Thin Legs had worked with his stone hatchet and with his knife. For what would be the length from a man's foot to his knee he had chopped and chipped on each side of the wood until there was left something that could be clasped easily in the hand, and this part he had cut and scraped until it was round like a spear-handle.

At the end was still a flat stick with which a man could pull in the water with all his strength, grasping the round handle above. No man had seen such a stick before, and I spoke not, though Thin Legs grinned.

"We will call it a paddle—which means what pulls," he said and grinned again. "Get into the boat."

I got into the boat and took the strange stick and dug it into the water and pulled swiftly with all my might, and the boat shot away as do some of the swimming birds upon the water; for now I had my grip and I was strong. I went to the other shore and very swiftly back again. What a thing had we!

And another paddle made Thin Legs, so that we each had one, and day by day we learned about the boat and the flat stick until, when we pulled together, we went over the water like the queer, clacking water-bird of the rushes, which need not fly from danger, so swiftly can it swim.

And all this time in the day was Thin Legs toiling upon a new boat—the little boat for us two alone, which should be greater than the boat the tribe had already made.

All day he toiled, chipping with his stone ax, and burning with little fires covered with wet clay, that the fire might not reach too far, and each night I brought him food—nuts and berries and meat—for I was as eager about the boat as he. And one day Thin Legs declared the boat was done.

It was a wonderful boat! Never before had such a boat been seen. Not great in size was it—only the length of two men and but broad enough for one—and each of its ends was pointed like the other.

But it was not that which made the boat so marvelous. Long and patiently had Thin Legs labored. Much had he chipped and burned, and so watch-

ful had he been that the boat, smooth on the outside as the shell of the river-turtle, was itself but the thinnest shell, alike in thickness throughout every part of the tough wood, yet as strong as the clumsy boats we had already made, and so light that one man alone could carry it.

Even Thin Legs found it not too great a burden. To me, Scar, the Strong One, it was as nothing. Yet this shell thing would easily carry the two of us upon the water and a considerable burden besides. Very wise was Thin Legs.

For a long time we used the boat, going where we would in the lagoon and spearing the fish, though many we lost because our spears would not hold them well; and great hunting had I in the beech and oak woods on the farther side, which we could not reach so easily before and where the bush-birds and the cock that struts and calls and all the creatures that feed upon the nuts and berries were not so fearful as those on the side of the lagoon where were the caves, because they had not been hunted so often by Cave men.

Close upon these creatures I would creep and drive my arrows through them, and we would come back to the caves with much meat. And there was none among the hunters that matched with me, Scar, the strong bowman, if I do say so myself.

One day I had shot and killed a porcupine, and I went back to the caves with him most carelessly; and because there was more than I could eat—he was a very fat porcupine—I called to Thin Legs to come and cook and eat him with me.

I was careless, and one of the spines, the things upon the back of the porcupine, slipped into my thumb, and I could not pull it out again from the flesh below the first joint.

Thin Legs tried to help me get the piece of porcupine out of my hurt thumb; but it would not come back, though we pulled, and it hurt me, and I yelled. Then suddenly I pushed it—I don't know why I pushed it—and it went easily and smoothly. Thin Legs took hold of the other end of it and pulled the great quill through without hurting me at all.

The next day we took our little boat and rowed up and down all around the edges of the yellow, shallow water, and with our flint spears speared many of the fishes; but many of them slid off—not all of them, because sometimes we used to toss them swiftly into our boat or to the bank.

But the most of them slid off; and, though we were very keen of eye and deft of hand, Thin Legs and I, we never got the half of them.

But something came into my mind that afternoon, and I looked at Thin Legs as we lost fish after fish, and rowed to the shore with him and sat down on a little rock, and then I asked him what it was that made the quills of the porcupine hold things so that it was hard to pull them off.

He did not answer, but thought a little. There came the distant look upon his face again, as if he had found something, and then, with a shout, he leaped up and began running toward the cave.

I paddled back with the boat and fish, but I did not see Thin Legs again that day. He was working in his cave, and would allow none to enter it. In the morning I knew.

All night he had worked, and he had chipped the heads of two flint spears so that they were barbed, as were the quills of the porcupine, only in a far coarser way. Then I knew. Never had been such spear-heads before, nor any worth so much in food-getting. How can I tell the story of the barb?

We went to the lake the next day with our spears—for Thin Legs had made another like the first one—and we rowed in our boat among the shallows, and there came beneath us the great fish; and we speared them, and none of them slipped away, be-

cause of the great barbs at the side of our flint spears.

Very heavily laden was our boat, for it was full of fish when we paddled back that day, and very rich in fishes were we now, and great men in the tribe were Thin Legs and I because of the spears which held the fishes.

There is a curious white fish, very tender and flaky and sweet in the mouth, which gathers in schools in the big river just above where the swift current begins, and it came to me that I might go among them with tied lines and barbed hooks trailing from the boat and so catch at least one or two of them.

I wanted Thin Legs to go with me, but he declared it to be unsafe. If once the current got hold of the boat too strongly, he said, it would be carried down the river and over the falls and upon the jagged rocks where no man could live; but I only laughed at him and said, since he feared, I would fish alone.

I took my lines with me, with bait for the barbed hooks, and tied one end of the lines about my waist, letting the hooks float in the water far behind. I could hear the roar of the falls, when I became afraid and would turn the boat to row back with the floating hooks; but I found all at once that I had come too far.

As I strove to turn the fierce current caught the paddle and exerted its strength against me. How could Thin Legs have chanced upon such treacherous wood?

The paddle snapped short in the middle, and I was helpless with the fragment of the handle in my hand. The boat whirled round in the rushing waters. The falls roared more loudly. There were the jagged rocks below and certain death there.

I threw myself along the bottom of the tossing boat, lest it overturn even before the leap. But of what avail? There was only death below!

I closed my eyes and, with a roaring of the waters in my ears, shot downward toward the jagged rocks, and then came nothingness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARMORERS.

Scar awakens to see the beginning of a new age. He tells how came a discovery greater in its results than any other that the world had yet seen, or will ever see again.

I was aroused by the sound of a strange hammering, blows following each other rapidly and with a quality of sound it seemed to me I had never heard before. It was not like that of stone upon wood or of stone upon stone, but had at times a faint ring, a something altogether unfamiliar.

I had been sleeping peacefully in the sun, lying in the grass of a plot among bushes which grow in a valley-like gorge between rocky walls and having many boulders scattered about upon its surface.

I sprang to my feet and emerged from the bushes to discover the cause of the curious hammering and recognized the scene, though somewhat slowly. The Hammer was at work with two companions, and I knew that I should have been helping him had I not become tired and gone to the sunny spot in the bushes to rest and sleep a little.

The Hammer — he had gained the name because he was nowadays doing little else than swing his big stone hammer in seeking to acquire what had never been much sought before— saw me approaching and hailed me boisterously: "Ho. Did you sleep, Scar, big laggard? Here is more mauling for you."

There was mauling to be done assuredly. All three of the men were at work, standing beside a flat boulder upon which they were seeking to pound to little fragments uneven chunks of rock which, from their shape, must have been somehow broken from a larger body.

As I drew nearer I saw that among the fragments the men were thus seeking to pulverize there appeared lumps and shreds and strips of a substance which did not break beneath the blows, though it might bend and flatten.

Then what remained of the daze of my sleeping went away in a moment and I knew the why and wherefore of what was here before me. The red substance was the thing Hammer had found in the pronged rock, and was copper, as we came to call it, something now most precious to us and in the getting of which we were all assisting Hammer to the utmost. What arrowheads and spearheads he had given us! There had been never others to equal them.

It had been a curious discovery, and one unlikely to have been made by other than this Hammer, friend and hutmate of mine, and the shrewdest and most thinking man among us.

He, who was ever alert to discover the reason of what was unusual, was attracted one day by the appearance of a particular boulder in the valley. It was different from the others in that it had upon it many outstanding points and bulges, as if the stone were harder in those spots and had yielded less to the chippings of the cold, heat, and storms or whatever might make it grow smaller with time.

He picked a small rock from the ground and struck a heavy blow upon one slender projection longer than his hand, thinking to break it off, but it did not break, it only bent instead!

Then, indeed, was the curiosity of Hammer aroused mightily. He would have that strange projection! Fiercely and strenuously he pounded upon it, and very wearily at last, for he had set himself a serious task, though he finally succeeded, loosening the prong from the rock after long battering of it back and forth. He held in his hand something well worthy of his study.

Hammer brought to our hut the red piece which surely was not of the rock itself, and much we considered of what it might be and of what use it could be made to us. That last thought took but little time. Hammer decided it.

"It will not break," he said. "It will only bend, and that not easily, yet it may be hammered into many shapes. Such hammering it shall have. I will make a spearhead such as men have never seen!"

He took the fragment of metal and one of the heaviest of our stone hammers and went with them to the hard, flat boulder in the ravine and there began his pounding.

All that afternoon came to our ears in the village the sound of the hammering at the rock. I did not go there, for I had other things to do out in the lower hills, where I had seen a group of little deer and where I thought I might get a chance at one as they came from the wood at sundown.

I got none, and darkness had come when I reached our hut again and found Hammer by the fire, whereon he had roasted meat which tasted good to both of us. I asked concerning his labor and he showed me the piece of copper.

What a change had come to it! Very nearly in the shape of a spearhead it was now and fine to look upon in its bright redness. Hammer said he had not sought to do more when the light began to fail, for the work must be finer now and he must use a lighter hammer.

He was at the rock again in the early morning and wrought there all day again, meanwhile having lying on the rock beside him as he worked the best and most beautifully shaped stone spearhead that we owned, one of the hardest flint, most perfect in its form, and so polished by rubbing upon sandstone and afterward with the bark of trees that it was as smooth as the shell of a beechnut.

This Hammer used as a model, and the "tap-tapping" of his light hammer of stone upon the metal was like the tapping of a woodpecker who

never wearied. He would not show me that night what he had accomplished, but said that his task would be done in the day to come.

At night, when we met again in the hut, he showed me the copper spearhead.

It was something wonderful, that spearhead. It was smoother than any stone one ever made, for Hammer had tapped so gently, at the end, that there was left no trace of indentation, and afterward he had polished it until now it glittered in the firelight. Its edge was better than any stone knife could be made to have, and, Hammer told me, it could be ground upon our sandstone whetstone, or if it became dulled could be easily hammered into sharpness again. It could not be broken! There was no other such spearhead in the world—and we could make others like it!

There was such excitement in the village as had not often been before when Hammer, who had set the spearhead in its shaft, displayed it to the tribe.

There was wonder and great envy and desire, and a demand that henceforth Hammer should do naught else but make such spearheads, that each might possess one, and so the tribe be made superior to all about us.

And Hammer promised this, if only they would bring to him the copper with which to work, and he told of how he had found that which he had. This was agreed upon, and soon as many men as could work together were assailing the copper-holding boulder with their heaviest hammers and mauls of stone.

A weary task must it be to break that rock to pieces, but the hammers were of a harder stone than it, and all day the blows were falling, and in time each scrap of copper which it held must needs be in our possession.

And, as it had been agreed upon, so it came to pass, though long was the labor. Strips and bits and fragments of copper of all sizes, from those fit for arrowheads and spearheads up to those large enough for axes, were gained from the gradually crushed rock, and Hammer, whom I now aided, labored from dawn until night.

The time came when each man in the tribe bore proudly a shining, copper spearhead, and when some had axes or copper arrowheads as well. It was a great thing, but the rock was gone! Where could we get more copper? There was none to answer, and upon this problem Hammer and I thought much and discussed it many times.

Long one night were Hammer and I debating in our hut concerning what had become the common problem. To both of us it seemed that there must be more than a single rock in all the world which held that which we wanted.

"And it is not distant," said Hammer, "this other rock of the same kind; there may be a host of rocks." Then he spoke still more earnestly.

"We, even you and I, are the ones. We must seek more copper, and we shall find it. It lies somewhere in the gorges, surely. Will you come with me until we have gone far enough and searched most closely? What greater thing could we be doing? Will you come with me?"

As he well knew, he need not have asked the question. I had, long since, become as earnest as was he in the great thing upon which so depended our fortunes and the fortunes of all our tribe.

We caught our rough little steeds, small, hairy and shaggy, but sinewy and enduring, and with ropes of hide about our shoulders fastened to us the heavy hammers we hoped to need; and after the usual struggle with the animals, got fairly on our way.

A half day's ride brought us to the first ravine, and then we took off the rawhide halters which were our only bridles and let the horses go.

They started back whinnying and galloping. The horse of the time took

most unkindly to the carrying of any burden. He was to learn much concerning that matter very soon.

Two of the openings of the hills we explored most thoroughly that day. They were not at a great distance from each other and were very much alike, narrow gorges or ravines with narrow bottoms and steep, almost perpendicular sides.

We found nothing to even remind us of the sort of rock in which Hammer had discovered copper in the first place. We took up our march again, and just at nightfall came to an opening, not so narrow and gloomy of appearance as the others.

This we would explore in the morning, and so we lay down for the night before a little fire we had built. It was early autumn and was not cold.

It was a wonderfully shining morning which came to us, and as we ate I still kept my high spirits, and was so filled with cheer, and made such buoyant talk that Hammer said I must have arisen early and gone into the forest and eaten of a root which it was said would make men laugh.

I cared not. I was most courageous and full of lightness. I felt that the Things, the makers of happenings, in which we believed a little, though heeding little as well, were going to smile upon us sometime that day. Of this I spoke afterward to Hammer many times.

We started up the opening in the hills and the prospect was fairer than we had seen yet. It was not a gorge, but wide enough to be almost like a narrow, ascending valley, and its sides were not perpendicular, but sloping, and bearing many stunted oaks and pines and shrubbery, as did the bottom.

Over the bottom were distributed boulders of all sizes, and some of them appeared certainly not to have come from the mountain sides adjoining, so different were they in appearance from the rock of the sloping walls.

Such a thing I had often seen, however, and I thought little of it. Hardly had we entered the gap than we began testing the rocks with our heavy hammers, battering away at them until the moss and incrustations of any kind were knocked away and the nature of the rocks made clear to us.

Our hammers, of which I have not yet spoken, were most excellent for this. They were of much weight, and of the hardest kind of stones of proper size that we could find in our region. These stones, half as large as a man's head, we had grooved around, after much labor in the chipping, and fitting in the grooves and holding firmly had laid withes of the toughest willow, which were twisted into handles of the length we wanted. So we made hammers which would crush the common rock most easily.

Never were better hammers than these of the hard, unbreakable porphyry and greenstone, though these were not the names called them, if, indeed, we gave them names at all. It was sufficient that they served our purpose well. So we hammered our way up the slope, but found nothing to reward us.

At midday we rested for a time and ate and then took up our testing again, not far apart from each other, with Hammer, as it chanced, a little in the lead. We had not gone half a furlong when there came from him the longest, loudest, and most ear-splitting yell I had ever heard. I was with him in a moment.

Hammer was standing beside a rock of about the height of his shoulder. It was, in a general way, not unlike the rocks through which we had passed, but it had the difference that it was not altogether smooth of surface, and that here and there upon it obtruded lumps and points.

One of these points Hammer had smitten in his testing, and now it glittered in the sun, a spike of purest copper! There could be no mistake about it. We had found what we were seeking. In that one rock, could we but in

any way break it apart, were hundreds of the new and amazing weapons which were such prizes.

We attacked the most obtruding and slender and most promising of the outstanding parts with our great hammers working most feverishly until we sweated like the wild boar at the end of the long hunt.

I won in the race, and very proud I was. The spikelike mass upon which I hammered, beating it back and forth and this way and that, parted at last from the mass and fell to the ground only a moment before that upon which Hammer had been spending his mighty blows. We had what would make a spear-head apiece, enough in themselves to have made our journey worth while!

All day we labored, so beating off some half-score of the red protuberances, and then, to breathe ourselves, went farther up the somewhat narrowing valley to learn whether or not there were other rocks of the kind which meant so much to us.

One other we found, to our great delight, but one only, though we followed the defile until it lost itself in what was little more than a crevice in the now close-looming mountain.

We resolved that for two days we would labor on the rocks and that then we would return to the village, where Hammer would work upon the copper we had gained, and I would return with others to do what we could to further hammering of the two rocks, and make perhaps some further search. That plan we did not carry out.

It was about the middle of the afternoon of the first of these two days when I heard from the forest of beech and oak which lay at the foot of the slope the call of the grouse—doubtless feeding on the many nuts.

We had, in our excitement and absorption, been eating only of the dried food we had brought with us, and my stomach clamored for roasted grouse as soon as the cries of the birds reached me.

It affected Hammer as it did me, and I took my bow and arrows from where they were left at our sleeping place and crept into the forest. There were grouse in abundance there, and soon I had a pair big enough and fat enough to satisfy even such laborers as we with a supper worth the eating.

I had gone well into the wood in my hunting, and now strode swiftly toward the gap, paying little attention to what was about me. So carelessly did I walk that I stumbled sharply against a small rock which lay half hidden beneath the brown leaves which were beginning to fall thickly.

I glanced down at the obstacle, which was but a flattish stone not a quarter of a yard across, and—I know not why, save that I was at this time curious about all rocks—stooped and turned it over. Its bottom, clean upon the sand, was red! It was copper!

Then went out from me a yell which could by no means have been less mighty than was that of Hammer when he had found the rich rock in the defile. He could have heard me from anywhere.

His answering shout came back, and soon he was with me, looking upon what I had discovered. We stood there silently for a moment and then involuntarily looked about us. Among the beech leaves on every side lay smaller or greater rocks of similar looks.

We turned some of them over. They were copper, seemingly almost pure and not so great of size that they could not be beaten apart.

We could not but know that a new thing, one of the greatest ever known, had come to men, and that we and our tribe would be the first to own it in abundance. No longer at this time would we trifle with the two rocks in the valley!

At daylight we took up our journey for the village, carrying with us only what we had beaten from the rocks and one of the smallest of the fragments we had found among the beeches

and oaks. Henceforth our work with copper was to be in a different way.

We had reasoned upon it, and had decided what we would do. At first it had seemed wise to move our belongings to where the metal lay to our hand, but there were other things to be considered.

The mouth of the wide ravine where Hammer had found the red-pronged rock, near a blasted and hollow tree-trunk, faced the village squarely, and, fortunately for him, there also stood near an almost square boulder of the hardest stone, of about half his height, which served him as an anvil.

Such another rock it would be hard to find in a convenient locality, and we had seen none like it in the beech wood or in the ravine of the two rocks on which we had been working.

It would cost labor to transport the metal from the wood to the village, but once it was there it would be where we could most easily convert it into weapons. We would be near the village and all its conveniences, and besides we would be where those would come who wished to barter, as we knew they must in time.

Little traffic had there been between the tribes, however friendly they might be, at any time, for the things possessed were very much alike, and, besides, the bartering was a new thing.

Our ancestors did not barter. They took what they wanted, or, if not strong enough, must go without it. Relations had changed, and now mankind were engaged in fighting each other only part of the time.

Now a new reason for trade had come, and we felt its importance and its promise. So it was resolved between us that the forging should be done in the ravine facing the village, and the copper brought from where we had found it in the wood.

We could use our little horses. It is hard to tell how great was the excitement in the village when we showed what we had with us and the news of our discovery went about.

Excellent and very curious was the story of our tribe from that same day. There began a new life, for we had another interest now than mere living upon what the earth and land and water might give us for the eating or the wearing.

Surely never before did a tribe of men so change in character, because never before had arisen conditions so splendidly compelling. I devised double pouches from the skins we had, one to hang on each side of a horse, and the youth of the tribe were set at work bringing the copper rocks from the distant forest, while men there toiled to break the larger ones to fragments suited to such carrying.

There was a procession of boys and horses between the village and the treasure-ground, and soon there arose a small mountain of the copper rocks beside the stone anvil near the great tree-trunk, and the sound of hammering never ceased.

I worked with Hammer at the shaping, as did two other men, and it was not long, since the anvil rock would accommodate but four workers, before we had rolled down from farther up the valley four or five more of the hard rocks to also serve as they might for other anvils, though to accomplish this they required many, as did the later hard work in chipping the tops of the new rocks down to the proper level.

Then still more of the men were set to work to learn the way of the hammering and shaping, and became expert according to their gifts, though none could ever hope to equal the way of Hammer. How he rejoiced in his own skill!

There appeared nothing that he could not fashion from the glittering copper brought to him. With mighty blows at first he would beat the metal more nearly into the shape desired than could any other of us while wielding the heaviest hammers, and then, such crude shape gained, it was marvelous to watch him.

He played with the thing as if he loved it. The sound of his beating, as he changed from one hammer to another in his fashioning, was like the slope from hand to finger-tip, until the gentle "tap-tap" could be scarcely heard, and beneath his hand lay, finally, such perfect weapon or utensil as had never been before.

Once, in sheer bravado, it may be, he devised and made a brooch so delicate and fine and beautiful that all stood wondering, and there came dark looks and jealousies among both men and women; but he gave the splendid bauble to the most aged of the women, saying that old women had once been young, and so the faces brightened.

Not a man or youth but had keen copper-headed spear and arrows and knife and ax, and was trained in the sharpening and care of them. We were bravely weaponed. Not always, though, did we use the copper arrows, for they were too precious to be shot lightly in the hunting, those made of stone still serving for the killing of the smaller game.

Then followed a small thing which proved in the end a great one. A youth of the tribe, that he might not easily lose his copper arrows, had tied the scarlet feather of a bird to each arrow-shaft close to its end in a little groove, that it might not hit the bow and mar his shooting.

The brilliant feather would reveal the arrow wherever it might chance to fall, which was a good thing. But more came of it. The youth soon learned that an arrow flew more smoothly and evenly and that with it thus feathered he was far surer of his game.

There followed a time when Hammer spoke less often and seemed lost in some new thought. One day he told me of it.

"If," he said, "we could only melt and mold the copper!" And he said also: "You and I will go to the village and work there a while and try to do certain things." So I went with him.

The flat rock which had been our anvil was in its place, and sound as ever, seemingly, stood the hollow tree-trunk near it; and I saw that it was at this trunk with the hollow opening at its bottom that Hammer looked first and examined most carefully. In the times of our working here I had noticed one thing about this opening at the base of the trunk—that, especially when the wind blew up the valley, it roared and whistled up the trunk through the opening and even drew curvingly the flames of any fire which chanced to be made near it. Could it be this, I thought, that was now in the mind of Hammer? I was not mistaken.

He called to the men in the village and bade them bring from the banks of the stream behind the village a great quantity of soft, tenacious clay such as we used in making our pottery, at which work both men and women among us were most skilful, and this clay he spread upon the earth on and before the opening, thus making a clay platform.

He also plastered the inside of the trunk upward as far up as he could reach with this same clay; then upon the clay platform he made a fire, not too high, and fed this fire until nightfall and for some time later. Then we slept, for we were older men now and cared not to work far into the night.

The clay floor and the clay above it were well baked when we came to the tree in the morning, though not yet enough, Hammer said; yet he did not at once rebuild the fire, but sent for a slender and knowing lad of the village, to whom he gave a task of merit.

The youth was to wriggle his slim body through the opening and ascend and plaster the trunk inside from bottom to top! It was a feat, but the youngster was equal to it, with the aid provided him. The men cut down a tree and from it took a long, slender

limb equal to the height of the dead trunk, and sheared off its twigs and many side branches, leaving always enough of each to make a foothold. They climbed the trunk and drew up the limb and let it down inside, and thus provided the boy with a sort of ladder from which to do his work.

The clay was passed up to him at first, and later slung down to him from the top in a skin pouch which one of the men drew up. Two days it required for the resolute lad to complete the work well, but at its end he had bestowed upon him such spear-head and arrows and knife and hatchet of glittering copper as made him mightiest of small warriors and loftiest of mien among a thousand.

Then, in the clay-bottomed and lined old tree-trunk a mighty fire was built by Hammer and kept going until the clay was turned to brick. He had made a furnace! The fire roared up the opening as if drawn by all the demons of the sky in time of storm.

Now Hammer took a lump of the clay and, working very carefully, pressed down into it, to half its thickness, a copper ax; upon this he laid a part, exceedingly thin, of the bladder of a stag, and afterward he pressed down more of the clay so that the ax was all embedded, save a portion of its handle; he then left the mass to dry for a time in the sun, and later heated it for a long time in a fire outside.

When he drew it forth and it had cooled, the wooden handle outside the clay was burned away and, by a little careful prying, the two halves of the mold which had been separated by the bladder came apart.

These he fitted together again and enclosed in another mass of clay, leaving open only the opening into the hollow mold. The clay was set upon the ground with the hole upward.

Next Hammer brought from the village a covered earthen pot, not very deep, into one side of which he made a hole to receive the end of a long handle of wood, though before he put the handle in he covered it also with clay which he baked about it in a long fire.

He had now a vessel which he could thrust unharmed into even such a dreadful furnace as he had made within the base of the tree. Into it he placed half a dozen ingots of the purest copper, and thrust it, with its lid on, into the white-red heart of the flaming coals. The long handle was propped into place upon a crotch near the flames, and then we fed the fire and waited!

The day passed into the night, one of us awake at all times and feeding the raging furnace as it needed. Morning came, and then Hammer, who had been sleeping last, arose and looked at me and beckoned. Together we neared the white-hot mass of coals and embers, and taking hold of the long handle, very carefully withdrew the pot from where it rested in the eye-blistering furnace.

We took it away from the fire and rested it a moment on the ground while, with a long stick in hand, Hammer lifted off the still red cover. Then rose such a yell of triumph as had not been heard since we found the copper in the forest. The metal had melted!

We did not speak. Carefully as men had ever performed an action, and holding the ungainly handle firmly, we poured the molten stuff into the hole in the waiting mold.

It filled and overflowed and ran upon the ground, but we cared not. What was left we poured into a hollow in the soil, and then threw ourselves upon the ground to wait again. It was noon when we broke away the clay, and later when the mold had cooled enough to be handled; the two parts separated easily and there came forth a copper ax!

The great thing was accomplished! It was not a perfect ax, but it would be so after a little grinding and polishing. Henceforth the making of

copper things would be done in a new and easier way. Furthermore, one man—two men, indeed—would die something more content. The tribe—the whole world—had a part in what had come that day!

Later we learned to build a better furnace and to provide at the forest village all things required for easier casting. With the training to the labor from the getting of the copper to the time when it was made into weapons or other things, there came, too, a new orderliness and sense of what was best among us, and we established what was something like a government in a council of the older men, and less like the ways of the barbarians we sometimes met who had no law save that of might.

We feared them not, though once the ever-dreaded westward drift from we knew not where brought to our doors a small horde of barbarians who thought to overrun us easily, but who fell in windrows at our barricades before such archery as ours, or died beneath our copper spears and axes and fled, a remnant, to seek somewhere an easier conquest.

There were not too many left for such adventure, and the tribe next to us, a strong and warlike one, received them fiercely and finished them completely.

But Hammer and I were growing old now, and, to me especially, came a weakness which I could not overcome. I was sick for days, and was well tended, though it did not avail, I know not why, for I had but little pain, and still helped to advise, as was my duty as one of the older council, and still felt every interest in the welfare of my prosperous tribe.

Prosperous indeed it was, for now we and what we possessed were known to all. From far and wide came the riches of the time to us—many things—thick furs from the North, amber from the western sea, and a host of other things of worth.

And as the barter grew, so did a greater acquaintance between the tribes of all the land, and all learned much and came to understand each other better, and of what was beyond the region of each. All this because of our great discovery and of what we had done with it!

And might there not yet, I dreamed, be hidden in the rocks other and even more useful metals which men would sometimes find and smelt? These thoughts pleased me much in the days when I lay helpless and weakening from day to day; and much I spoke of them in the times when Hammer sat beside me after bringing such food as I could eat. But it was not for long!

CHAPTER VII.

THE SAILORS.

Scar the Bold takes to the sea in the early days of the Phenicians, when the world had grown much older than in its age of copper, when his latest tale was told.

I HAD been sleeping pleasantly enough, though dreaming of a noisy clanging of hammers in a forest. I awoke to find myself stretched lazily upon the sand, to hear the lapping of waves, and to look out upon blue waters, to the westward, it must be, for it seemed afternoon and the sun was not far above the waters, a little to the left hand as I faced it.

I rose to my feet and looked toward the east, and there saw a host of palm trees, beyond them green hills, and beyond these mountains. From the beach the land lay level to the hills, and not far from the shore and among the palm trees were many huts with people moving about among them.

Near where I had been lying were a number of boats hauled out upon the sand, which boats I studied curiously. They did not seem unknown to me, but I was still half sleeping, for the sea and the air and the day

were drowsy and the leaves upon the palm trees were idle.

Not from the trunk of some great tree had any one of these boats been hewn and hollowed. They were made in quite another manner, with a framework and keel and ribs of heavy wood and a sheathing with the seams made water-tight by calking, and carried oars instead of paddles. Very good boats they seemed to me, and fit for riding rough water, and as my sleep-clogged senses cleared I knew this to be so, for had I not helped to build them!

From where the larger boats were hauled up to the shore there came a shout:

"Haste thee, Scar; we go out for the fishing!"

I hurried toward the boat, for I knew what was my present duty, since there were but six of us to man the boat, which made but scanty crew.

We were not to row far, however, only to a place near the islands where the fishing was most promising, so that all the oarsmen usual were not needed. I took my seat upon the rowing bench and grasped an oar, and soon we were sweeping toward a passage between the islands. There were in all the world no better seamen than we of the Phenician race, which had begun to live fairly with the founding of our village, Akko.

We were not great people as compared with those who were behind the mountains of Lebanon which protected us on the east—there were as yet but some five thousand of us to occupy the narrow land between the mountains and the sea—but we had prospered greatly since venturing from the home of our forefathers where the great Euphrates finds the southern ocean.

It was well for us that we had found this palm and wild vine-clad country, rock-walled and safe as might be from invasion, and had taken up our abode here and sent to our kindred, telling them of the soil's richness and of the many spoils of the sea; and so they were following us, band after band, forming new villages to the north along the coast.

Of these were Sidon and Tyre, though as yet they were but hamlets. As for us in Akko, we could ask no better fortune than was already ours. We were possessors of only this close-bounded and curtailed domain—but what a land!

Never was one fairer or richer or better suited to the needs of such as we. The palms which grew in forests along the sea-lapped land stretching into a wide beach supplied abundant timber for our houses, while for our ships—already our sailless biremes were becoming stately—there were the cedars of Lebanon thick upon the range behind us, and oak and other woods of strength.

Back of the sandy coast belt was the fertile plain, yet to become a region of gardens and orchards and cornfields, a land for the pomegranate and the orange. Still farther back rose the green, low-lying hills, great slopes whereon would grow most healthily the vine, the olive, and the mulberry, all of which we cultivated zealously; and then, as the hills rose into mountains, came the ruder spaces clothed here and there with forests of oaks, chestnuts, sycamores, and terebinths, and best of all the mighty cedars of which I have already told. To the west of us in our front lay the great sea, the Mediterranean, as men learned to call it, blue as the sky above it, teeming with the fish we needed and treasure-bottomed because of the rare things which by lucky happening we found there.

Far in the offing above the tideless waters could be seen a dim-blue speck where the sky and water blended—the island Yatnan, the Cyprus of the future, an island of kindly people, to be some time followed by others called the Greeks, with whom we were already beginning to do a little trading.

For we were traders! Traders,

boat-builders, and sea adventurers were we above all other peoples. The world had learned to barter, it may be from those who had first discovered copper, which all men needed and for which they would exchange that which they had, and we were those who had already made bartering our chief and earnest occupation.

Warriors we had never been, though sometimes, at bay, we had fought well; nor had we been skilful hunters within the memory of our generation. Dark-haired and swarthy, sprouted from an ancient race to the south, some said, we had come to this new land to make, if we might be favored of our dark god, a better future.

We had built our houses at Akko and had sowed our fields and planted our trees and vines and had builded our boats, and in them had already begun to range the coast for such trade as might be found, though not so far at first, because as yet we had few goods for barter save the fine linen which the women wove so well, and wool and cedar timber, and besides we were not yet acquainted with the strange shores.

The bireme in which we went to the fishing was shared with me in its ownership by my comrades Aradnus and Malchus, and it was to Malchus that our people owed a part of their coming vast good fortune.

Malchus had many fancies, and among these was one for a collection of the glittering different shells we found upon the shore or in the waters we dredged for shell-fish, of which there were many edible and nourishing.

Once, in an oyster, he had found a pearl of quality, and so it came that he was ever curious to learn what his shells might hold. Much we derided him for his useless searching, but he made answer only that there were many things yet to be learned, and the issue proved him right.

Among the shell-fish counted useless by us, because we found them tasteless, were two kinds, each of spiral form and ending in a rounded head, but one sort more rough and spinous than the other. It was after breaking one of each sort of these twisted shells that Malchus discovered a curious thing.

With a stone Malchus cracked the shells apart upon a smooth rock, where he could observe them closely. That of one sort thus broken and the creature within it shown, there appeared a shell-fish having a sort of sac behind its head, this sac extending into a vein traversing the body, the whole filled with a liquid, whitish in color and having the smell of garlic.

This liquid chanced to gather in a tiny pool in the surface of the rock, and, even as Malchus studied it, wondering what its use to the fish might be, it changed before his eyes as the air reached it from yellow white to green, then blue and red, then a deep purple red, and finally to crimson, which last color did not pass away.

In the shell of the rougher kind he found a creature with a sac which showed also changing colors, though somewhat different of shade. Much Malchus wondered, and at last he sought a piece of linen and dipped it in the liquid and found he had a cloth of brighter color than ever known before.

He had discovered a wondrous dye! More of the shell-fish were soon collected, and there was much experiment with the dyeing; for we all were full of interest now, and it was found, in the end, that by first dyeing with the matter in the sac of the smoother shell-fish, which was abundant on the rocks near shore, and later with that from the rougher kind, which was found in deeper water, there was gained a purple so royal and brilliant that no other in the world could by any means compare with it.

Dark and rich it was, like red blood cooled, and, as it was shifted in the light, a blazing crimson. The rocks

and the sea-bottom were covered with myriads of these strange shell-fish, which we caught with baited basket traps let down, and soon our varied cloths gleamed with such hues as would command the desire of all who might look upon them.

A marvelous new thing had we for barter, and in the end it brought great fortune, though not all of it remained to Akko. There came a time when vast beds of the shell-fish, and of even more productive quality, were found near swiftly expanding Tyre, and great dyeing was done there, and trade came widely in the coloring and its fabrics, until priests, senators, emperors, and the great of all the known world must garb themselves in Tyrian purple as most worthy of their dignity.

Surely never was a people's fortune so affected as was ours by what might be deemed so small a thing as the juice in the head of a sea creature!

But this discovery of the purple dye had but lately come and diverted us from a host of things of greater purport. Our boats and our plans for our sea-roving as we might extend it were what absorbed us chiefly. Nowhere were better boats than those we had already learned to build; but we were ever seeking their improvement, since our fortunes were dependent upon them.

Biremes we had, as our boats or ships of the better sort were called, better than those owned by our fathers, not short and rounded and calked with bitumen, as had been the boats of only a little time before us, but longer and calked with tar, which we had learned to make, and, in our latest ventures, double-decked so that the oarsmen could work below while their masters were above them.

Good ships were these, riding the rough seas well, and much we prized them. Our only lack was in the oarsmen. We needed galley-slaves, and had but few, and oftentimes the trader and his people must needs take to the oars themselves.

As for me and my companions in sea ventures, we had but two dark creatures we had found castaways upon a bare island some distance to the south, and certainly of some poor tribe, for the broken canoe we found with them was crude of form and by no means fitted for a sea trip.

Blown away they doubtless were from the great continent which bounded the sea on the south, a land almost unknown to us, though we were somewhat acquainted with the people, ancient almost as we, who dwelt on the shores of a great river with many mouths which came into the sea not far from its eastern end.

Intelligent the captives proved, in a slow way, and docile enough, though possessed of enormous appetites which we must gratify or else lose of their strength in the rowing, but which was nevertheless somewhat of a burden on us. However, we hired them to the husbandmen when not upon a voyage, and so regained a little of their keeping cost. We were ever thrifty, we Phenicians!

More slaves we must have certainly, and it had been resolved, not only by we of the Spearhead—for so we had named our sharp-prowed boat—but by others of the traders, that cruises must be made with that end alone in mind; and it was considered that we might find what we sought in some of the islands which lay beyond blue Yadnan, some of them very small and having on them very probably so few people that we might, banded together, make our foray safely and bring away as many captives as our ships would carry.

One of those who were to take part in the expedition was a most daring and reckless captain having the name of Neco, who, but a little before this time, had made a voyage to the southward and brought back with him to Akko a cargo of hides; for among us were skilled tanners and cunning work-

ers in leather who supplied many things for our trading, and hides were always desired by them.

It so chanced that upon the return voyage of Neco some of the hides which were green and like to spoil were stretched to dry between poles set upright on the deck of the vessel, and that the wind from the south, bearing hardly upon them, pressed the boat most swiftly homeward, the craft requiring only to be steered.

And this gave Neco a great thought, and he swore by Moloch that henceforth the wind should serve him and that the labor of the rowing should be so avoided. So vaunting was he in this that he declared that he would yet reach Yadnan and thus return, and the marvel of it was that he did as he had boasted, sailing one day when the wind blew strongly from the east, and returning when it had shifted to the west.

Now his pride became overweening, and, having made a great sheet from broad strips of linen sewed together, he spread it, nailed between tall uprights, and set sail to the southward with a fierce rising wind behind him.

His ship disappeared amid the mist and spindrift, and nevermore was seen of man. The blast must have been too much for the fixed sail, and the vessel must have buried itself beneath the waves, which rolled high upon the day which was the last of Neco.

Eagerly had I noted the feats of Neco, and it had been borne in upon me that there was a degree of wisdom in his madness. Even his death, of which we became assured, brought me no fear.

I, too, would seek to learn what might be done to make the wind our servant, and I set about this swiftly, being, to my wonder, well supported by both Malchus and Aradnus, who sometimes showed less hardihood than I, but who now strangely enough became as deeply lost in this dream of a new conquest for the toilers of the sea. We devised a curious plan whereby we thought we might try the issue with less risk of our lives than had been faced by Neco.

Often when ships laden with timber had been cast upon the rocks and crushed, those in dire peril had escaped by lashing together as many of the escaped beams as they could, making a raft which could not easily overturn, and so drifting, by good fortune, to some place of safe landing.

Our ship, so we devised, should be a raft, yet more than that—it should be a sort of boat as well, but one unsinkable; and thus we built it, working long with our two slaves and hewing and spiking the seasoned cedar timbers, of which there were great store at hand for purchase, and of which we owned a part.

For many days we hewed and shaped and fashioned until we had a great raft some thirty forearm cubits long, more than seven times the length of a tall man, and more than half its length in width. Of double depth were the dried timbers and so mortised and interset and spiked together that the whole was as one great piece of wood not to be torn apart by the mightiest seas.

Calked it was, though needlessly, for we knew that the water would often come aboard, and all about the sides was raised a stout-timbered wall of the height of a man and having many openings at its bottom that the water might escape and we might walk dry-shod when seas were calm.

So much we allowed the strange craft the nature of a boat that it was tapered to a prow at either end, and, furthermore, was hewed so that each prow swept upward from beneath, that the boat might rise on any sloping shore. At each end provision was made for a long steering-oar such as we used on the biremes.

Upon either side, amidships, was erected a stout mast between which the broad sail of strongest linen was stretched flatly, and in the center was a shorter mast to which were bound

many things which were to form our cargo. There were other short posts as well, placed here and there to serve a like purpose.

We carried our arms and much food and many lashed casks of water and certain chests of trinkets and some of more worthy things to barter; for we could not guess what might be our landing-place should our plans fail. It was decided to attempt the voyage to Yadnan and thence homeward as our first venture.

So one afternoon, when the sun shone most fairly and the wind was from the east, we cast off the long mooring-rope and were blown gently away to sea, while half of Akko stood looking upon us curiously or jeering at our uncouth vessel.

We were steering for Yadnan, as we thought, but many are the things in the laps of the gods!

Like how many things is the sea! It is like a woman, soft and smiling and caressing, at least upon the surface; it is like a stallion pawing and tossing his white mane; it is like a green forest bending and heaving before the wind; it is like an unbounded sheet of shimmering, supple glass, supine beneath a calm; and, at last, it it is like a herd of wild beasts roaring and hungry and devouring.

Let none count our Mediterranean as harmless compared with the mighty western ocean. The leopard is more treacherous than the lion! Much we knew already of the changing sea, but much more were we to learn!

The eastern wind, still strong and even, bore us steadily though far from swiftly away from our own coast until the shore-line became dim, and, since it was so squarely astern of us, we found no difficulty in steering straight for Yadnan.

Even with our laggard movement we should reach the island by day-break, and this sailing seemed, in sooth, an easy matter. My companions laughed and jested, and the two slaves, relieved of rowing, were agrin.

Then the breeze abated somewhat and the wind began veering here and there, and the raft-ship lost something of its headway, while the oar with which I myself was steering became more and more an ineffective thing.

Most irresponsive to guidance was our ship upon which we had so labored in the building. There arose a little black cloud in the far northwest, and somehow I liked it not. I wished for the bireme.

At last the breeze died away altogether, and we lay there, rocked as gently as a first-born by its mother. The little cloud in the northwest was becoming somewhat too lusty for my taste, but as yet there was no sign of really dangerous weather.

So we swung and swayed until the sun was low down in the west, and then the lightness changed to something more somber very quickly, for the cloud had extended itself ambitiously and the sun's last slanting rays we failed to get.

The breeze, too, had returned, coming this time from the north and having a greater and increasing vigor to it. The raft began to act with even less obedience to the steering-oar, strain I never so hardly, for the sail now took the wind endwise alone, and this could not avail. Not long did this continue.

The waves had begun to rise, though by no means roughly, and the end of the vessel where I labored was caught and twirled by one of them so smartly that it lay in a new way, and in a moment the wind had caught a hold upon the sail again and we were turned fairly about and headed for the south, stern foremost, if indeed we might be said to have a stern, since the ends of the craft were alike in every way.

We had but one recourse. The steering-oar was shifted from what had been the stern to the end now made so, and we were sailing again, with oaths or prayers in our mouths according to the impulse of each. My own mood was not greatly either for

oath or prayer now." As the uncouth sail filled or tautened and the boat leaped forward as clumsily as it did strenuously, the wild, fierce sense of abandon and utter daring came back upon me in a wave, and I whooped aloud in zest of it, my comrades catching the unction and yelling as loudly in the same headstrong spirit.

So drove we southward half through the night, when again the wind changed, this time carrying us to the westward, though so gradually that Malchus, who had replaced me at the oar while I lay sleeping, held it so skilfully and firmly that the stern was still the stern, with which feat he was much delighted. With the morning the sun was shining again, though the wind had not abated.

All day we ran westward upon that sea of low-rolling waves—a sea so smooth that no water came over our boarded sides—and farther and farther we were carried from land or means of succor in any greater peril: but I lost none of my heedless ardor, nor did either of my mates fail me.

Especially was I delighted with the usually silent and thoughtful Aradnus, who, strangely enough, seemed to enter most fully and delightedly into the spirit of the trying of the sail.

"It is well," he shouted to me as the thing bellied as far as it might before the wind and the foam arose a little beneath our low prow. "We are getting much wisdom and more is coming to us! Mark what it does!"

And well indeed marked I that sail! I did naught but study it and note its tremendous promise and its failings and its menace. As I studied there came to me slowly a new perception.

Why were we so helplessly at the mercy of this spread of linen when the wind blew? Why had we stretched it thus immovably across our raft-ship? As I looked upon it there came such comprehension as made me laugh at myself in sheer derision. I, and not the sail, should be the master, and there must be a way to make it so!

This I had noticed, that when the wind changed but a little and so smote the sail somewhat aslant, the raft, still held by the steering-oar, kept straightly on its course; but when the shift was greater, so that the pressure came more nearly abeam, there ensued a stoppage, and we washed about unsteerable until there came another change.

This, then, I had learned—that it was not necessary that the wind should bear squarely on the sail, but that a slanting pressure would do almost as well and still allow us to direct our course.

Then, why not have the sail so that we could get such pressure at all times if we willed, and so have ever steerage way? Much I pondered upon this, and at last I perceived what I thought might be the remedy.

There was aboard one long chest, in which I had placed, beside our weapons, a goodly number of tools such as we sailors used, with the thought that, should we be cast ashore, we could build shelters for ourselves; and glad I was now that I had been so provident.

More time we would not waste before I had carried out my new design, and so I explained its nature to the others, who comprehended what I had in mind and who at once began the labor with me.

The two masts to which the sail was nailed were set deeply in holes mortised squarely through the timber on either side, but though tightly, not so that they might not be lifted out by the heaving of good men.

Now we took chisels and hammers from the long chest and began the making of similar square holes in a great circle amidships, the diameter of which was the width of the broad sail.

It was a task which took us long, but the sea was calm, the chisels were sharp, and the hammers heavy, and it was done at last. Just as we had the task completed it chanced that the wind shifted so that it came squarely

over one of our sides and left us wallowing again.

It was not for long. We strainingly lifted the two masts from their sockets and so replaced them in the new receptacles that the wind, though coming over our side, struck them obliquely and thus again propelled us, while the helm oar kept us straightly on our course. It was a revelation. The sail was being, for the first time, tamed! But there was more to come, and that at once.

I sat upon one of the chests after our first moment of jubilation and watched with pride the issue of the conquest we had made, when there came to me a new idea beside which the first, so carried out, seemed only a beginning!

We were plowing merrily westward now, but westward it was not my wish to go. If now the wind, coming from one side of us and pushing upon our sail obliquely, could so carry us, as it were, athwart its course, why could it not in the same way take us to the eastward were the sail turned so that the pressure of the wind would press in the opposite direction?

I leaped to my feet shouting and told of what I had conceived, and forthwith we acted. The masts—or, rather, one of them—was raised and so shifted that when it was planted the sail took the wind upon the other side and at once we lost headway quiveringly and soon were sailing eastward!

Truly it was a great day in the history of sailing and one of vast moment to all traders and sea-rovers!

Of where we were, save that we were far from land, I had slight knowledge. Full half the way across the sea we must have come, for the north wind had been a strong one while it prevailed and had hurried us for many a league despite the heaviness of our sailing.

The westward course as well had been with a southward trend, and it seemed to me that it were much easier to find a port on the African shore than otherwise. But what manner of port might await us in that strange region?

Most barbarous tribes, so the Egyptians told, inhabited the long reaches of sandy or rocky coast, and luckless were those who landed there. I had no plan; we were undetermined of mind as the gulls which swept about us, but land of some sort all men who eat and drink must some time find or perish, as we were not equipped for very long.

It was decided that we should bear to the southeastward straightly as we might, and seek one of the mouths of the great river which we call the Nile.

The wind held as it was, and slowly though steadily we moved toward the east all through the afternoon of this day when I had devised the shifting of the sail, and toward nightfall at a swifter rate, for the sky was now becoming overcast and the wind was rising.

Soon there were mounting waves, and the raft-ship, as I have called it for want of a better name, began to rise and fall in its now more hurried progress and to occasionally dip its prow into the sea and take aboard much water, which did not harm us, since it at once washed out again. We would have been content with this mood of the wind and sea had it but remained the same, but that was not to be. The storm-god was abroad that night and drunken!

The wind became a gale, and the gale a most tremendous one. Each man of us was firmly lashed to a stout post, else we would have been inevitably lost.

Exhausted, we slept by turns as best we might, still lashed for safety's sake, and when at noon I was roused by Malchus I looked with pleasure out upon a sea which was not threatening.

To the southeast appeared afar a blue haze which, as we sailed, revealed itself as a low-lying coast, and, furthermore, a coast revealing the mouth

of a broad river—one which could be nothing else than one of the outlets of the mighty Nile.

The river entered the sea through the lowlands made by the slit of countless ages, and for a league at least we sailed up the deep stream between flat marshland.

Gradually the banks became higher and palms showed in the distance, and at last we moved slowly up toward a place where were trees on the river's western side; and there we contrived to land, one of the slaves swimming ashore with a rope by which we hauled in our raft, mooring it stoutly by other ropes tied to our posts. Far up the river we could perceive buildings of stone, and I knew it for a port of some importance of which I had been often told.

The slaves we left to guard our vessel, knowing they would not venture to desert us in this strange land, and then we three—Aradnus, Malchus, and I—after having washed ourselves and donned fresh array from our scantily filled chest, fared forth to learn what Egypt should prove to us.

We reached the city, not a great one like Thebes, Memphis, or other cities of the upper river, but a prosperous outlying port with promise of future trading for us.

There were people in the streets, but we had not thought of recognition. Ever comes the unimagined. Conceive, then, how surprised I was to hear a call to us in the Phenician language as there advanced to me a swarthy man of middle age, a man of good appearance, who spoke most cheerfully:

"Welcome, Phenicians! Whence came you here?"

I could not understand, yet all was simple. The merchant—for such he was—explained to me that he had for years gone with the caravans to Babylonia, and so in time acquired the Phenician language.

He declared also that he could at once distinguish a Phenician by his appearance, which was, however, no marvelous thing, since the Phenician face was racially distinct, and since we had traits of garb but trifling yet sufficient to make us somewhat apart in dress as in complexion and demeanor.

There was much talk between us, and when we had done it seemed to me as if that which could not be had taken place. Here were I and my companions, who but a few hours ago were tossing about in a wild venture upon an unknown sort of craft, facing death in raging waves, and doubtful of our future and our fortunes, now in peaceful harborage, and, more than that, in a fair way to attain such ends as would enrich us and our people in the future.

The merchant had promised much, and it was borne in upon me that he spoke honestly. At this port of Egypt, he said, there were not he alone but various other merchants who would trade with us Phenicians. What a prospect was this for us in Phenicia who were now seeking broader ways of traffic! Gladly I assured the merchant of our constant future sailing with goods for Egypt, and so it soon came that I and my companions, through this helpful first acquaintance, met other merchants and made divers pledges to them for the time to come. And one business of much profit and great promise came on the moment.

I have said that our sore need in Phenicia was of more galley-slaves, that we might be equipped for the trade we should soon command. Of this I spoke to the merchant, Thomes, whom I had first met, and from him learned that he and his friends could furnish me sturdy slaves at such price as made foolish long voyages to gain them, such as we in Phenicia had in contemplation.

Gold we had with us, for I had counseled with my companions that we bring with us such of our wealth as we could carry, and we had it bestowed in belts about our bodies.

Upon this store we now drew, and therewith purchased twenty lusty

slaves at a price which seemed to us but half, and forthwith bestowed them upon our boat and there provided them with subsistence while we awaited the time of our departure some days hence; for I had certain thoughts in mind which were of import. I had more to do with the sail!

Ever, when not engaged in the trading or informing ourselves in such things as might serve us in the future of the ways of these Egyptians, were we considering how the sail might be made a greater thing, and how a portion of the huge labor of its shifting might be avoided or made more easy, and from these debates and from many earnest hours of puzzling and deep thinking came at last some birth from my poor head.

Our trading—for we bought certain Egyptian goods for sale in Akko—and our communing with the merchants ended, we left the port and set up tents on the shore beside our vessel, and there began the labor which must follow my new thought concerning the handling of the sail and making it more subservient to swift occasion.

First we raised amidship, though a little toward the bow, a single sturdy mast, and next we stretched the sail upon a strong frame, which frame was hung upon the mast, securely held by encircling thongs supported on outstanding pegs, and so sustained that it might be swung in all directions hanging thus firmly and flatly.

To the middle of this frame at either side were attached long ropes to be pulled from deck by the slaves, thus giving us the power to slant or hold the sail in any way the wind might call for. It was but a rude device—much better ways did we later find for the sail-shifting—but it served us very well.

I was resolved to return to Akko in our strange ship, though the merchants made ready proffer of one of their great rowing vessels to carry us by oars alone along the great stretch of coast.

This would not serve us. Our slaves must be trained to the rowing, and so I had provided oars and the fastening oar-thongs and seats along each side of our vessel.

We might thus make tedious way by oars alone, but we would not. The sail must have its further testing, and its control must be learned by all of us. Henceforth we must be sailors!

What need to tell the story of that great voyage?

The sail served well, though truly not as it came to serve us a little later, and the new slaves had learned their oarsmanship before we came into the bay of Akko. What need, either, to tell of the manner of our reception by our citizens? There was no longer scoffing, and when our tale was known to all there came excitement among the captains concerning the trade with Egypt, and preparations were made for many sailings.

As for us, we moved both mast and slaves to our fair bireme and prepared for much adventure. Soon, too, other biremes, as well as vessels of lighter sort, were bearing sails, and though crews were lost at first, through too great recklessness in time of storm or through great ignorance, yet the age of long voyages by rowing had passed forever.

Both I and my companions throve, and after some profitable trade with Egypt in glorious purple fabrics and other things, and when we had builded another and greater vessel, a trireme, requiring many galley-slaves, there came to each of us who had once so faced the danger of the sea together a desire for new adventure and, it might be, graver peril.

The lust of far roving had come upon us, and we would not be denied! We loaded the trireme with many goods and an abundance of arms and set sail to the west and north, for we would explore the shores of the vast continent there lying and harboring,

as we knew, a host of many different peoples, how barbarous we knew not.

We knew, though, that they had no boats with sails, and that we could flee that which we could not face. No man aboard but was gleaming of face when the Seeker, with white sail outspread and not a single oar outthrust save those for steering, swept bravely from the harbor.

Fortune sat ever with us then. No more need I tell of our many voyages in search of trade and adventure. Nor care I to boast of our growing traffic and our far-flung sails.

Very soon Phenicia was growing in prosperity as never land had grown before; Yadnan had become Phenician, and we worked its copper-mines and had a temple in its city, Paphos; the fame of Tyre and Sidon was extending throughout the lands of of Egypt and the Euphrates; and our ships and caravans carried such wares as might tempt all peoples. As for we three—Aradnus, Malchus, and I—we were now among Phenicia's richest men. Of the rest, my story appertains chiefly to me alone, and is not as I would have it!

Of Elissa, fairest of Paphian women, I have no complaint to make. The gods will judge her, but not the gods whose nostrils fed upon the sacrifices. There was none like unto her in all the Yadnan city, and we inclined to each other, and after much earnest wooing she became my wife. Proud I was, and prouder still when she bore me a son lusty and comely, who soon had twined his little fingers round my heart-strings, and whom, after the way of doting fathers, I deemed the fairest child in all the world. They were golden days which followed, until I sailed away again upon a voyage —and then came Baal!

Of the religion of the Phenicians I have not yet spoken, and only in rage or shame may one tell of its quality. Of its origin I know nothing, save that the great Baal, or Moloch, as one with him, was as the creating and yet burning and destroying sun, and that he must have his worship and his sacrifices.

Lightly was this religion held by such as I and the other sea-rovers, in whose faces blew the pure winds of the sea, and who had seen and who knew of things beyond wild superstitions; but with the people of the cities and the fierce, unknowing rabble this was not so, and they were under the dominion of priests as bloody-minded and full of frenzy as the savage cannibal creatures who dwelt in distant places.

The image of Moloch in the temple was a beastly human figure of metal, with a huge bull's head and outreaching, receiving arms. In the grossly protruding belly of the monster was a door through which a fire was built within him, that children laid in his arms might roll thence into the red, consuming furnace beneath!

What strange madness of faith may have misled and impelled them in their superstition who may describe, but incredible indeed there were those who thus gave up their children willingly, even the first-born and the only one! If it cried, the mother would fondle and kiss the child—for the victim must not weep—and the pitiful sound would be drowned in the clamor of flutes and kettle-drums.

Silent and unmoved must the mother stand, for if she wept or sobbed she lost the honor of the act and its reward, and the child was sacrificed notwithstanding!

Could there have been no other and stronger and more merciful gods, and where were they when such things came to pass? But of these horrors I must not take account.

I but avoided them, and we lived our happy life remote, my wife and child and I. I went to sea content and eager only for swift trade and swift return. Scarce knew I even of the existence of Phalos, the dark-visaged high priest of Moloch.

Gentle and faithful was my Elissa but somewhat inclined to dreaminess and observing the prayers to the gods, though partaking in none of the rites of the fanatics.

Most resolute she was, too, when a matter became fixed in her mind, though to me she always yielded. Yet in the body of this fair and gentle creature might lie, ready for distorted molding, the soul of a new zealot, deadly and sacrificing. Alas for me!

I was returning after a long expedition, and most profitable had been my voyage; the winds were with me on the return, and I was full of the joy of the thought of the welcome which awaited me, when one afternoon a sail showed far in our front and swiftly nearing us, which I soon recognized as that of Marinus, captain and trader like myself and one of my closest and most sturdy friends. Soon he made signals that we should check our course and then was rowed aboard us. His aspect was black and ominous.

"Strain every sail!" was all he said when first he spoke.

Then came the hideous story. How or when he knew not, but my wife had passed under the grim spell of the priesthood, especially under that of Phalos, the high priest, a man overbearing and ruthless and ambitious.

Counting on my absence and of the force which might be raised to face me and my allies on my return, my only one, the man-child of my heart, was to be made a sacrifice to Moloch on the morrow, and so the too truculent and irreligious captains be taught through me a needed lesson!

Swiftly as he might, Marinus, trusty friend, had put to sea to warn me, and now he would sail back with me to aid me in what might come.

I answered not. I could but grasp his hand. At last my voice came, and then but broke forth in a bellow to spread every sail and man every oar and drive forward the ship as never ship was driven before. How they sprang to do my will! What look of deadly import came upon the faces of Malchus and Aradnus! Marinus departed for his own ship, to follow us.

What sudden freedom and happiness must not madness some time bring! How good to change, relieved from agony of mind, into unknowing, babbling forgetfulness! But no kindly madness came to me in those long hours when the ship, though so forced upon her way that Marinus was left behind, yet seemed to me to only creep along the hindering waves.

So passed the long night. Sullenly and through it all I could hold converse with none, though my companions would comfort me in my affliction, and so sought in vain. With morning the wind still held us, and with mid-afternoon we entered the harbor of fair Paphos.

Even as we swung inward a boat darted forth from the land, bringing a messenger from another of the captains—for my vessel had been awaited by my friends as Marinus had arranged. Then fell the blow! Now, even now, the rites in the great temple were in progress and my child about to be offered as the sacrifice!

Then, with need so ghastly, the better gods gave back my reasoning strength. We would invade the temple and would make a rescue, if it were within the power of man!

I took swift and stern command anew. I would lead, with Malchus and Aradnus next, and a portion of my crew as well, the others remaining to hold the ship in instant readiness for sailing. It was the counsel of the wise Aradnus that, should the child be saved, we sail at once for Egypt, where were a host of friends and where priests of Baal had sometimes been flayed alive.

I looked upon my brown-faced crew and knew that I could trust them, even the sunburnt galley-slaves. How many times had all these ranged dangerously beside me in times of struggle with the savages!

I took from my weapon-chest a certain Assyrian ax I cherished, short-hafted but broad and keen of edge and heavy. I kissed the ax and laid it against my cheek and then thrust it in the bosom of my tunic.

We landed swiftly and rushed toward the temple. Vast was the throng about the structure and inside, I knew, must be as dense, save for the great open space before the place of sacrifice. Wedge-shaped, we struck the heaving mass and drove through it as wild boars through reeds, straight past the entrance, even to the inner circle of the mad worshipers, and as I leaped clear of them my eyes were smitten with the whole dread picture!

There before the altar and the beastly red-heated image of the leering god, side by side, stood Elissa and Phalos, the high priest—he grim in his power so manifested, she proud and erect as she passed my child into his waiting hands. And how a blasting picture may transform a man!

In all the world of living men there was not another then so strong as I; in all the wastes and desert places of the vast forests there was not a wild beast more ferocious; in all the earth or in the heavens above there was no being with more swift and certain mission!

I bounded across the space between us, leaping to Phalos even as he took the child and was about to face the grinning idol, and then, as he turned at my hoarse shout and our eyes met glaringly, I drove that Assyrian ax down through that head, down through that crafty brain, down sheer between the hating eyes, and, as I caught the child, he fell crumplingly as any poled bull of one of his own sacrifices!

I saw, but as an instant's vision, Elissa sink to earth in a white swoon, and bounded with my child toward the entrance, where the fray was raging, while about and behind me rose first the groan and then the yell of vengeance of the frenzied worshipers.

Naught for the moment checked me with my circling ax seeking more blood. I reached nearly to my followers, so near to Aradnus that I tossed the child to him over the intervening heads, and had the joy of seeing him, upon my shout, bound away with it toward our vessel and so preserve its safety.

Nearer and nearer to my own men I struggled, but I could not reach them. The fierce guards of the priest were all about me now and a thousand of the mob were crowding savagely behind them.

I felt a spear thrust in my side and then another, and so went down most happily.

My man-child would become a man in Egypt!

CHAPTER VIII.

ALESIA AND THE END.

Centuries uncounted have rolled away and Scar lives once again. He and his thirty wild Viking sea marauders in their shield ship, have encountered a Roman Galley. All except Scar have been killed, and he has been left for dead on his deck, his head pillowed upon the body of Regnor, his friend. He awakes to find his ship drifting westward toward a land which he recognizes as the almost unknown Island of Britain.

So Scar tells his last tale:

To the westward I perceived a dim uplifting, darker than the hue of the water, and as the breeze carried the ship forward this dimness became more solid and it was made plain that it was land.

Well did I comprehend its meaning. I, alone and wounded and in one of the hated Viking ships, was drifting helplessly upon the shore of Britain. My death, it might be, had been delayed for only a little time, but what of that? Death was the Viking's brother.

Now it chanced that I knew more than a little of this strange isle of Britain. For years I had been in almost daily speech with a British slave

named Locrin, now an old man and under my protection.

He had been captured long ago when fishing with companions in one of their curious open coracles of skin, or currachs, as they were sometimes called, and had in time become almost an Angle, for he had been treated kindly under the rooftree of my own family and clan.

Him I had, as I grew in years, been accustomed to take with me in my hunting and sometimes on expeditions, and from him had I learned not only the manner of life of the Britons, how they fought their enemies in raiding Caledonians, which sometimes came from the north, and other like things, and had also gained from him some knowledge of his language. This I had used with him in sport, with the idle thought that it might some day become of use to me in my adventures.

Glad was I now, in a somewhat somber way, that I knew something of this wild isle toward which I was being carried and of the people whom I must meet. How I might be received I could but guess, yet I knew well that it would most likely be as the wild beast caught prowling.

Slight reason had the Britons to welcome with extended arms the Viking stranger. Who welcomes the plunderer, even though the plunderer be shorn of strength and helpless? Assuredly my thoughts were gloomy as I drifted.

The tide seemed with the wind, and my sailless ship was nearing the shore so steadily that soon it must ground itself upon the pleasant beach in water so shallow that I might wade ashore if strong enough. Still stood I leaning against the mast and scanning the long wood narrowly. Then suddenly my gaze was fixed.

From around a point where the forest extended far down toward the beach swung into view a chariot such as I had never seen, its galloping horses deftly driven by a swart, skin-clad man wearing a sort of helmet and what appeared to be a breastplate. Behind him, resting one hand upon his shoulder and swaying easily with the chariot's movements, stood the stateliest and fairest woman my eyes had ever rested on.

Behind the chariot followed, running close and easily as if accustomed to it, some score of followers, a few with shields and spears, the rest all armed with bows. So, for a moment's space, they came, then they saw the ship and made instant halt, the horses pulled backward on their haunches and the whole company closing up at once about the chariot They saw a Viking ship upon their very shore!

The company did not flee, but stood and looked, the woman still in her place and gazing long, with one hand raised above her eyes to aid in the scrutiny. Some time she studied, then seemingly gave some order, and the chariot was driven forward, though more slowly now and followed by its company.

My ship had come, by this, close to the land and must find ground in a moment, which it did just as the Britons drew up opposite and not more than a spear's length away. They looked upon me silently, the woman upon whom the others seemed to wait, most curiously and gravely. At last she spoke, and her words were brief enough:

"Viking, what do you here?"

Glad was I then that from old Locrin I had gained some knowledge of the Briton tongue!

A little I paused and debated in my mind, and then, looking into the clear and questioning eyes of that proud woman in the chariot, I did not hesitate nor falter.

Stammeringly and haltingly, as best I could in the strange tongue, I told my tale in bold and simple truthfulness, concealing nothing. I told of my own name and standing and of the foray and the sea-fight, and of all that might concern my captors.

The men stood listening with mouths agape, though with stern and threatening faces, but the fair countenance of the woman did not alter. I knew that she was passing judgment. At last she spoke again, slowly and thoughtfully:

"Vikings and wolves are much the same to Britons, but it may be that your tale is true, and it is not without merit in you that you have fought the Roman. Other than I must pass upon your fate."

Then, turning to her people, she commanded that I and the body of dead Regner be brought to shore, which the spearmen did, supporting me, who found myself still weak, and laying the body of my comrade upon the sand. Then, without further parley, and under direction of the woman, the band returned the way from whence it had come, I walking with a supporting spearman on either side.

"Take him to where the king is sitting," said the woman to those about me, "and say to King Cadwallon that I will follow swiftly, that I may make all clear to him relating to the prisoner."

Then she looked upon me fixedly, but saying nothing, as I also looked upon her most steadfastly, and as I had never before looked upon the face or into the eyes of woman. There came to me a marvelous understanding.

Well I know it to be unbelievable, but as we stood there thus, she a haughty princess of the haughty Iceni, as I came to know, and I a Viking haughty as she, but rude and rough of port and now blood-stained and grimy, the truth of the thing so strange came out like light between us. Each knew it well and each accepted it unfalteringly, for we were made of such a mold. No loftier or more courageous was I in my degree than my fair and stately Goneril. We spoke no word, but as we parted at the cross-road and her chariot swept away, I knew that beyond all doubting I should find her with King Cadwallon and that she had already spoken.

Two days we traveled through the land of Kent, and each day brought me greater wisdom. Let none say that the country of the Britons is but a vast waste of forest, moor, and fen, peopled only by wild beasts and tribes of men almost as wild as they.

So had I thought it and so had those on the mainland, deeming only that along the island's coast there might exist among the natives a variance from the barbaric and outlandish customs of the interior.

On this same winding journey—for we sought the easier ways and made no haste—I saw herds of feeding cattle and droves of horses, and meadows and reaped fields, and many a rude but goodly homestead. Never had my eyes met fairer prospect than that on which they rested in this region, lately ravished by the Roman, and I wondered not that its people had defended it as fiercely as they had vainly. My bent was all with them.

My guard of ten sturdy spearmen, somewhat glum in the beginning, became amenable upon the way, and from their leader, himself a Kentish spearman and having some little wisdom, I learned that which gave me cause for wonder and hard reflection.

We were marching through a bruised and smarting region, one where the souls of men were seething in unavailing rage and bitter protest. Cæsar had come and gone. He had not advanced far into the country, but he had slain many of the islanders and ravaged the fields, and, having driven the Britons into their forest fastnesses, had forced from their chieftains a promise of submission, and had taken hostages away with him.

No harm had the Britons done the Romans before this harsh invasion. Little they knew of Roman intrigues and ambitions, nor of this Cæsar's wars and conquests. They were content to live alone in their own way upon their own green island.

Yet to them, unheeding and unsuspecting, had come this scourge without a pretext. There seemed no recourse and no vengeance for them. They had been smitten and their hostages were with the Roman army. What wonder that there smoldered in the breasts of these hurt islanders such hatred and such fear as may not be described!

Cadwallon, as the Britons called him, and as I also shall, though he was called Cassivelaunus by the Romans, was not altogether a bad king, but held somewhat weak at times, and had, besides, certain enemies among the more envious and ambitious of the chiefs beneath him.

Fortunately the invasion of Cæsar had not reached his capital on the river called the Thames, and he was still secure in power. This capital was a place called London by its people and by all other Britons, though the Romans had named it Trinovantum, and was the town of chief importance in the land.

I learned much, too, concerning the stately lady of whom I was the captive and who had given orders as to my disposal. She was the great lady Goneril, a princess of the Iceni, and kinswoman of King Cadwallon.

There had been trouble among the Iceni as to the succession, and at this time the family opposed to that of Goneril was somewhat in the ascendancy, and it were better in many ways that the princess should seek refuge for the time at least at the court of her kinsman.

An aunt she had also, wife of a chieftain of Kent, with whom she was but now a guest. Only brave words had the man of Kent, the leader of my guard, for the fair princess, and even now my heart went out to him because of it.

Most imperious of mood she sometimes was, he said, and of great influence with both the king and her uncle in Kent, but ever generous and just and much beloved of all, from chieftain down to churl, Iceni though she might be. All of this much delighted me and gave me pride. Most curious, yet just and due it is, that a man should cherish even as his own the honor and fame of the one woman to him.

On the morning of the third day we had news of King Cadwallon, that he was hunting with a company of his nobles and attendants in a forest not very far southwestward of his capital, and to this place we took our course. It was mid-afternoon when we came to where he had paused for rest and meat after the long chase of the morning.

There were many tents pitched in a pleasant glade in the midst of the forest, one of them a pavilion larger than the others, and this one was the king's.

There were a goodly company assembled there of chiefs and nobles and fair and stately ladies who had taken their dinner with the king and now were moving around and talking together, but who, as I was brought in, ceased in their conversation and looked upon me with much interest, from which I judged that my story was already known to them—as indeed it proved to be. I stood now before the King Cadwallon and there took note of what manner of man he was.

He was of manly height and framed like a good warrior, but his face was somewhat drawn and the look in his eyes was not of one who felt his power supreme. Richly garbed he was and grave and stately of demeanor, yet lacked his eye the eagle flash.

Naught have I to say against this King Cadwallon—naught, though it came to pass that I knew him well indeed, and never did his friendship fail me—but I could have wished him to be of a front more confident and even arrogant, since he had about him such wild and untamed lords and chiefs of clans.

To all I said Cadwallon listened most patiently and, it seemed to me,

almost with approbation. He answered that it was very true we Vikings had not forayed in Britain and had done no harm at any time, save it might be that some reckless ones had captured a few currachs of the fishermen who ventured too far at sea, for which no grudge was held against us, and he added, what was to me most heartening and promising, that we were kindred in spirit, while not of blood, in hatred of the Roman, and that at this time we were counted not as enemies but as allies in whatever of war was likely to come to either of us.

Then he spoke still further to me, who had of a sudden become most emboldened and at ease, saying that, having known of me from Lady Goneril and of my degree in my own land, he had it in mind to deal with me as one of rank and one having knowledge of the sea and ships, and also of the Romans, and so to offer me service with him with such command as might be later determined.

Here was sudden change of fortune surely for a shipless man and prisoner in a strange land! At first I knew not what reply to make; then, as it came upon me how many of my friends were slain and how bereft I was of all things, while here was opportunity for adventure which might lead to important happenings, I was inclined to accept the service; though still I hesitated, for a Norseman is ever a Norseman utterly.

Then rose before me the face of a woman standing in a chariot, to whom I had given a great wordless pledge, and I paused no longer! I swore to give good service to the king, and, raising me from my bent knee, he declared me one among chieftains and bade me join the nobles about and make new friends with one to aid me who was waiting. Then turned I and looked again into the eyes of Goneril.

Most prideful and stately seemed the lady yet in her dark beauty, but there was laughter in her eyes as she took me by the hand and led me among the company, making me known to many of them and saying, as she laughed, that he king had accorded me her thrall since she had taken me prisoner.

I was, she said, to lead her little company to her uncle's hold, there to acquire a better knowledge of Britain speech and Britain forests and ways of fighting, until I should be called to closer service by Cadwallon.

Next morning with a slender train we set out on our way through Kent. Only a rune-maker should tell of that too short journey through the Kentish woods and winding pathways. It is not in me to give a sense of its sweet flavor. Not m any words we said at first, but we did not need them.

We only knew—we two, each proud and close of heart—but knew as others might not know it; yet the trees knew it, and the birds and squirrels in the trees knew, and the horses upon which we rode. Only the men who followed us could fail to know!

We came, upon the evening of the second day, to the hold of Gerguint, who had married Bera, the aunt of Goneril, where we were received as became the princess's rank, and where I was accorded as pleasing welcome, for a messenger had arrived ahead of us to tell of my degree.

Of Gerguint, whom the Romans later called Carvilius, I must now speak freely, as soon he proved himself to me, and of him I cannot speak too well. A strong prince of a strong fourth among the Kentishmen, he was one after my own heart, fearing nothing and having that understanding which makes one of high blood know of and recognize that which may be in another.

It was in his mind to be to me as a close friend, and so he was from the beginning, hunting with me and showing to me all the differences there were between the Viking and the British ways, both in the chase and in the modes of warfare.

Much he delighted to go forth with me in my Viking ship, which had been brought along the coast and drawn into a twining small river entering his lands, from which place we made short voyages along the coast.

The Britains were not worthy as sailors, and this was soon perceived by Gerguint, who now desired that they should build better vessels, learning the things which would serve greatly for their own defense, and this he sought to bring to the attention of the king. So he and I became good friends.

And for Goneril and myself what shall I say? It is hard for a man to tell properly, and so that it may be at all conceived or understood, of what is between him and the woman whose breath has become his own.

No difference made it with us that the blending and welding had been so swift and unaccountable. It was a fate met willingly, and even when the time for words of mine had come few were demanded.

I sought to tell, in my unfashioned mode, of what was in my heart, and she but smiled upon me and told me that I need not speak. What days were ours as we rode the glowing Kentish woods in the late autumn, and she told me of her people's ways and sought to make me comprehend them, and of the boundaries and friendships and animosities of the many tribes and clans, and all else that might tend to make me fitted for some rule among them!

Even their art of war she taught me, and therein made me marvel. In her full veins pulsed only warrior blood and made itself so manifest that it seemed wondrous that in the same warm current ran all of tenderest womanhood and faithfulness. Indeed she was herself a warrior bold enough.

Well do I bear in mind the first time she took me with her out upon the sands to teach me chariot-driving, and how in the essay I swayed and tottered, guiding the horses bunglingly as we rushed along, her chariot in the lead, circling or overtopping and descending the steep dunes or darting upward from the beach to swerve and rock along a hillside.

Never in any storm at sea had I such strain to keep my feet beneath me, though in time I gained the needed reckless skill, to Goneril's vast approbation. Most solicitous had she been that I should excel in this, for the chariot was much relied upon in all the battles of the islanders.

In fight, the warrior had with him a charioteer who drove against the enemy, while the warrior, standing beside him, fought with javelin or spear or ax or other weapon as the ranks were neared or broken.

When the mêlée became most furious the warrior, leaping from his place, would then engage on foot, the charioteer withdrawing from the fray a little to be in readiness in case of swift retreat or further charge on a massed body. Most formidable were these chariots, though only when they were afforded ground for evolution. In the close forest battles they were useless.

Winter came, sharp and keen and not unpleasant in this land of Britain, with its climate tempered by a great sea-current from the southwest, and, almost before it had begun, came my first service to King Cadwallon.

There had come an uprising of a certain tribe whose overweening and ambitious chief thought, with the alliances he had made, to cast off the king's authority. Gerguint was summoned to attend with a force which I was to accompany, which body was joined to others, and soon we met the rebels in the northwest forests.

It was not a long campaign, but there were sharp skirmishes and, finally, a battle which was one of merit and wherein I had opportunity for the dealing of Viking blows when much they counted.

It chanced, too, that I had occasion to save the life of Gerguint, who had

risked it foolishly, charging ahead among the savage clansmen and going down beneath a mass of them. Hard it was to hew a way to him and lift him to his feet again before they had added other and more deadly spear-thrusts to the ones he had received; but I was well repaid.

Thor! but it was good cleaving! Back to back we stood, and I could ask no better shield than Gerguint. Fairly beholden proved he when the encounter ended with the night and the death of him who had been rebellious, and closer yet we became in comradeship. We swore blood-brotherhood—a thing which was excellent for me and later came to serve me in good stead.

And why delay the story of what was the crowning of my desire and great and overmastering resolve? I asked that Goneril be made my wife, she proudly joining, and Gerguint did not fail me, nor did the Lady Bera, for I had become as of the family.

Then was the King, Cadwallon, sought, and for a time he hesitated. Counting all, I was but an adventurous stranger and of altogether alien blood. Yet, since that blood was noble and since I had sworn him fealty and had proved myself in battle, and it may be also because he felt the need of each strong arm, and above all because of the firm words of Gerguint, he at last gave his consent and had grace to give it finely.

There was a great attendance of the Kentish chieftains in the hall of Gerguint and of many from the court, and there was our marriage and ceremonies by the Druids, and abundant feasting and drinking and music by the harpists, and so we two, thus joined before all, found happily what life may hold.

The winter passed and spring came, and in the bursting of heart of stream and bud and bird there was not more warmth and glory than in ours. So passed the days; then as the summer neared a pall fell on the land.

It was in the air, a vague unrest and dread. There was no frolicking beneath the moon in any of the scattered hamlets; the laborer in the field looked often toward the wood; the hunter moved with senses most alert; the wild beasts themselves, one thought, were seeking deeper harborage; it was as if all nature was afraid; the very winds seemed whispering repeatedly in fear the one word, "Cæsar!"

The alarm had come across the sea from the Veniti. A little vessel of that friendly people had eluded the Roman ships patrolling the Gallic shores, and so reached Britain with news of recent movements of the devastator.

He had, it seemed, been engaged in suppressing a revolt of the Treviri, who lay somewhere near the Rhine, but meanwhile had given orders that a great number of ships should be made in readiness for his army at a port called Itius, lying nearest to the shores of Britain.

That he had it in mind to once more make a descent upon the islanders was, so the Veniti messengers declared, a thing assured. It was this fell news which had spread through Britain and had aroused the sudden dread of which I have already spoken. What time the scathe might come no man could tell.

But if there were trembling throughout Britain, there came also the courage which goes with desperation. Feuds were forgotten, as were boundaries, and there ensued wide summoning and a gathering of the many princes to consider swiftly what might be done in the impending struggle with the invader.

It was agreed that Cadwallon, as the chief among the southeastern rulers of the island, and in sort an overlord of some, should have the supreme command. So in and about the southern hills soon a great force hung. Then one day at noontime there showed across the sea a mighty spread of sail. Cæsar would strike!

eight hundred sail! What scores of thousands of the trained legionaries must they carry, and what chance had an unordered host in an encounter on open, even ground!

It was decided by the leaders not to give battle at the shore, where the nature of the beach gave easy landing to the Romans, but rather to meet them on the high places, which had been fortified in a rude way by the felling of many trees in front of them. Here we awaited the attack.

Of that first desperate struggle against the veteran foe I can tell but vaguely, for I was in its midst, fighting as for my life and unseeing as to the general battle.

Fiercely we charged and drove among the enemy with our chariots, but could not shatter them. These were the trained slayers of the world, and when one rank wavered or was broken another rose behind it, and ever the whole pressed forward, killing as it came and irresistible against a force with no planned manner of cohesion.

We were driven backward, though fighting stubbornly, and finally the enemy overwhelmed and seized the camp, and the Britons, leaving a host of dead, were driven into the forests.

There was a kind of reformation, and then began the running fight of days, as Cæsar neared the capital. There were bloody stands and skirmishes, and we cut off many of the Romans in the woods, but nothing could stay their firm advance.

My Goneril was in London, where I had thought her most secure in this time of great jeopardy, though stubbornly she had insisted on following me into the field. The main body of the Britons was now within and about London, and Cadwallon to make his last stand against the approaching army of Cæsar, which threatened the passage of a ford above the city. At this ford all must be decided.

There had been treachery. Mandubratius, crafty and wavering chief of the Trohantes, to save himself, had cast his lot with Cæsar.

Androgeus, a chief in command in London itself, had turned against Cadwallon and was tampering with the conqueror; and all these things gave fear. Yet we would make such stand as should be remembered long, and so all Cadwallon's forces were drawn up beside the ford to dispute its passage.

The Romans came, their legions rolling to the shore and entering the waters boldly, while our own massed armament stood awaiting them with eager weapons, a multitude looking upon us from the slope behind, even our women among them, as was the Briton's way. Then came the clash and struggle.

As the Romans neared the land, avoiding as best they could the sharpened stakes which had been set against them, their onrush was almost hidden by the cloud of spears and arrows falling upon them, and many were slain and carried downward by the glad current of the British River, but there was no checking them.

Some struggled through and others followed, as the first were slain and soon the ranks had gained a footing, their front being lopped off as it came, but ever heaved forward by the tremendous mass behind.

As in the surges of a growing storm each succeeding wave crept farther up the beach, and the fight was soon on land. Though hate is in my heart for them, let none speak lightly of the dauntless courage or the stern hardihood and discipline of the Roman soldiers.

Those ranks pressed ever forward, though we raged among them with our chariots and met them manfully on foot with blows as fierce as their own and thrusts as deadly.

But what could avail such ragged and open charge as made the wild Britons against an advancing wall which ever renewed itself as it was broken here and there?

In dire peril we were driven back-

ward step by step. Soon I was half surrounded and felt a wound or two and began to breathe too heavily.

Then came to my ears a woman's cry. Circling downward and at one side from the slope above, where were the onlooking multitude, had come Goneril, driven by grizzled Leir, her charioteer, and swinging to the front and very center where she knew I would be found.

There had been none who could restrain her. Mad with her fear for me, wild as a she-bear for her bayed mate, she had come storming on the battlefield, her dark hair streaming and the love flame in her eyes, seeking only to be with me, even in death together.

And timely was her coming, for I had been beaten to my knee and was in sore strait. Surely the gods guided, for the chariot came to me through the mêlée as the wild bull through brush, and I was lifted to it by Leir's strong arm as, scarcely slacking in its course, it passed athwart the raging lines and so away toward safety.

And even at that moment, as Goneril bent down toward me tenderly, there came a Roman javelin which drove deep into her side, and as it lurched out and away with the chariot's surge, left following it a rush of her dear heart's blood, drenching her robe with red.

Into my arms she sank, and so I held her until, flying, we reached the wood; then I laid her gently down on the greensward.

What can I say of that awful, awaiting moment, or of what came? She was still alive, my glorious Briton girl. She smiled upon me and sought to reach up her arms about my neck, and could not; then sighed a little, and there died. Then all things passed away, and I fell as dead beside her.

There is little more to tell of Britain. Cæsar had triumphed; London had fallen; the conqueror had wreaked his stern will upon the land; Cadwallon had yielded, and had agreed to pay tribute, and Cæsar, taking hostages and many prisoners to be sold as slaves in Roman marts, had sailed away.

For a hard four hundred years the Roman heel would press on Britain's neck. What was all this now to me? They had carried me and my dead Goneril away into the forest and, joined by certain of her kinsmen who had escaped, we took up our journey with my dead to the country of the Iceni, where they would bury her with the ceremonies befitting such a princess.

All this we did, but I could speak no word. Men looked upon me with a sort of fear. My speech seemed lost, but came at last with the new swelling of the heart and the humming of the dark thoughts in my head.

Nothing of Britain knew I longer. I was a Viking again, with only Viking gods and Viking thoughts, and these transformed me. Cæsar had slain my Briton girl, and all the life and fame and glory of all the Roman world could bring no solace. Goneril was dead, and henceforth I lived but to bring death such as I might to every Roman.

No oath of vengeance needed I to take on the white, holy stone of Odin's priests. I sought Gerguint, still wounded in his castle, and was received as if the castle was my own, but abode there only as a silent and unheeding guest.

Time passed, and finally I sought the little band of those I had hardened and taught to sail my shield-ship, and they joined me, nothing loath, and in the darkness of a stormy night we crossed to the coast of Gaul, where I would fight against the Romans, for secret word came that there was nearing ahead a vast uprising to cast off the Roman yoke.

Far to the south and west we laid our course, for I would hold it so well out at sea that we might avoid the Roman ships now haunting all the Gallic coast. Some days we sailed, and at last, having escaped them,

made entrance at the mouth of a fair river called the Seine, and sailed inland upon it until we reached an island where was a town the capital of a partly maritime and trading people, the Parisii, who, because of their lack of strength, had allied themselves with the Senones, a more powerful tribe lying to the south of them.

It was winter now, and all Gaul was aflame with the hope off casting off the Roman power. The clans were gathering, and in Paris, called by the Romans Lutetia, I attached myself to a small force led by one Critognatus, an Avernian of note, who was now on his way to join the Gallic army under command of Vergincetorix. Cæsar was slowly advancing, and Vergincetorix was hanging near him, harassing him with his forces. We were eager for the field of war.

Through many a devious forest path, across many a silent stream, and over wide, frozen marshes we took our way, and reached the Gallic camp on the evening of the third day.

It made an amazing and curious sight, with its far-extending fires beneath the trees of the dense wood, lighting the ways between hosts of rude shelters of boughs or sods or tents of skins, until the lights but twinkled in the distance; for it was a huge force which had now gathered.

Most cordial was my greeting, though of a certain dignity, for Vergincetorix was one of commanding and grave air, albeit his eyes gleamed brightly. There proved occasion for little speech.

Of all that had occurred in Britain this wise leader had made himself acquainted, and it so chanced that he knew my story well, and well could understand what impulse drove me now and what manner of service I might give.

He placed me with the command of Critognatus, and, upon my asking, directed him to allow me, under my own leadership, a company of some hundred of a wild outlying clan of the Averni, with whom I might adventure in my own way. Glad was I then!

What days and nights of brooding came to me! Ever I saw the tomb of Goneril or the fanes of my own gods! No puling gods of the weak races they, but war gods and gods of vengeance!

Wild and savage and unfearing were my band of an outlandish mountain group to whom I had joined my few of Britons, and whom I now trained to more knowing warfare; but even they were scarcely equal to the fierceness and persistence of their leader.

No venturing foragers from the Roman camp were safe from our ambushes or sudden onslaught, for I hovered like a wolf about a fold, and many a legionary's blood made the snow brighter in my eyes. There came to me something of a name, and I was made welcome among the Gallic chieftains, stately in their glittering helmets and tunics and rich furs, and some of them most gallant men and good, but I could not be as one with them.

I held myself aloof in a stern loneliness. They were not of me or mine. What says the Norsemen's rune:

> Gasps and gapes
> When to the sea he comes
> The eagle over old ocean;
> So is a man
> Who among many comes
> And has no advocates.

But little recked I of it all. I only sought and slew with my hardened following. Then, later, fell Avaricum, and Cæsar, with his army fed and rested, turned toward Vergincetorix, who, after some well fought but unavailing battles, entrenched himself in the city of Alesia, where he awaited the issues.

Alesia was a town of the Mandubii, and one well fortified and of importance, founded anciently, it was related, as a trading-place of the Phenicians. It lay upon the flat crest of a great hill, almost a mountain, and was protected on two sides by the rivers Lutosa and Osera.

In the front the mountain sloped down into a plain a league in width, behind which, at some distance, rose other hills which surrounded the plain completely. The army of Vergincetorix now occupied the wide slope of the city's hill down to the plain, and had made before it a long, deep trench and a stone wall the height of a man throughout.

Upon the plain and nearer the hills were arrayed the Romans, who began at once a gigantic work of encircling fortifications such as I had never seen before, and which gave me new comprehension of the utter inflexibility and hungry and all-conquering resolve of this great Cæsar. None other could have devised so vast a plan, and by no other army than his could it be executed.

And now came anxious days to Vergincetorix. The promised succor was delayed and famine threatened. It was resolved to send away the helpless people of the Mandubii, but they could not pass the Romans.

Very early in the siege Vergincetorix had fairly divided, man by man, all corn and cattle and other food, and this was near its end. A council of the leaders was now held, at which was to be considered the best course to be taken, and at this council Critognatus spoke most eloquently, counseling a sally and a quick determining of the great issue, however fatal.

Then came the news by messengers who had passed the enemy that our allies had come, and that under the leadership of Commius they were about to attack the Romans in great force!

There was no faltering now! We must sally forth when our allies made their attack. The assault soon came, and for two days there were furious charge and countercharge and much slaughter, the Gauls outside assailing the farther Roman works as did we the inner ones. On the fourth day came the bloody climax.

There was at the extremity of the Romans' northern line a hill which could not easily be included in their works, and the outer Gauls had perceived this hill's advantage. They took from their main army sixty thousand of their best men, and these, under command of Vergasillaunus, passed round and seized the hill at night.

At noon it was decided this great force should make its charge. Then all would join the battle, and all knew that, before the night fell, there would come an end either of free Gaul or of the dreadful Cæsar!

My ax was red with Roman blood. My arm was wearied and my body sore that night and through the brief hours of rest I snatched I slept but fitfully.

That my sleep would fail me in the night to come I had no fear, for I knew in my heart what must befall. It did not daunt me. What warrior had done better? What says the Havamal of Odin:

> Cattle die,
> Kindred die,
> We ourselves also die;
> But the fair fame
> Never dies
> Of one who deserves it!

At noon the battle burst with utmost fury, as Vergasillaunus hurled his force upon the Romans, and, almost at the same time, we from within assailed the ramparts. Nothing could stay us.

The ditches were filled with clay and hurdles, the walls were mounted, their defenders slain, the turrets cleared, and we burst fairly through the breached wall and struck our foes on even ground.

What foaming struggle then, what vengeance sought for wrongs, what strokes for freedom! Should victory come to him, what mercy would he show, this harsh and treacherous Cæsar! Even I, who fought for my own hand and for my vengeance, could not but feel hate with the Gauls. For this man surely the gods must have a punishment.

The noble Vergincetorix may grace his triumph, to be later murdered in a Roman dungeon; each Roman soldier may boast a Gallic slave; a servile populace may greet the conqueror madly with acclaim, but certainly the evil day and evil end must come. May the daggers of false friends some time await him!

We raged ahead and slew, but ever came swinging into support the Roman legions in the way I knew so well from Britain. And no longer could we force them. Oh, for a thousand of my wild Jutlanders, Angle, Saxon, or Jute, I cared not, to hew a way with me into those solid ranks!

There came a sudden rush and so close a press about me that I had no room for the swinging of my wet ax. The Roman short sword is most keen, and, driven into a man's side and cleanly through him, he must reach the earth.

The feet of a host of charging legionaries passed over and beyond me, and there came to my ears their distant shout of triumph.

The blood is flowing freely from my side, and I am weakening and dying. The Valkyries are circling in the sky. It is the end. How will they appear to me and how receive me, Odin, the All-Father; Thor, the hammerer; Balder, the beautiful, and Freyja, and all the great queens and warriors of the past?

That must be as it may be. I have fought well. And, now, even the gods are lost in mist. Strange visions are coming to me, visions of shining seas and the vast ocean, of warm, palm-clad lands and lands of ice and snow, of plains and forests and the dark mountain passes, of a thousand fierce encounters, and of other and more gentle things. Above and beyond all I see a creature, soft-furred of arm, dark-eyed, and wild and beautiful of her kind, near to me in the lofty tree-tops and gazing at me gravely from between leaved branches.

THE END.

THE PERFECT FACE.

THE Graces, on a summer day,
Grew serious for a moment—yea,
They thought in rivalry to trace
The outline of a perfect face.

Each used a rosebud for a brush,
And while it glowed with sunset's blush,
Each painted on the evening sky,
And each a star used for the eye.

They finished. Each a curtaining cloud
Drew back, and each exclaimed aloud:
"Behold, we three have drawn the same
From the same model!" Ah! her name?

I know. I saw the pictures grow.
I saw them falter, fade, and go.
I know the model—oft she lures
My heart. The face, my sweet, was yours.

Walter H. Hanway.

Red Hawk and Artemis

by James Francis Dwyer

MR. DAN DALTON, alias "the Red Hawk," reached New York per medium of a freight-car. He dropped from an uneasy perch as the train rumbled along the banks of the Hudson, way up beyond One Hundred and Ninetieth Street, and he stood watching the tail-lights as the long string of cars rolled toward the heart of the City of Clamor.

The lights disappeared as the caboose swung round a curve in the road, and Mr. Dalton walked slowly down to the bank of the river, in whose moonlit waters he intended to wash the grime of travel from his face and hands.

The Hawk was happy. He had skilfully evaded the arm of the law which had made a sudden grab at his much-wanted person, and he hummed a tune as he divested himself of a suit of overalls which he had thieved from an engine-cleaner at Albany. He brushed from his clothes as much of the dust of travel as he could, then he turned and walked up the wooded slope toward Riverside Drive.

It was a night of witchery. A moon that looked like a newly minted dollar flooded the Hudson with silvery beams. From the water came the soft tinkle of a guitar.

A line of scows went curtsying down the stream, and the little, prowling breezes that nosed along the Palisades fingered the curly hair of Mr. Dalton and whispered to him of loot to be gathered in the city before him.

The Hawk walked up through the little wood between the river and Riverside Drive, and he was within ten paces of the road when he stopped suddenly and dropped upon his hands and knees. He stared directly ahead at what he at first thought was the figure of a dryad dancing in the moonlight.

It was a sight that brought back to the mind of Mr. Dalton the stories of fairies and wood sprites that he had heard from his Gaelic ancestors. Between him and the fence separating the little wood from the drive were scattered bushes, the shadows of which were like splashes of ink upon

the moon-whitened grass, and from one of the shadow splashes to another a girl, who was as lovely as Artemis, moved with a grace and suppleness which thrilled the Red Hawk.

Mr. Dalton was amazed. The moonlight made the lines of the girl's lithe body plainly visible, and his keen eyes were delighted with the grace displayed in her movements. It was eleven o'clock; Riverside Drive was deserted, except for a passing automobile that dashed like a scared goblin toward the city; therefore, the actions of the girl, who moved from shadow-patch to shadow-patch with the grace of a fawn, interested Mr. Dalton immensely.

The Hawk tried to puzzle out the meaning of her actions. His first glimpse of her movements made him feel certain that she was playing hide-and-seek with a male companion, but the observations of a few minutes convinced the Hawk that his surmise was wrong.

He pushed forward a second supposition, and his keen eyes assured him that the second guess hit the mark. The girl was moving toward a two-storied house on the other side of the drive, and was taking advantage of every bit of cover as she advanced.

"She's stalking it," murmured Mr. Dalton, "and she's taking particular care to keep under cover lest some one might pipe her from the windows."

The nymph, whose graceful movement thrilled the solitary watcher, advanced cautiously. She skipped from one bush to another, and Mr. Dalton experienced wonderful sensations as he watched.

It was a delightful experience. To be a lonely spectator of a girl dressed in diaphanous draperies which, while showing her figure, gave full play to her well-turned limbs, was a treat that Mr. Dalton fully appreciated.

"Oh, gee!" he muttered. "Why, this beats—this beats anything I have ever seen!"

The girl reached the fence which separated the wooded slope from the driveway. She stood for a moment in the shelter of a small tree which grew close to the barrier, then she vaulted the fence with an ease which surprised the watcher.

The Hawk was close to her then, very close, and when she swung herself over the fence the white-eyed moon gave him a glimpse of shapely ankles and the smallest feet he had ever seen. He felt certain that she was a wood nymph decked out in the latest Parisian finery, which made her infinitely more alluring.

"I wonder what is her game?" he breathed. "What the dickens is her little game?"

Mr. Dalton looked at the house which was directly across the road from the spot where the nymph was standing. The house was in darkness, but as the Hawk watched it the front door opened and a tall, thin man walked out upon the moonlit piazza. The tall man stood for a moment upon the piazza, then he moved slowly down a flight of stone steps leading to the drive.

The appearance of the man seemed to startle the girl. The watching Hawk saw that her supple body was tense and rigid as she crouched behind the tree.

The tall man reached the bottom of the steps, and a fear which Mr. Dalton saw was upon the girl prompted flight. She vaulted back over the fence and rushed toward the nearest cover, and it so happened that Mr. Dalton, who had not expected her to retreat with such suddenness, was crouched in the patch of inky shadow which she selected as a temporary hiding-place.

He did not have sufficient time to move his long legs out of her way, and his inability to do so brought disastrous consequences. The girl tripped over Mr. Dalton's legs and rolled into the grass.

The Hawk, a great admirer of

courage, thought well of the girl's nerve at that moment. Instead of giving vent to the scream which he expected to hear, she gathered herself up and slipped into the shadow beside him. Kneeling behind the bush, she stared at him, her white face thrust forward till it was close to his own.

"Who are you?" she asked sharply.

"My name is Dalton," answered the Hawk. "Dan Dalton."

"What are you doing here?"

"Amusing myself."

"Are you spying on me?"

"Certainly not."

The big, luminous eyes of the girl stared at the face of the man as if endeavoring to find something that would give her a clue to his business.

"But who are you? What are you? Tell we what brought you here!" she cried.

"I arrived by freight from Albany exactly ten minutes ago," answered the Hawk. "I came up from the woods and I noticed you. I thought at first that you were a goddess of the woods who was practising a new kind of tango step in the moonlight."

He smiled as he made the remark, but no answering smile came upon the face of the girl. And the Hawk thought that he had never seen a face that was more beautiful than the one before him. It was a glorious face. The big eyes shone like diamonds in a bath of wine.

Her red lips, partly opened, disclosed two rows of baby pearls which were whiter than the moon. The oval face carried a look of purity and innocence that brought the Hawk a feeling of reverence which he had not experienced since the days when he had attended church as a little boy.

The wonderful mass of red-gold hair piled above the white brow—the girl wore no hat—was a maze in which the moonbeams lost themselves, and to the eyes of the Hawk it looked as if she had a golden nimbus around her shapely head.

But it was the innocence upon the face that held the Hawk. Pictures of saints that he had stared at as a child came up before his eyes as he looked at her. He had never seen such a look of childlike innocence upon a grown person, and he wondered when he glanced at her if it was her innocence and not her courage which enabled her to control herself when she tripped over his legs and somersaulted into the grass.

The ordinary girl, reasoned Mr. Dalton, aware of the danger which beset her sex, would have promptly screamed and fled precipitately from the spot; but the sprite of the night had coolly gathered herself up and started to cross-examine him.

The Hawk was unable to marshal his thoughts and was incapable of forming an opinion concerning the girl kneeling beside him on the soft grass.

The girl was still studying the face of the man. Her big eyes examined one feature after the other, and the Hawk, keenly aware of her scrutiny, tried to veneer his features with a look of respectability as he felt the probing gaze.

"I think you are a gentleman," murmured the girl, and her voice was as soft as the cooing of a wood-dove as she uttered the flattering verdict.

Her remark puzzled the Hawk. If any other woman had made it he would have been skeptical, but the childlike innocence upon the beautiful face of the girl made him feel that she believed him to be a well-bred person.

"I thank you," he said. "It is kind of you to say so."

"I am in search of a gentleman who might assist me at this very moment," said the girl, and her honeyed tones thrilled the Hawk as her words fell upon his ear.

Mr. Dalton's admiration for the nerve of his *vis-à-vis* grew as he listened. There was not the slightest trace of fear in her voice. She spoke with an ease that told him that she was complete master of herself and was in no way flurried over the ex-

traordinary manner in which they had met.

"I am at your service," he said. "You have but to command and I will obey."

"It is a dangerous task," murmured Artemis.

"I love danger," said the Hawk.

Once again her eyes swept over his face as if she wished to make certain of her man before outlining the task.

"I want you to perform an act which is unlawful," she whispered.

"It will be a mate for an act which I have just performed," said the Hawk, smiling. "I have told you that I rode into town on a freight-car."

The girl laughed, a delicious little laugh, which made the pulses of Mr. Dalton throb as he sat drinking in her beauty. The night had roused within him a wave of romance which his cunning vainly tried to combat. Sentiment welled up in the soul of the Hawk. The girl before him was fairer than Daphne, and her ravishing beauty sent the blood coursing madly through his veins.

"Are you willing to break the law?" she whispered.

"I am willing," answered the Hawk gallantly.

The girl rose to her feet and looked toward the dark house on the other side of the drive. And the Hawk rose and looked in the same direction.

Standing side by side, they watched in silence. The man who had walked down the steps a few minutes before was slowly climbing back to the piazza. He crossed the moonlit veranda and entered the house.

Artemis turned to the Hawk, who was now convinced that her eyes possessed hypnotic power that overwhelmed him. Her moist lips whispered softly and he felt her warm breath upon his cheek.

"My stepfather lives in the house across the way," she murmured. "You have just seen him enter the door. He comes out to look at the stars each night before retiring."

"I have a penchant for doing the same thing," murmured the Hawk.

"He thinks I am in bed," continued the girl, "and he will be fearfully angry if he discovers that I am not. If I knock at the door he will open it because he has sent the servants to bed an hour ago. You see, I was at a—at a dance, and I stayed late. But I must get in. I cannot remain out here all night, can I?"

"Certainly not," answered the Hawk.

"Then I must get in without letting my stepfather know," murmured Artemis. "Do you—do you understand what I wish you to do?"

She moved closer to the Hawk as she breathed the question. A strange, heady perfume came from her and made his pulses throb. The Hawk thought it came from the golden nimbus of hair which framed the beautiful face.

"I think I understand," he said.

She laid a little hand upon the sleeve of the Hawk, a little hand that was so white that Mr. Dalton assured himself that no snow that ever fell from heaven was whiter.

"I want you to climb through a window at the side of the house and open the front door for me," she whispered.

"I'll do it," said the Hawk. "Show me the window and I'll open it in three minutes."

"The window is on the north side of the house," said the girl. "It is the only one that you will be able to force. I tried to—to open it a few moments ago, but I was not strong enough."

"Which room does it open into?"

"The dining-room," murmured Artemis. "And you can walk straight across the dining-room to the hall. The front door has two bolts and a lock upon it."

"It is a simple job," said Mr. Dalton.

"Simple for one who is brave," she whispered.

The Hawk felt helpless under her gaze. The big eyes seemed to flood his soul with a stream which washed away the army of suspicion which rose up on hearing her request. Her eyes were wells of purity which beat back the army that urged him to go slow. In those few minutes he felt that he understood for the first time a few problems which had puzzled him in his youth. He remembered reading as a boy how a band of murderous brigands had ran from the eyes of St. Ann, and how a deadly serpent had backed away at the gaze of St. Ursula. He understood as he looked at Artemis.

"Will I do it now?" he asked.

The little white hand was still upon his sleeve as if it wished to restrain the impatience which was upon him.

"We must wait," she whispered. and the "we" flung the Hawk into the seventh heaven of delight. "We must wait for fifteen minutes. My stepfather retires immediately after he looks at the sky, and he is asleep the moment his head is upon the pillow. Let us move up to the fence and I will show you the window."

Together they moved into the shadow of the tree beneath which the girl had stood a few moments before, and, standing side by side, the girl pointed to the window on the north side through which she wished Mr. Dalton to force his way.

"There will be no danger," she said. "There is only one man servant and one woman servant on the premises. They are both old and they sleep in the rear of the house."

The Hawk felt helpless. His keen eyes sought the face of the girl, searching for suspicions strong enough to wreck the power which her look of innocence had over him. A combination of circumstances had arisen which left him as helpless as a pine chip in a millrace.

The big moon, the soft breezes, the whispering trees, the perfume that came from her filmy draperies, the big eyes which had discovered the gentlemanly traits upon his face, battered down all the doubts behind which Mr. Dan Dalton generally slipped when any one told him what he classed as a sweet little fairy tale.

During the wait which she had advised so that her stepfather might have time to betake himself to dreamland the Hawk tried to screw up his courage so that he would be able to break the pledge which he had given her, but he was unable to do so.

Her soft voice roused him out of the reverie into which he had fallen.

"He is surely asleep now," she whispered. "Don't be afraid. Push up the window and walk across the dining-room into the hall."

"I am not afraid," said the Hawk sharply.

"I know that you are not," breathed the girl. "I—I know that you are a true knight who is not afraid to perform an act of kindness for a girl in distress."

Mr. Dan Dalton felt that he was floating on clouds of golden mist. He could hardly convince himself that the girl was real. Mr. Dalton had Gaelic ancestors, and in his subconscious mind were stored many legends which told of wondrously beautiful fairies who frequented lonely spots at midnight to lure men to destruction. The pressure of her soft hand was still upon his arm, and the honeyed tones came to his ears.

"I shall always be grateful to you," she murmured sweetly. "I shall pray for you every night."

The Hawk felt that a blood-vessel would burst in his head if he did not get away from her. He mentally cursed himself for the lack of control which he had at that moment.

"The front door will be opened in three minutes," he said. "Good-by."

"Good-by and good luck," she murmured. "You are so, so good."

The next moment the Hawk was crossing the drive with a stride that

showed no hesitancy. He climbed the steep bank at the side of the house and walked noiselessly along the flagged path till he reached the window which the girl had pointed out to him.

It was an easy matter to open the window. The steady pressure of the Hawk's strong fingers beneath the upper part of the bottom sash bent the fastening till it snapped with a sharp noise. Mr. Dalton stood for a moment and listened; then he lifted the sash and climbed through the window. It was quite dark within the room, and he groped his way forward.

He circled the table that was between him and the door leading into the hall, then he walked quickly along the carpeted passage, drew back the two bolts which the girl had spoken of, turned the key noiselessly, and opened the door.

The girl slipped across the threshold, and once again the Hawk felt certain that she was a dream-maiden who might at any moment fade away into the pearly night. She stood close to him, and the sweet perfume again came to his nostrils. A little tendril from the golden nimbus around her head stroked his face as she leaned forward to whisper to him.

"Thank you a thousand times," she murmured softly. "It was so very good of you to help me."

"It was quite a simple matter, I assure you."

"But it was brave of you."

Her little hand had found its way into his big, muscular one as they stood together, and Mr. Dalton was possessed of a fear that he had not thoroughly washed his grimy hands after dropping from the freight-car. He thought that he might soil the small hand whose snowy whiteness had been so noticeable when resting on his arm.

The girl made no attempt to move forward, and the Hawk's keen intuition told him that she was either waiting for him to speak or waiting to speak to him. And the Hawk's intuition was marvelously correct.

Her supple body was close to him as they stood together in the shadowy hallway, and he noticed the rising and falling of the lace upon her rounded bosom. Her face was close to his, and her whispered words came to him like the soft breathing of the night.

"I told you a lie," she murmured. "I told you a lie when I asked you to do this for me. I cannot let you go without telling you and asking your forgiveness."

The Hawk experienced thrills that he had never experienced before as he looked down upon her wonderful face.

"Then, you do not live here?" he asked.

"Not now," she murmured. "I did live here. My stepfather lives here now; but I—I ran away from him."

She moved her face out of the gloom into the silvery flood as if she wished to allow the keen eyes of the man to search her features for anything that might throw doubt upon her words.

And the purity of her face fought back the flood of suspicions which her confession unloosed in the mind of the Hawk.

Again he tried to think evil of her but he could not. Again he was in the position of the serpent who retreated before the eyes of St. Ursula and the murderous brigands who turned and ran before the purity which they saw upon the face of St. Ann.

He wished at the moment that she had not thrust her head into the moonlight. The glory of the face made him believe. His soul was bathed in an essence compounded of moonbeams, sighing breezes, and the soft glance of eyes that Helen might have owned.

"You are not angry with me?" she asked.

"Angry? Certainly not!" stammered the Hawk.

"And you are not sorry you helped me?"

"I am glad, very glad."

There was another slight interval of silence, then the girl spoke again.

"My stepfather holds something be-

longing to my sister Muriel. It was my mother's property, but my mother is dead. It has been in my mother's family for three hundred years. When my—my mother died my stepfather turned us out of doors and he refused to give up this—this property I speak of."

Something warm and wet fell upon the big hand of the Hawk. He knew it to be a tear-drop, and as he looked down at her face he saw in the soft moonlight the companion tear glistening like the Kohinoor diamond as it rolled slowly down her velvety cheek.

And then Mr. Dalton, born of the moonbeams and the breezes and the magic of the night, felt that he would gladly wreck the house to help the girl whose little hand he held. A Gaelic ancestry is something hard to overcome in a position such as the Red Hawk found himself.

"I must get this property," murmured the nymph. "I must get it to-night. I had given up all hopes of getting into the house when you came along. I think that Fate sent you to help me."

"I think so, too," murmured the Hawk.

"But I had to confess to you that I told a lie. I had to tell you before I let you go. Now—now I must go forward."

"Alone?"

Her face was very close to the tanned face of the man. She tried to draw her little hand away from the grip of his big one, but his clutch tightened. She looked up at him with a question in the big eyes.

"I must go alone," she murmured. "Unless—"

She stopped and looked up at the Hawk, looked up at him with a light in her eyes which swept cunning and caution to the four winds.

"Lead on," whispered the man. "Lead on, and I will follow."

He took the arm of the girl and gently drew her into the hall, then he softly closed the front door.

The Hawk understood as they walked along the hall that the girl was thoroughly acquainted with the premises. The soft fingers that clutched his sleeve steered him clear of a big hall-stand which came in their way, and the pressure of those fingers brought about a mental intoxication which made Mr. Dalton think that he was walking on air.

They reached the stairs and started to ascend. Using much caution, they moved up into the gloom above them. The house was very quiet.

They reached the first landing, and the girl, still holding the sleeve of her companion, turned to the right. She moved along a passage which led toward the front of the house. Through a large French window at the end of the passage the moonbeams were streaming, making a pool of silver upon the Eastern runner which muffled their footsteps.

They passed a closed door, and then another; but at the third door the girl halted and listened. The moonlight from the window at the end of the passage enabled the Hawk to see her distinctly.

The white fingers of the girl gripped the knob, turned it noiselessly, and pushed open the door. The darkness within the chamber made it impossible to see. The Hawk's keen eyes could see nothing, but his ears brought him a little information. As he stood side by side with the girl he heard the soft breathing of a sleeper.

Artemis clutched the arm of the Hawk, and he glanced down at her. She made a motion with her white hand which told him that she wished him to stay where he was while she went forward alone. He nodded his head to let her know that he was agreeable to follow instructions, and she slipped from his side, to be immediately swallowed up in the darkness of the room.

Standing on the threshold, the Hawk waited patiently, all his senses alert. Minute after minute went by,

but the dark depths of the room still held the girl. The regular breathing of the sleeper came from the darkness, and the Hawk wondered. He wondered what was the nature of the property which the girl wished to gain possession of.

Minutes passed slowly. A suspicion flared up in the mind of Mr. Dan Dalton as he waited. He had a conviction that the girl had obtained the property which she sought, and then, fearful that he might demand something for the help he had given, had slipped out of the room by another door. He tried to quench the flaming suspicion, but he could not. He conjured up a picture of her eyes and the wonderful innocence upon her features, but the suspicion remained till it was suddenly extinguished by a happening within the chamber. A sharp click came from the darkness, and the room was flooded with light.

The Hawk sprang backward and crouched. He could see into the room, and he peered with much interest at the little tableau which met his eyes. He looked into a sumptuously furnished bedroom. A mahogany suite of wonderful workmanship was set off to advantage in the large chamber. Rich curtains completely hid the two windows on the farther side from the door, and the walls were covered with tapestries and works of art.

But it was not the furnishings that concerned Mr. Dalton at that moment. Between the two heavily curtained windows stood the girl, her hand upon the open door of a small steel safe which was fitted into the wall of the bedroom. The eyes which had hypnotized the Hawk were turned upon a lean-faced man who was sitting up in the mahogany bed, and whose right hand held a small automatic revolver, the barrel of which covered the girl standing near the safe.

It was the man in the bed who broke the tense silence. "Don't move," he said quietly. "Don't move or I will be forced to pull the trigger. Put your other hand up, my dear, and don't attempt to put it near your clothes again."

The Hawk watched the girl, and his opinion of her courage was confirmed at that moment. He told himself that the ordinary female would have immediately wrenched her gaze from the man on the bed and looked toward the spot from which she expected help to come. But Artemis did not make this blunder.

She did nothing to disclose the fact that a friend was in hiding, and Mr. Dalton's admiration of her was great at that moment. There was no fear upon her face as she looked at the short barrel of the automatic; in fact, the Hawk thought that he detected a look of scorn upon her features as she stood tense and rigid beside the little wall safe, her white, shapely fingers clutching the door, which she had evidently just succeeded in opening.

The lean-faced man continued to speak in a hard, rasping voice.

"You will pardon my slowness," he said as he flung back the clothes and thrust one leg and then the other over the edge of the bed. "I have a little touch of rheumatism, madam; but I will not keep you waiting long. Please don't move your right hand. I have little chivalry in my composition, and I would have no hesitation about firing."

"You are going to call up the police?" said the girl.

"That is exactly what I am going to do," said the lean-faced man, rising to his feet. "I will not keep you long. Just straighten that arm, will you? Keep it up. That's right."

"Please don't call the police!" murmured the girl. "Please don't!"

"Why?" asked the man.

He had been making slowly toward the telephone-table, which was not more than six paces from the bedside, and when the girl spoke the Hawk understood that she was trying to delay the occupant of the bedroom so that he could go to her assistance. The

Hawk knew that she was thinking at that moment that he would rescue her.

The pleading tone arrested the steps of the lean-faced man, who, confident of his own power, was in no hurry.

"I want to plead with you," murmured the girl. "I want to speak to you."

The man with the revolver considered her from head to foot, and while she was under examination the Hawk moved swiftly. Dropping upon his hands and knees, Mr. Dalton moved across the carpeted floor toward the head of the bed, which was eighteen inches or more from the wall. This allowed the Hawk a passage which would enable him to crawl behind the man whose eyes were appraising the girl standing beside the wall safe.

"Don't attempt to be funny," murmured the man with the gun, as one of the girl's white arms grew limp. "I told you I would shoot, and so I will. This little instrument can squirt a stream of lead at any one just as easily as a fireman's hose squirts water."

The Hawk circled the bed and rose to his hands and knees. He knew that the girl was aware of his actions, but her eyes did not move from the face of the man holding the automatic.

The Hawk rose to his feet and prepared to spring, but at that moment fate was unkind. A cluster of electric lights upon a bracket attached to the wall directly above the head of the bed flung the shadow of Mr. Dalton across the carpet when he stood upright, and the man with the revolver swung round upon him.

The girl gave a little cry of warning and the next instant the explosion of the automatic rang out.

A bullet licked the forehead of the Hawk like a red-hot tongue, and he hurled himself forward. The marksman did not get a second chance.

Dalton's right fist went out and connected with the lean jaw of the shooter. It was a terrific punch. The knees of the pajama-clad man doubled beneath him and he slipped quietly down upon the rug.

The girl's nerve did not desert her at that moment.

"Quick!" she cried. "The butler will be armed."

Together they ran through the door into the passage and stood for an instant listening. The revolver-shot had roused somebody on the lower floor, and the Hawk, seizing the arm of the girl, ran toward the French window at the end of the passage.

"We cannot escape by the stairs," he whispered. "Some one is coming up."

Mr. Dalton hurriedly unlocked the window and sprang out upon a small balcony. The girl followed. The whole world was bathed in liquid silver. The river shone like a strip of white satin. Immediately beneath them the deserted drive stretched away toward the city.

The Hawk rushed to one end of the balcony and looked over. The supporting pillars offered the only means of escape—easy means for a man who could climb over the balustrade, grip one of the supporting posts, and slide to the ground.

But Mr. Dalton's doubt as to whether the girl was able to perform the same acrobatic feat was speedily set aside.

"You go first," said Artemis, speaking in a low whisper, "and I will follow you. I can slip down with my feet upon your shoulders."

The Hawk wasted no time in obeying her orders. He slipped over the balustrade and the girl followed. He circled the post with his long legs, slipped down it for a short distance, and then waited till her little shoes rested upon his shoulders.

"Go ahead," she cried. "I am ready."

They slipped to the ground, and the man caught the girl by the arm. Lights were flashing inside the house, and a woman's scream shattered the silence of the night.

The big moon that rose high in the heavens placed the Hawk and his companion at a disadvantage; they knew that they had to use speed in getting away from the spot.

The two rushed across the drive and gained the woods. They ran swiftly and the Hawk was amazed at the speed of the girl who ran by his side. He set a pace that would try the stamina of an athlete, but she kept up with him. Without a word she ran forward into the night, and the admiration of Mr. Dalton did not lessen during that run.

They avoided the open places, taking advantage of every patch of cover that offered. Below them flowed the river, above them was the slope rising from the driveway. The Hawk as he ran was reviewing the happening in the house and again martialing the suspicions which he had vainly tried to thrust forward a short time before.

The Hawk halted at last, and the girl stopped beside him. Both were breathing heavily. The run had been a strenuous one. For a moment they stood looking at each other, and then the girl spoke, her big eyes upon the face of the man.

"We must separate," she gasped.

"Sure," said the Hawk. "It will be dangerous for us to keep together."

His keen eyes were upon her face and he noticed with surprise that in spite of all she had gone through her features still possessed the calm innocence which had acted as a barrier against his suspicions.

But now the Hawk's suspicions swept forward in a wave that her look of innocence could not stem. They had flamed up in the bedroom where the pajama-clad man was within an ace of putting a bullet through his head, and now as he stood looking down into the face of the girl there was a hard glint in his eyes.

"You got it?" he said, and his gaze swept her face like a biting flame.

"Got what?" she asked.

"The property you were after?"

For a moment she waited before making a reply. Her eyes did not waver under the glare of Mr. Dalton, who challenged her to deny his assertion.

"No," she murmured. "I didn't get it."

"My eyes must have deceived me," he snarled.

"Why?" she breathed.

"Why?" he snapped. "I'll tell you why! When that fellow swung round to blaze at me I caught the flash of something which you dragged from the safe. You didn't have it till then, and I liked your nerve for being able to take advantage of the diversion. Not one woman in a thousand would have had the pluck to grab the loot at a moment like that."

She did not flinch under his scrutiny. Her big eyes met his piercing black ones in which suspicion flamed.

"You flatter me," she said after a slight pause. "You flatter me when you praise my courage."

"You've got nerve enough for a dozen," he snarled. "Nerve for a regiment. You"—he came closer to her, and his head was thrust forward in an accusing manner—"you planned a burglary and fooled me into helping you by telling me that you were trying to recover some property belonging to your sister."

"But it does belong to my sister!" cried the girl. "It does! It does!"

The Hawk glared at her.

"You are a swift un," he growled. "You are the goods, sure, and you can brazen a thing out better than any one I know. You rigged that job up and played me as a sucker. Now—now—"

He stopped and looked at her.

"Well?" she prompted.

"Now I want a share," snarled Mr. Dalton.

The old Hawk was on top at that moment. There was a lust for loot in the black eyes which looked down upon the girl. His iron fingers were crooked as if he would tear from her his share of the plunder which he risked his liberty to obtain.

The girl showed no fear. She stood up straight before him, a soft, lissome creature who seemed fairy-like and unreal as the gently waving branches above her head tried to block the moonbeams that wished to lose themselves in the masses of her piled hair.

"You wrong me," she said quietly. "You wrong me very much."

The Hawk tried to ignore that liquid softness of her voice, the softness which shook his faith in his own craftiness.

"Do I?" he snarled. "You tried to play me as a sucker, and no one can do that. I am the genuine Dan Dalton, and when I am in a game I get my bit of the apple. You bet I do!"

She was very close to him as they stood in the shelter of the bushes. The night wind carried the perfume of her garments to the nostrils of the Hawk, and he tried to control himself. He was fighting hard. He wanted to disbelieve her because he desired a share of whatever she had taken from the safe, but he found it a difficult job to disbelieve her. Her wonderful eyes were upon him, and he had to fight hard.

"If I told you the story, you would believe," she murmured. "Oh, I know you will believe me. Let me tell it to you."

"I don't want to hear the story," said the Hawk, his voice hoarse and throaty with the struggle that was upon him. "I don't want to hear it."

"But you must! You must!"

Her two white hands went out and clutched his sleeves. The Hawk gasped as he felt her fingers upon his muscular arms. He had no desire to believe. He had no wish to hear the story. He wanted his share in whatever plunder she took from the safe, and she was preventing him from demanding that share by her witchery.

"I don't want to hear!" he cried. "I—I—"

"Listen!" she murmured. "You must listen!"

Her parted lips showed the rows of baby pearls that were wonderfully white. The rounded throat was like a pillar of ivory in the soft moonlight. The Hawk tried to protest, but he could not. Mentally he damned her for a witch who held him in thrall.

"Our family is one of the oldest in Virginia," whispered the girl, speaking in a soft, sweet whisper which the Hawk thought was like no other voice that he had ever heard. "They settled there ever so many years ago, and the wife of the first one of our family who immigrated to this country brought from England the Lorris Emerald. The emerald was a gift to my long dead ancestor from King Charles the First. He gave it to her on her wedding morn. On her wedding morn, mind you, and she gave it to her elder daughter.

That eldest daughter gave it to her eldest daughter on the morning of her marriage day, and so on down through the centuries. It was never given until the wedding morn, and it was never worn by the receiver till she put it on to be married. You must not doubt me! You must not! I am telling you the truth! For three hundred years we held the Lorris Emerald, the eldest daughter giving it to eldest daughter, and giving her good luck and good fortune with it. It carries the blessings of eleven mothers who have handed it down."

The story-teller was breathing quickly, her face upturned to the face of the Hawk. And the Hawk felt that his suspicions were being throttled one by one by the soft words that fell from the lips of the girl. She made him believe! He tried hard to disbelieve the story which she told with such fervor. He wanted to tell her that she lied, but he could not.

"Five years ago my father died," continued the girl, "and my mother married the man you saw to-night. Inside twelve months she died. His cruelty killed her, and his cruelty drove us one after the other from his house. My eldest sister, Muriel, was the first

to leave; I was the last. My stepfather had in his possession the Lorris Emerald, and he would not give it up. I went on my knees to him, but he refused my prayer. It was not his! It belonged to the women of our family. It belonged to us! No man of our family had ever thought of it as his property!

"To-morrow morning, Muriel, my sister, is to be married. She has been weeping for weeks because she will be the first in three hundred years to break the tradition of the Lorris Emerald. The emerald brings luck to the one to whom it is given, and my little sister Muriel is afraid that bad fortune will come upon her because she is breaking a tradition that is three hundred years old. Oh, you must believe me! You cannot disbelieve me! Surely you do not—you do not think that I planned a common burglary? You could not think that! I would not—I would not—oh, you cannot think that I went in there after something—something to which I had no claim. I felt to-night that I would do anything to bring to Muriel the emerald which belongs to her and which has come down to her from her ancestors, and —I—I—"

The girl was sobbing now, and the Red Hawk choked as he watched her. He wanted to disbelieve the story, but he could not.

"Show me the emerald," he growled. "Show it to me."

"You believe me?" sobbed the girl. "You believe me?"

Again the heady perfume came to his nostrils and attacked his common sense.

"I believe you," he muttered. "It is a queer yarn, but it looks true."

"It is true!" cried the girl. "It is true! Surely you feel that it is true?"

"Show me the emerald!" snarled the Hawk.

Her eyes were upon him as she took from her bosom a tiny lace handkerchief, rolled into a ball. The Hawk's eyes watched her fingers as she uncovered the prize which she had taken from the safe in the bedroom. Very slowly she unrolled the handkerchief, turning fold after fold till at last she disclosed an emerald pendant, a single stone of extraordinary beauty, which made the Hawk give a gurgle of wonder as it flashed before his eyes.

It was a glorious emerald. It seemed to burst from the lacy folds like a great green eye that drank ravenously of the bright moonbeams that rushed to it.

The Hawk was filled with covetousness. He had a tremendous desire to snatch the stone and run. His fingers reached up for it as if an uncontrollable longing pushed them forward. But the girl seemed to understand the emotions that possessed the man. She placed her white fingers on the sleeve of his right arm, and the reaching hand of Dan Dalton dropped to his side.

The man tore his eyes away from the emerald and looked at the face of the girl. Her self-possession astounded him. Her innocence was a pillar of truth, upon which the story seemed to rest, and yet doubt after doubt sprang up in the crafty brain of the Hawk.

"He didn't recognize you!" he growled. "If you were his stepdaughter, why didn't—why didn't he say something?"

"He took an oath that he would never recognize us again," murmured the girl. "He would have sent for the police if you had not—if you had not shown such bravery. He does not know me as a stepdaughter any more. I am a stranger to him."

She was slowly wrapping the big emerald in the lacy handkerchief, and the Red Hawk, fighting for control, turned his back upon her. He had a terrible desire to tear the stone from her white fingers and rush away through the woods. Once or twice the longing to do so nearly overpowered him, and it was only the sobs of the girl that held him in check.

A far-away clock struck the hour of midnight, and the sound roused the girl.

"We must be going!" she cried. "It is dangerous to wait here any longer. We can make our way up to the drive."

They turned up the hill, walking side by side. The Hawk walked like a man in a dream. He had tried to screw up his courage so that he could tear the emerald from her hand; but he could not, and he wondered at the power that she possessed. He felt that the story was true, but it was the first time that he had been swept away by a tale of that kind.

He cursed the white fingers which had made him drop his hand as he was reaching up to snap the wonderful stone. The emerald danced before his eyes as he walked up the slope. His imagination pictured it like the green eye of Vlau winking at him from the folds of the handkerchief which she had thrust into her bosom.

For a hundred yards they walked through the bushes — walked in silence. The drive was close to them. They saw the big headlights of a car that slipped quietly toward the city.

The Hawk knew that he was allowing a great prize to slip away from him. He told himself that he should not consider the woman. He told himself that he should not be an emotional fool and let the story about the girl's sister stand between him and his share of the prize he had helped to win. And yet he lacked the power to demand his share.

The drive was very close to them when fate gave the Hawk his chance. The toe of the girl's dainty shoe caught in a creeper and she fell upon her hands and knees. The Hawk's strong arms were thrust out to help her to her feet, and the iron fingers of his right hand, strong and yet wonderfully skilful, touched the handkerchief which contained the Lorris Emerald!

The girl's face was turned from the Hawk at that moment, and the purity upon it could not restrain him. His fingers touched the scrap of lace that was wrapped around the emerald, and the plunder lust welled up within him.

As he lifted her he felt the gem in the folds of the handkerchief, and all his cunning and resourcefulness came to his aid at that moment. He slipped purposely upon the steep slope, and as the girl struggled to her feet the Hawk's skilful fingers that had performed marvelous feats extracted the emerald from the tiny square of lace and carried it to his own vest-pocket.

The girl got upon her feet, and the Hawk, watching her closely, thought that he detected a look of fear flit across her face. The big eyes were upon him, and he endeavored to control his features. He wondered if she knew.

The girl's right hand moved toward her bosom, as if the white fingers wished to feel certain that the pendant was still within the handkerchief which the Hawk had thrust back after he had abstracted the emerald. And the Hawk watched the white fingers. He watched them with fascinated eyes.

The fingers hovered over the handkerchief, but they did not touch it. The Hawk was certain that she did not suspect him. He breathed a sigh of relief as the hovering white hand busied itself in brushing from the left sleeve a little leaf which had clung to the muslin. A smile illuminated her face, and the tension which was noticeable for a moment was relieved.

"I was nearly down then," murmured the girl. "My shoe caught in a vine."

"And I stumbled in trying to help you," said the Hawk. "I was very clumsy in lifting you up."

Again they started forward. The Hawk congratulated himself as they walked. He had obtained possession of the loot in spite of her face and the story which she told. The night had not been wasted. What did it matter

to him if Muriel did not receive the Lorris Emerald? He would not be there to see her tears.

Besides, it was only a stupid tradition kept alive by sentimental women. He, the Red Hawk, had never been known to let a chance slip, and he wondered how she had kept him back from tearing it from her hands. He felt that he had narrowly averted making a fool of himself by allowing her to walk off with the loot which he had fought for.

The Hawk felt that a warmth radiated from the stone in his vest-pocket. He thought that a warmth came out from it which thrilled his whole body. He made calculations as to its value. He wondered where he could "fence" it to the best advantage.

They reached the drive, climbed through the railing and stood upon the road. And as they stood there, a lumbering taxi came rolling down from the north. The driver of the cab was chanting a ragtime chorus concerning maids and moonbeams, and the fact that his singing was execrable told the Hawk and his companion that he was without a fare.

"It's an empty taxi," said the girl. "We can ride down into the city."

The Hawk wet his dry lips. "I am not going into the city," he said.

"Are you not?"

"No, I am going to stay in this neighborhood."

The girl evinced no surprise. The taxi came rumbling along, but the driver stopped his chant and wheeled in toward the curb when the Hawk hailed him.

The girl, standing near the open door of the taxi, turned to her companion, who looked as if he was shepherding her into the vehicle. The Hawk wanted to get her out of his sight. The feeling of warmth which came from his vest-pocket had a strange effect upon him. He wished to feast his eyes upon the emerald the moment she left him.

"I can never thank you sufficiently for what you have done," murmured the girl. "You have been very, very kind to me."

"It was nothing," stammered the Hawk. "I enjoyed the fun."

"We might meet again," she murmured. "This little town is a small place."

"We might," he muttered.

The Hawk stood looking at her as she paused for a moment before stepping into the cab. Her face was bathed in the soft moonlight, and he had much difficulty in turning aside the little wave of remorse which came to him as he looked at her. What did he care for her sister Muriel? What did he care for any one? He was a burglar whose hand was against every one. He looked for no sympathy, and he gave none, yet she was very beautiful.

"I shall never be able to thank you," said the girl. "I will always pray for you."

The taxi-driver was staring straight down the white roadway. The girl glanced at the driver, then she stepped forward suddenly, threw her white hands around the neck of the Hawk and kissed him on the lips and cried—

"Good-by, good-by!"

The next moment she had slipped from him and had sprang into the cab which moved forward toward the city.

The Hawk stood for a moment endeavoring to control himself. He had been startled by her action. The white arms which had circled his neck, and the moist lips which had been pressed for a moment against his own, had carried him into the seventh heaven of delight, and for a few seconds he could not think. Then a horrible suspicion pricked him into action.

The fingers of Mr. Dalton's right hand dived into his vest-pocket and he gave a cry of agony. With a curse upon his lips he rushed madly along the dusty drive, pursuing the red tail-light of the taxi, which seemed to leer at him as he ran.

"Stop!" he roared. "Stop! Hold her, driver! Hold her! Stop! Stop!"

But the driver, instead of slackening, let out a notch or two and the car sprang forward.

The Hawk, running swiftly, saw a white face that was thrust out of the window of the cab. A voice that had thrilled him each time he had heard it came back to him on the soft night wind.

"Good night, Red Hawk!" cried the voice. "Good night, dear, kind Mr. Red Hawk!"

Her voice was lifted in an improvised song, and the words floated back to the man. She sang:

I had a little Red Hawk, and he was very tame,
He really tried to rob me, but he didn't know the game.

Mr. Dalton stopped in the middle of the road and flung a torrent of curses after the taxi. He had not told the girl his alias, and yet she knew him.

"The little jezebel!" he screamed. "She's a crook! She a cunning little crook! She knows me! She knows me, and she fooled me right up to the last minute! A sucker? Why, I am a thousand times worse than a sucker! I am the biggest lump of green stuff that ever came to this old city!"

He stood in the middle of the drive till the honk of an automobile coming out of the north startled him; then, still hurling curses at the taxi that rolled toward the heart of the City of Clamor, he dived into the bushes.

A POET'S CONFESSION.

I've written scores of verses to
  Full many a fair and dainty maid,
With eyes of heavenly, azure hue,
  Brown, hazel, black as ace of spade,
In fact, of every earthly shade,
  And dubbed them angel, siren, fairy;
But I am more than half afraid
  My loves are all imaginary.

I've raved about a certain Lu,
  Until I can almost persuade
Myself that all I've said is true,
  Instead of just a trick I've played.
The name (a simple trick of trade)
  Has far more rimes than—well, say Mary,
And so I've used it. Why evade?
  My loves are all imaginary.

I've prated love till I am blue,
  And never yet have I betrayed
The fact that 'twas for revenue
  Those jingling verses all were made.
Supply demand, and get well paid—
  Demand for verses, tender, merry.
A hypocrite? Do not upbraid—
  My loves are all imaginary.

Some poets, true, can serenade
  The maids they love, so gay and airy,
While I can only masquerade.
  My loves are all imaginary!

Sam S. Stinson.

The Heart of a Child

By Jim Fellom

Author of "Hairtrigger Manning," "Desert Loot," etc.

THE two men glared at each other. It had been a short, hard fight. They stood bareheaded in the sun, chest to chest, panting into each other's faces, their hats in the dust, the ground kicked up around them.

A little distance away another man stood and watched. He watched with the morbid fascination of the curious, with wide eyes and mouth agape. He had stopped at the first sign of conflict, the only witness.

Half a mile off the oil-can roofing of a cluster of dug-outs reflected the sun-rays like so many heliographs. Crowding them on all sides was a tumbled sea of tents.

Back upon the ridges and hog-backs and upon the lower slopes of the range the white dumps of "prospects" stood out prominently against the mother rock of ribboned porphyry.

Some unseen worker in the vicinity emptied his wheelbarrow of rock. It rattled out metallically, clattering and grinding down a dump. It roused the man in the overalls. He edged away with his eyes upon his opponent, picked up his hat, and beat the dust out of it against his knee.

"From now on, Fisher," he hissed, coming back glowering, "there ain't room fur the two of us in Dugout! Yer know what I mean! When you insult her, yer reckon with me! I'm givin' yer a chance to get heeled—quick!"

His well-groomed adversary got out his handkerchief and flecked at his high-priced boots. He wiped the blood from his mouth.

"Goes with me, Tannehill," he replied indifferently. "On sight, eh?"

"You know it!"

The sounds of a fast-traveling wagon bowling over the rocky road reached them. With one accord both turned away.

"Don't forget," sneered Fisher over his shoulder.

"That's up to you!"

As he spoke Tannehill threw a look full of malicious significance at the spectator. The latter fell in alongside, smirking.

"Hullo Len—what's the trouble?"

"Any time one of them half-baked promoters or any man takes it into his

head he kin shoot his mouth off about my old woman and get away with it—Well, he'll find out! Yer heard what I told him. It goes, Smith!"

He ended with a torrent of abuse, stopping to shake his fist at the broker's retreating figure.

The wagon that had occasioned the interruption sprang out of a gulch into which the road fell, the horses taking the grade on a lope. Seeing the two men the driver jammed on the brake and jerked the animals on their haunches.

"See Fisher?" he asked shortly. He was breathless with excitement.

"Just around that bend," motioned Smith, and Tannehill cursed to himself.

"They've struck it on the Fisher No. 3 lease," the wagoner ran on. "The town's crazy! Ten feet of a ledge and no sign of a wall! Look at the mob!"

He turned in his seat and pointed with trembling finger at the unbroken line of men laboring like ants up the steep side of a hill behind the town.

"A reg'lar mint. Fennimore, a mucker, swiped a chunk as big as a walnut, and soaked it to a barkeep of the Nevada for twenty bucks! I'll bet Fisher'll be tickled to death. Gee, he's a lucky guy!" the blacksnake popped.

"You *bet* he's a lucky guy!" shouted Tannehill, smiling malignantly after the news-bearer. But the fellow was out of hearing, lashing the team into a frantic scamper.

Fisher was no coward. On the contrary, he was an overconfident chap, who had whirlwinded his way through college astride the bank-book of a wealthy, liberal father. Therefore, he believed himself capable of every task, equal to every situation.

Men knew him for a "bluffer." In his two years' efforts to frame a career, he had broken more promises, more traditions, and more mining companies than any "boomer" in Nevada. His career was as far off as ever.

In Dugout he was making his usual stand. He had been one of the first in the district, now four months old, and had shouldered his way to an acknowledged position of influence by more misrepresentation and bull-headed luck than ability.

Nettie, Tannehill's wife, he knew. When she and her husband had swung from the stage ten days after the San Francisco disaster, he had caught her eye. No one noticed that she started and paled. Neither was he seen swaggering away through the crowd—a knowing, reckless twinkle in his eyes, a reminiscent smile on his lips.

Came the first strike on the Golden Siren claim. Tannehill hunted hard for a lease. The dapper broker, Fisher, learned of it indirectly, and as indirectly got one for him.

After this Fisher's office hours became capricious seasons of no import. But, in the excitement of a new-born gold camp, where men are uncovering fresh riches every day along a five-mile belt, might not a mining man be justly pardoned for want of system?

Old college chums arrived. They camped on Fisher's trail, captured him, and spirited him away for a night's revel. The wine was good and he boasted. He said too much. It got away from him in a saloon. Even the bartender had warned him patronizingly.

However, the fact remained that he had held his own with Tannehill—that lanky, rough-neck whose honest callouses he despised. His overweening opinion of himself rose to exalted heights at thought of the encounter and its result.

Shoot at sight! The very idea of weapons, six-shooters at that, was playing into his hand. Tannehill did not know his expertness; did not dream that his trunks in California were bursting with trophies won in the gun-club tournaments of the Pacific coast. What a shock the old bean-eater would get.

And, happy thought! "Babe"

Todall, the very man he was on his way to see, had the one gun to his liking—a thirty-eight on a forty-five frame. Todall would appreciate the joke, too.

Then, after the affair was over, he would sell his holdings for the first man's figure and leave Dugout. The camp was a "wild-cat," anyway—they had dug the bottom out of it already, in conformity with its name.

He had been losing valuable time staying, and he would be glad to go. Besides, there was the possibility of a *vigilantes* committee that would be made up for the most part of too many men of Tannehill's caliber and circumstances to make a longer stay advisable.

"Well, I'll see it through, anyway," he confided to the desert landscape. "Wonder what she'll think?"

The next moment he was enveloped in a cloud of dust, and heard his name shouted by a driver who spared neither horse-flesh nor conveyance.

"Mr. Fisher! They've got it in No. 3. Parsons sent me after you. Somebody on the seven o'clock shift gave it away. The camp is nutty. You can't touch the Treacle Group for love or money. There's ten feet—"

"Ten feet!" gasped Fisher, quivering.

"—without indications of a wall!" the messenger spluttered on. "Picture-rock, every bit of it. He's got three men on the ore-dump with shotguns. The Two Continents Company offered Felladay Brothers a hundred thousand, and they laughed at 'em. Hurry! Come on—jump in! Look at the mob! Look at it!" He was cramping the wagon about as he spoke.

Fisher turned burning eyes in the direction indicated. He saw the snake-like trail alive with humanity—a sluggish stream that seemed to be siphoning the cañon of some dark, heavy liquid and spreading it over the high slope.

He hesitated no longer. With a strange cry he tumbled awkwardly into the seat and sank his fingers into his companion's arm.

"Go on! Go on!" he cried wildly—nor heeded the rocky nature of the road that twisted and listed the vehicle into dangerous angles.

He was rich. Rich as Crœsus. A desert potentate! At that very moment the news was being flashed over the financial world.

Before sundown the mining exchanges would be churning maelstroms of money-mad men, with Fisher No. 3 mounting to impossible figures. It was the sensation of the century—peer of the famous Comstock, even!

The name Fisher, too, would be handed down to posterity among such celebrities as Fair and Flood and Mackay. It was the crowning victory of any man's life!

Little was said during the furious drive back to Dugout. More than once Fisher essayed a question. The words were jolted out of his mouth in an incoherent stream.

He gave up the attempt to speak, clinging instead to the wagon seat to keep from being slung into the road. But his eyes never left the surging multitudes on the heights.

Soon they were rattling through the squatter suburbs of the camp. Dozens of men were raising tents. An epidemic of activity was in the air. Fisher was dully aware that a saloon was doing business under a fly, where two hours before had been a deserted, stony angle in the wash of a gulch.

Far up the street on "Brokers' Row" a great, restless drove of men drifted from sidewalk to sidewalk. They were everywhere — running, shouting, gesticulating.

Scores of pack outfits were unloading in the crush. There was bedlam in the air, a pestilential madness, an unuttered dictum, primeval and understandable, of every man for himself.

Here two mean-eyed fellows scaled

a hillside under a staggering weight of tools and the parts of a windlass. They fought the acclivity for toe-hold, cursing it and their burdens.

There four others strained like fiends to budge a five-ton boulder from a tent site. A little girl in dirty calico, capering into her father's way as he nailed a lunch-counter sign into place, was buffeted into a rock pile.

He forgot about her. Scores saw the act, but hastened on with gold in their hearts. The clashing tintinnabulation of the hames' bells on the freighting outfits, mingled with the cries of the skinners clamoring for passage.

A horseman came zigzagging through the press. His piebald was bleeding from the mouth.

"Fifteen feet of it, Hank!" he screamed to a friend over the sea of upturned faces. "No wall yet! Runs better'n a hundred thousand." He was gone, yelling: "Throw your feet for some ground!"

The news traveled like wildfire. Those who heard the flush-faced herald gasped and grew madly desirous.

Fisher strangled. "Good Lord!" he cried hoarsely. "A thousand dollars for you, old man! But, hit it up! Hit it up! Make it two thousand! Pound them on the back! Go on! Get somewhere!"

The driver's eyes gleamed. He drove the black snake in with all his might, standing on the footboard for a better swing.

The white meat showed for a second under the dripping flanks, then reddened, and the team plunged forward, snorting in agony. Fisher, looking ahead, chafed and cursed. Would he ever arrive?

Somebody was shouting. The wagoner swung in his seat.

"Which one, Fred?" he bellowed.

"No. 1. Just struck. Rich as—" He was out of hearing.

"You've got it in No. 1, too!" choked the driver hysterically.

But the broker made no reply. His gaze was riveted upon a figure standing in the middle of the street. It was a woman! Even in that moment of supreme agitation he had recognized her at a glance—Nettie!

She was signaling frantically, her lips apart, her eyes wide with anxiety and horror. Men stopped in their rush and looked stolidly, first at her, then at the approaching vehicle and its occupants.

"Pull up! Pull up!" cursed Fisher, livid with rage. The horses came to a restless halt and the woman rushed up.

"Quick, Gerald!" she faltered almost inarticulately. "Quick! Please! Get down and run! He's hunting for you! He's—he's—" She could say no more, but clutched his sleeve and pulled at it fiercely, desperately. The driver stared like a simpleton. Fisher glowered.

"He—looking for me? What do you mean by—" His voice trailed off into silence under the quickening power of recollection.

A painful instant dragged by. Nettie contemplated him mutely—the pleading pouring from her eyes. An automobile swept past them laden with men.

"Oh, you Fisher!" they chorused and cheered roughly. But the broker did not hear. Two thoughts claimed his mind to its innermost recesses—he was hunted, was unarmed!

The knowledge filled him with sickening dread. He crumpled against his will, and the red in his cheeks drifted to a pallor that showed yellow through his tan. His gaze grew fearful, shifting from face to face in morbid apprehension. Finally, with an effort he regained his self-control.

"I guess you're right," he said with a drawn smile. The woman sighed. Then, to the driver: "I'll leave you here, old man. I'll keep my promise about the pay." As he spoke he stepped to the ground.

Instantly a shot rang out. It crashed

into the wagon bed. Cries arose on all sides. The wagoner in a panic plied his whip, bowling a man over in his flight.

Fisher headed across the street and again the revolver roared. The crowd parted, stampeded. Nettie Tannehill alone faced the danger. She ran screaming for a space between two tents from where the blue smoke curled.

But Fisher got away. Dodging behind dugout and tent he gained the outskirts of town, clung exhaustedly to a boulder and watched for pursuit. When it did not come he mopped the sweat and dust from his eyes, sought a hiding-place in a near-by thicket and waited for nightfall.

Several hours later he crawled from his retreat. Black banks of clouds were rising out of the east. The wind had sprung up. It blew fitfully, each time bringing a shower of heavy drops that thudded like pellets upon the thirsty earth.

The lights of Dugout were reflected brilliantly against the soggy sky. Occasionally, when the wind shifted, the hubbub of the sleepless population broke the stillness like a far-off rumble.

During his long vigil Fisher had thought over his dilemma. His enforced inactivity wore upon him. That he, Gerald Fisher, should have been compelled to fly before a muscle-bound clod like Tannehill stung him to the quick.

And there was his new-born triumph and his honors in marksmanship. It seemed as if the name Fisher had been dragged into the mire, had been made an expression for ridicule and cowardliness.

Perhaps at this very moment he was the laughing-stock of the camp's riff-raff, the object for coarse jokes in the dram-shops, and for confidential whisperings in the seclusion of the Montezuma Club.

It was with eagerness, almost, that he got his bearings and made a détour of the town. Seeking the shadows he at last stopped before a plain, board cabin on the outskirts. In response to his knock the door opened.

"Hello, Drake!" he said, and pushed past the man on the threshold.

"All hail, King Midas!" was the other's jocular greeting. He was a tall, clean, young fellow, dressed in a gaudy bathrobe and smoking a calabash. "What bringest thy majesty to our humble hovel at this unseemly hour?"

"Loan me your six-shooter, old chap!" Fisher stretched out on a chair as he spoke and lit a cigarette.

Drake's sleepy eyes rested on his visitor. His clownish laugh of their college days roared sardonically through the room. "That, your highness, is the literal translation of a Nevada horse-laugh. Imported from Goldfield, direct from Reno, the joy of the divorcée. It has—"

Fisher rose with an oath.

"Look here, Drake—" he began. But the big fellow pushed him back into the chair.

"Rest thyself, Sir Gerald," he declared with feigned unctuousness. "He is gone. If your grace will, Tannehill departed across the waterless waste with canteen and grub for two days. Don't look at me like that!"

He drew a camp-chair close and continued naturally: "Public sentiment went your way on account of the strikes on your leases, Fish, so don't flatter yourself. After the shooting a miners' committee got together and voted to run Tannehill out of camp—uphold the morals of camp and all that, you know.

"I was in the bunch. I led them—yes, sir, I sized up the situation as an out-and-out frame-up of some kind to get you, perhaps, for a piece of coin. There were about four hundred, I guess, and I talked them into it—speechifying on law and order, community good, and your gold did the rest.

"We took him down the road two miles and told him to keep a going.

The funniest thing about it is—he didn't want a word with his wife. He left without even a good-by. She's in camp this very minute.

"Of course, I'm not a bit curious, Fish, but tip a fellow off to the rumpus. Tannehill only said you two had trouble over a lease. He wouldn't—Where are you going? It's raining outside."

The broker threw open the door. "Much obliged, Drake. Don't forget to come up to the works to-morrow after the best specimen you can find. And, by the way, brave leader of men"—he smiled wearily—"you're in line for superintendent. Good night." He passed out into the storm.

It was early Sunday morning. The cool air of the desert night was still dispensing its delicate fragrance through the deeper hollows of the range. The high, western peaks were bathed in a roseate glow that brightened with the sun's coming.

On every hand were evidences of terrestrial disaster, the glaring incompleteness of an illiberal nature. A land of saw-edges it was, where a curve never had beginning, and the first root was yet to come. God loafed on the job, men said, and forgot the water-pipes.

In this fastness nestled Agua Podrida, the stage station and third relay between the settlements of Big Buzzard and Talisman. It boasted seven white men and a floating population of two-score Digger Indians, whose chief aim in life was to sleep, accumulate dogs and beg grub.

In the first capacity, however, the whites might have been said to have held their own. It was a desert wit who nicknamed the place, "The Den of the Seven Sleepers."

Therefore, that two of its denizens sat on the porch of the company's store before sunrise on that Sabbath morning would have been sufficient cause for strange doubts in the mind of any inhabitant within a hundred miles' radius; but, that they sat with their heads together, talking in low, excited tones, at a time when Nevada was being daily proved a storehouse of riches, would have sufficed to have filled the roaming prospector with wild beliefs and made a bloodhound out of him.

"That's right, Zollie," reiterated the younger man earnestly for the twentieth time; "as large as that!" He measured off a size with thumb and forefinger. "There wuz other chunks and a whole slough o' chicken-feed!"

His companion wet his cigarette dexterously and smothered the flaming match in his hand before he spoke.

"How fur is it, did he say?"

"Somethin' like thirty-two mile. You know where Cactus Flat is? Well, 'round there. Wish he'd git up. He wuz all in after the hike or I'd call—"

"So do I," broke in Zollie restlessly. "We can't git nowhere, Bill, at this rate. Ah, here he is."

A man shambled from the stage office, yawning and stretching and running his fingers through his tangled mane. His dirty shirt sleeves rolled above the elbows showed stout forearms burned to light mahogany.

His corduroys were in tatters and his boots reenforced with rough sandals of hairy rawhide.

"Hello, Drake!" greeted Bill, as he and his friend joined the other. "Whatcher got on fur to-day?"

Drake yawned prodigiously.

"Slip it to your uncle," he laughed; continuing, "Pleased to meet you, Zollie. Bill's been telling me you were in Dugout time of the rush? So was I. Great, wasn't it?"

Zollie shook his head sagely, as if mere mention called up reminiscences beyond the descriptive power of words.

"Yes, sir," went on the collegian glibly, "I worked for Fisher until his leases expired. I was his super at twelve hundred a month. Look at me now. Recollect when he first struck it on No. 1 and 3? Sure you do. The shooting scrape with Len Tannehill?

"That's when my luck boomed. But, say, that was a funny affair, wasn't it? I never could quite figure it out. I was as close to Fisher as a tick on your neck, but he was like a wooden man on the subject. You know she divorced Tannehill and married Fisher? You didn't?

"I see you're not up on camp news, Zollie. Anyway, a fellow was telling me in Big Buzzard last fall that they're running a hash-house now, down in the Johnnie country. Wouldn't that crimp you?"

The other man grinned tolerantly.

"That's Nevada," he argued, with the air of the worldly wise. "Come easy, go easy. Every one of that bunch that made it in Dugout six years ago, an' they sure wuz dirty with it, are on the rocks this minute. Take Phil Felladay—he's drivin' scraper for the Western Pacific, north of Reno. Old Doc McGint is section boss on the T. and T. "Vaseline" Pete, Monty Black, and Tony, the feller that owned the townsite, are workin' on the 'Frisco docks, they tell me. There ain't one—"

Drake interrupted. "By the way, did you hear about a dead man being found on the Amargossa last summer? Reports were that it was Tannehill. I got it from 'Pop-eyed' McDougal as straight."

"Sure," nodded Zollie. "I was on the ground at the time. What's more, I seen 'im. A freighter called Peters, who was always pullin' off an old gag about drivin' Fisher into Dugout, time of the Tannehill affair, an gettin' two thousand bucks for it, started the story. But there weren't nuthin' on the body to prove it, an' it's a cinch you couldn't tell me from somebody else jest by lookin', after I'd laid out under the sun fur three months or so. Could yer?"

"Say, fellers," ventured Bill impatiently, breaking his long silence, "we're jest losin' time. It's way past six. Let's git down to business or—"

"Right-o, greedy little brother of the Glut-Gluttons!" Drake chimed in good naturedly. "Myself — I forget the world goes around when I talk of early days."

He addressed Zollie.

"Bill tell you about the new strike? What do you think of her? Men, I'm going to predict: In one short month Nevada will boast another Dugout—'richer than our dreams of old; fabulous in yellow gold.' All of which means—that I am coming out of Coppersmith City last Tuesday and take a short-cut through Cactus Flat.

"I am dreaming along in a gulch when I come across new work. I snoop on after this with eyes and ears open. Sure enough, there's my man—a hairy old duffer, for all the world like Rip Van Winkle at his worst.

"He was talking to himself and working a dry-rocker. The going was slow, but at last I managed to get within jumping distance of him. Say, Zollie, ever see dirty nuggets? Look like hunks of ginger-bread, eh?

"Well, there was a whole half pan of them. Will I ever forget the temptation—I felt like a starving man with a juicy porterhouse just out of reach. I'd have struck the old fossil for a feed, anyway, only he packed a big, blue gat and seemed to be always on the point of going down after it.

"To tell the truth, I didn't like the look of his eyes. But, say, the stuff's there, and you can gamble that only us three know it outside of him. You boys put up the needfuls against my knowledge, and we'll split three ways on everything. Now, I've got a plan.

"There's no need of a stampede. We've got an eternity of time, the thing can't possibly leak out, and we'll get our outfit together systematically. To start with, I'm going to rest—" He never finished.

A chorus of yells rang through the cañon, followed by a rush of hoofs, a jangle of interfering utensils, and a pack-train swung into sight from behind a bend in the road.

It was traveling fast and light. The next moment its owners were hailing the three men out of a cloud of dust.

With its disappearance a wagon went crashing by. Drake got a good look at the lone driver, perched on the swaying seat like sculptured determination.

"It's old 'Never-Sleep'!" he cried with an oath. "It's a strike, fellows! Look at that!"

Two other vehicles came into view—the foremost one maneuvering desperately to keep the lead. Four horsemen dashed by at breakneck speed. The excited blare of automobiles signaling for the right of way, echoed over the mountains.

"It's Cactus Flat!" shouted Bill instinctively. "It's Cactus Flat!"

Four hours later when Drake and his companions rode their wind-broken animals into the new camp, it was two hours old, boasted a name, fifty tents, three saloons, one restaurant, and ten lots had been sold on the town site. Every foot of ground within a half-mile radius was staked.

And the name Cactus Flat gave place to another—Tiny Hill.

Then the months passed. Mining camp history repeated itself. Men were made and unmade overnight with a suddenness that upset their wits.

Some fresh from other conquests—magnates, and bloated with luckiness—took a chance. They were flung back—wrecks. Others begged a meal at sunrise, and at sundown bought wine for the crowds.

Yet, amid all this mad scramble, this soul-racking struggle for the almighty dollar, one man there was who toiled on, slowly, deliberately, with one all-absorbing thought:

"They'll come! Some day they'll come!"

He was routine, grinding routine, and every inch of his gnarled body showed it. Antagonism was his governing trait. There was unfriendliness in his glance, a snap in his tones.

The pioneers of the district found him out and left him alone: the latecomers did the same. Both denounced him—the camp's discoverer, the richest man with the richest claims, withal a despised stranger and no more desirable than a plague-victim.

So he was considered, and so he remained in the estimation of men. And, because that very attitude toward him meant the fulfilment of his greatest wish, he rejoiced over his unpopularity, and would not have had it otherwise.

But, at night, every night, while his fellows were courting fortune in the brilliant hells of the town, he would sit close up to the fireplace in his lonely cabin on the edge of the settlement and think. Sometimes, between long intervals of silence, he would smile coolly, confidently, and repeat over and over to the leaping flames: "They'll come! Some day they'll come!"

It was his custom, when he felt the hot blood mounting to his temples and when his jaw-muscles tightened, to occupy himself with some neglected household duty.

Upon such occasions he would generally feel his way, blind with consuming hatred, to the little cupboard, get out his flour and 'sour-dough' primer and make bread. That steadied him.

Afterwards he would smoke for a long time. Whatever his thoughts they suggested themselves only by deep, soft sighs. When he finally put aside his pipe and prepared for bed he would bring out a small japanned box from its hiding-place under his pillow. This he never forgot to do. It was as much a part of his desolate life as was his meal hour.

Then, over the faded tangle of a woman's trinkets he would bend until the night was far gone. During these periods he mumbled and mumbled and fingered each worthless article with all the reverence that one might show for a holy thing.

And yet may men, at the urge of their feelings, stoop to less inglorious levels than the worship of a little lavender bow, a ringlet of brown hair, a thimble, and the last love letter.

But, as usual, with the dawn he was the stranger again—unemotional, suspicious, uncommunicative. Often through the day, when no one was about to hear, he would chuckle mirthlessly to himself:

"They'll come! Some day they'll come!" he would murmur.

After which he wreaked his vengence upon the gravel bank.

One afternoon there arose a barrier across the well-trodden path of his thoughts. It arose unexpectedly, coming from a quarter not heretofore considered. A child looked in at his door!

She was a bright-eyed little creature, not much taller than his kitchen table. He had just turned from lighting his evening fire when he saw her. Habit caused his brow to darken and the unfriendly glitter to spring into his eyes. The rudeness, however, died in his throat. They studied each other—she curiously; he with growing uncertainty.

"How do, man."

She leaned against the entrance and swung a chubby leg back and forth in that fulness of life that cannot be still. When he did not reply she let her glance wander over the room.

"Oh, look! A wee little mousey!" she cried suddenly, in excited delight. "See him—under the bed?"

He started around almost in bewilderment and alarm.

"There he goes," she shrilled breathlessly. "Quick! Let's catch him! See—there!" That moment she was beside him, tugging at his long leg, the very impersonation of childish ecstasy.

He gave way obediently. A strange thrill passed through him. It left him questioning himself, flustered, staring at his tiny visitor in fatuous wonder.

"Stand there," she whispered in a flutter. "When I drive him into that corner you run and hit him with your hat. Now—ready! There he— Oh, he got away!"

Standing with his hat in his big fist he watched her. Her disappointment was obvious, and something like humiliation over the rodent's conduct summoned his words. He wet his lips.

"He's my side-kicker," he volunteered stupidly.

Instantly she brightened. "What's that?"

"He keeps me comp'ny. There's two of 'em. Then there's 'Kill-em-and-eat-em.' He's a lizard."

Her eyes grew round as saucers, brilliant with expectation.

"Oh, please tell me about them. Do they—do they live with you? Inside here?"

"Yes, the mice does, 'cos they got holes. But the lizard he hangs out under a rock, back o' the shack. They come in when I'm cookin' an' I feed 'em."

"And—and the lizard," she persisted eagerly—"You didn't tell me about him? Does he—does your little girl play with him?"

"Who?"

"Your little girl. Does she play with him?"

His little girl. He laughed outright. It was a rough, joyless laugh, and it ended suddenly.

On the impulse he wheeled about, crossed to the fireplace and threw on fresh wood. He made much of the action, breaking each stick savagely with his hands, and kneeling to shake up the coals.

But the artifice was shamelessly apparent and it did not escape her sharp eye. Almost at the same time she was by his side, craning her neck for sight of his face. In a rush of confusion he buried his head in his arm.

"What's the matter?" she asked him gently. "Are you sick?"

He forced a fit of coughing, explaining between gasps: "Whew! Sagebrush—smoke—is—worse'n onions on —yer—eyes!"

She gave no reply to this, and following a short silence he risked a glance. She was watching the sparks pouring up the chimney. Now, as if in response to his look, she turned.

"Do men cry, too, sometimes?"

"Men?" he echoed. The simplicity of the question embarrassed him. "Well—yer see, I'll tell yer how it is. Yer see—that is, maybe yer know—Well, yes, I guess they do—most of 'em."

"Do you cry, sometimes?"

He had dreaded this. It brought him struggling up from his haunches.

"I jest thought of somethin' I was goin' to give yer," he lied, at his wits' ends for an excuse. Fortunately he remembered his old coffee can. It was filled with 'picked' nuggets, and he immediately dumped them out upon the table.

The ruse worked. Over them they talked, she drinking in every word and prattling breathlessly in her turn; he eager to explain, eager to keep her occupied.

When twilight was filtering in through the open door and darkness was stealing slowly over the room she rose abruptly.

"I've got to go now," she bustled. He followed her out upon the trail.

"Yer didn't tell me yer name," he reminded her as she started off.

She paused a few yards away to smile back at him.

"My name's Nettie."

"Nettie!" he repeated vaguely. That was *her* name! A moment later she was speeding down the path, flinging her shrill good-bys over her shoulder. Then he missed her.

When he sat down to supper that night it was more to perform one of his many daily obligations to himself than to satisfy the demands of his appetite. He had no appetite. He lolled upon the table and mused, watching the steam rise from the hot food and pass into air.

It had been a "big" day—the inauguration of an epoch in his life. He saw a to-morrow, and another and another—not as they had been in the past six years, dreary and bitter, but brimful with pleasant uncertainties and golden hours.

This tomtit with the sunlit curls and a love for chatter had led him into a broad avenue. He could see far ahead now, with her by his side. His lonely nature craved the possibilities of this widened sphere, this warmth of companionship.

It seemed as if a mighty hunger was awakened in the depths of his being. He felt its delightful pangs gnawing in his breast, moving him strangely, rejuvenating him, offering him generously of the worth-while things of life, and he yielded to their bidding with all the abandon that he knew.

So the japanned box was forgotten for the first time. Every one of its love-tokens that had helped to form his mainstay of consolation during the six arid years, every crumbled memory that went with it was forgotten.

He thought of her, this new-found Nettie, and was glad. What had she said? Had she been pleased? He gave her ten nuggets. He should have given her a score—yes, all of them.

He growled over his thoughtlessness, hesitating to admit even to himself the miserly element of his nature. Supposing she never returned, that he'd never see her again?

It was an appalling notion, the suggested possibility of a calamity. In order to satisfy his fears he rehearsed in detail the particulars of her visit. He lived again each individual minute, heard her laughter and droll questions ringing in his ears, and saw her great, brown eyes glowing with childish rapture.

He dwelt long upon the manner by which she had exacted his obedience for the capture of the mouse. It was refreshingly odd how she had dragged at his leg. He felt the spot tingling yet.

It was just below the hip. Altogether, the picture was a pleasing one, and he chuckled and rubbed his hands over the folly of an unfounded anxiety.

Presently a happy thought struck him. If he killed that mouse it would please her. There would be a long

story of how it was done. How her face would beam, and how she would ply him for explanation!

He took up the light and searched cautiously every nook and corner of the cabin, but the house-pet was gone for the night.

When the candle was languishing in its own grease he crawled into bed with his reflections. And her name was Nettie. Nettie had made him happy once.

The bacon was sputtering in the hot pan when she came again. Indistinctly he made her out standing on the threshold and peering in at him through the thick smoke.

"Good morning," she chirped cordially.

He sprang from beside the fire, skillet in hand.

"I was jest thinkin' about you," he laughed as he approached her. "Won't you come in?" He observed with fond approval that she wore a clean, stiff dress, and that the corkscrew curls were fresh from a patient hand.

"I have to go to the store. My mama is waiting. I'll like to, though."

"That reminds me," he announced with startling mendacity; "I'm all out o' coff— No, it's—le's see, what was that? Oh, yes, I went an' busted my last spoon. That's what it is. I jest disremember everything fur some reason."

As he shut the door she took his hand. He held the tiny fist loosely in his own large one, fearful lest he might crush it. A happy pride surged up within him. He threw back his head and cast about furtively with sparkling eyes, hopeful that men might see him.

"Are you the richest man in camp?" she asked as they walked.

He laughed in great glee.

"Why?"

"'Cos Mrs. Gilbert says you are, and —and that you're the meanest old thing in the country. You ain't, are you?"

The accusation sobered him suddenly.

"The meanes' old thing in the country?" he repeated.

"Uh-huh. You ain't, are you?"

"No, Nettie, I ain't! An' you know it, too, dontcher?" His voice shook with sincerity.

Smiling up into his troubled face, her fat curls switched about in a sharp little shake of her head.

"She calls you 'Johnnie Tightwad.' I don't like her one bit." She finished with an indignant purse of her lips, then smiled again.

Here was a new worry, and one that deserved more than passing consideration. He reflected that stinginess to a child's mind is an unpardonable evil.

Unsavory tales such as this unknown Mrs. Gilbert was plainly capable of circulating were destined to undermine whatever regard his small friend might feel for him.

How best to meet these attacks was therefore a matter of great moment. But it was not until they were elbowing their way into the crowded store that a solution presented itself. He hailed it joyously.

Ten minutes later when they turned their steps toward home two clerks were filling the largest order for delicacies in the history of the firm.

"They'll all be here by noon," he assured her at parting. "You'll come, won't you, Nettie? I got 'em fur jest you an' me."

They were standing before his shanty, and, through a devouring aspiration to override any remaining doubts that she might have, he swept inside and returned with the old coffee-can.

His grizzled countenance was alight, his eyes dancing.

"You jest take these, Nettie," he said, thrusting the can under her arm. "They're a little present to you an' yer folks. It ain't nuthin'. Don't yer pay no 'tention to what this here Missis Gilbe't sez, will yer?"

Before she could reply a sharp voice broke the stillness, calling, "Nettie!"

Startled, he swung around to see a woman standing in the trail. Because of the distance that separated them, and because she held a shawl against her face to shield it from the hot morning sun, he was unable to make out her features.

He knew, however, that she was tall, graceful even through the lines of a formless store dress, and that her hair was a glossy brown.

He watched as the child trotted up to her side.

"Oh, mama!" he heard the youngster exclaim breathlessly. "You ought to see what the man bought for—"

"I've got a good mind to whip you!" scolded her mother.

Then his dimpled redeemer was whisked away.

Well, at any rate, he told himself as he hurried through his delayed meal, he had impressed her. After this he pondered ruefully over his inglorious reputation, cursed every toggle-tongued gossiper of Mrs. Gilbert's stamp, and wondered sadly if "my little gal got a lickin'."

It was well on toward midday, and the hole in the gulch where he worked was fiery under the sun-rays. It had been an exhausting task, this stripping the top dirt and the cutting out of a pay-bench fabulous in values.

Never had he invited sunstroke more recklessly; never had he deviated from the rule to set aside the meridian hour for a nap of sweet forgetfulness. To-day he had broken that rule, but then nothing had really counted until to-day. To-day there was witchery in work.

Two handkerchiefs were spread on bedrock. Each contained an equal number of nuggets, four. Sopping with sweat, he broke down the red gravel with his pick and raked it over, and dug into the crevices of the hardpan with his knife.

When he discovered a gingerbread specimen he would mutter jubilantly: "This is fur Nettie"; when he found another, "This is fur me."

If his piece happened to be the larger he would substitute it for the smallest on her handkerchief. For that reason Nettie's share was far in excess of his own.

With the removal of the bench he looked over her portion. Sixteen, he counted. Then he laughed delightedly, sat back on the heap of gravel, and wiped his sweaty neck.

They were partners. He had taken her in, and she was to get her part of the proceeds. At last there was real satisfaction in having what he had. He could do something worth doing.

Until yesterday his gold-packed ground had offered him nothing save its valuable self, a bounteous gift, but incapable of buying that which his heart missed and pined for; to-day it showed him the way, imbued him with the magic of its power and the joy of giving.

He was glad he was rich, glad to be the good genius to that baby miss, if only to feel that she cared for him. Then he thought of the cheap store dress that her mother wore, and increased her share of the day's harvest with five nuggets from his pile.

Taking up the handkerchiefs, he arose to depart. With his first step out of the shallow pit he paused. Heavy boots were pounding out an approach. They were close at hand, and in a trice he had fallen into his characteristic bearing of hostility—had withdrawn, as it were, into his hard shell of insolent silence.

Simultaneously the dividends went flying into a corner, and he was busy back-shoveling, his hat pulled far down over his eyes.

The next moment a man stopped on the edge of the hole. He breathed short and hard, and there was an offensive wheeze with each effort. The miner watched with heightening rancor the jerking shadow on the bedrock at his feet.

An indefinable prescience warned him of impending danger and worked uneasiness into his fund of rage. He

did not look up, but a primitive passion swelled in his breast. He sought to check it, but it swelled on, and the fearful seconds flapped by on leaden wings.

Presently the wheezing above him died away. The man coughed, cursed, then burst into speech.

"Say, you!" he flung out sneeringly. "I got your contribution this morning, and I want to know what you mean by it."

The other did not answer—did not catch the drift of the words! He was mistaken for another, he told himself, and since this fellow's greeting was so clearly insulting he could find out his error as best he might.

So he reflected and shoveled on, and though he did not deign to give so much as a glance at his visitor, neither was he aware that there were two shadows on the bedrock and that the second was the silhouette of a little child.

"You down there!" shouted the stranger angrily. "I'm talking to you!" He sent a clatter of gravel into the shaft with his foot.

"We're not beggars, understand! Nor dogs, that we must be tossed a bone! You tight-fisted old skinflint, you may have all that they say, but I've got enough common decency left to keep me from accepting charity from a man of your caliber! There's your filthy old can! Take it home and gloat over it!"

As he spoke he threw the vessel into the hole and over the mine owner's bended back.

That instant, the latter awakening to the facts of the situation and smarting under the abuse, straightened for an indignant defense.

The can caught him broadside upon the mouth, and he went down heavily.

A hurt was all he had needed to lift him beyond the restraint of his self-possession. He scrambled up in a blind fury and raged out of the hole—clawing his way over the brink like some mad animal.

Straight for his traducer he sprang. But that individual stepped out of range. He stepped just in time—blundered, rather.

A frightful blow shot by him. As its agent went pitching past, the stranger caught a glimpse of the purple face and his own paled. He stared, spellbound.

Then, too, a scream rent the air. It rose just as the miner came back to the attack. He heard it indistinctly, as if it came through miles of space. When it was repeated something went out of him. His rush died, and he swayed up to his adversary in irresolute belligerency.

"You sha'n't hit my papa!" was borne to him from afar. "You bad man! There!"

He felt a rain of feeble blows upon his leg and looked down in hurt and stupefied amazement. It was Nettie! She was striking him with her tiny fists, her lips trembling, her whole small body drawn up in a frenzy of fear.

He would have said something then. He tried several times. His lips pursed, but his feelings were getting the better of him and he dared not trust himself to speak.

Only did he stand and look at her, and there was much of that eloquence in his eyes that the wounded deer carries to its death. The hurt of those harmless, chubby fists—that was it.

She had struck him and had meant it, and the hurt drove deep at the root of that new-found love which had sweetened the sourness of his lonely life.

This man was her father; he, the untried friend of a day, a stranger in a land of types, a person with a warped individuality from whom no good had ever come. He was nothing to her, and he would have struck her *father*.

He saw it all now—how he had been his own deceiver, the passing of his dream, everything. Truly, he was a colossal fool!

"I was jest a little hasty, pardner,"

he said at last in all humility, his head sunk on his breast. "It was an ax'-dent, and I had no call to fly off the handle. Howsomever, yer ain't got no way o' tellin' what I think o' Nettie, here."

He paused to lay a trembling hand upon the sunny curls. "And—and yer riled me the way yer put the proposition."

His diffident eyes rose to the other's face, his hand extended.

Instantly there was a flash of recognition, then a terrible silence.

Tannehill's eyes narrowed. His hand clenched and fell back slowly to his side. With Fisher, the first shock had come and gone. He waited, a cold, deliberate glitter in his look, for his enemy was unarmed.

"Well," he said impertinently, "here we are again. I've never forgotten, either. See?" And he tapped his holster with proud significance. "I've been packing this smoke-wagon ever since."

Tannehill did not reply. Here was his six years' wish fulfilled. In the presence of this home-breaker was his time ripe for revenge. He knew this, but where was the satisfaction, the insane joy rather, that he had felt would come with this meeting? There was hatred, yes, but not of the consuming kind—the kind that makes a man's whole being thirst to take a life.

Nettie, standing between them, was watching him curiously. His hand still rested on her head, and she wondered why he looked so gray and strange and why the fingers of that hand twitched and trembled.

"Things have completely changed about, old settler, in the past few years," resumed Fisher more earnestly. "Now you're up and I'm down. That's where you've got it on me.

"But I've played life clean across the board. I've seen it, and stuffed myself with the best and the worst that it has to give. I'm right back after the wherewithal, you'll notice.

"Yes, sir—and I've shot my wad. I'm no good, partner. Look at me. Can you see it? You're sound all through, while I'm hawking up my lungs and fighting every day to live another.

"I've been doing this for four years—fighting, Tannehill, on the ragged edge of poverty and too proud to ask a favor of any man. Call it a comeback, retribution, anything you care to.

"I'm going to keep on fighting! Just to show you—if you still have it in your head to carry out our little old affair to a finish, I'll give you a chance to go and get your gun. That's square, isn't it?"

A fit of heavy coughing seized him. He choked helplessly and clutched his flat chest with his bony fingers. When the spasm passed he stood swaying, exhausted, panting painfully.

Still Tannehill said nothing. He looked hard into his enemy's eyes—cruelly hard. He got his black pipe out of the pocket of his jumper, searched himself for a match, struck it, and blew a cloud of smoke; but his gaze never wavered.

Instead, a wild light transformed his stare into an expression of fulsome mockery. For an interval he gloated thus, then he became conscious that Nettie's hand had stolen into his own. He glanced down, and his face softened.

"I'll get them things hauled over to yer place, Nettie, soon's I kin locate a rig," he said, with a return of his old manner. "Good-by, little gal." He turned suddenly and strode away, just as a woman in a cheap store gown came hurrying up the gulch.

"You were gone so long, I was worried, Gerald," she explained breathlessly. "Did you see him? I hope you gave him a piece of your mind."

Fisher pointed mutely at the bent figure toiling up the slope. Then he dropped to a seat on the dump and buried his face in his hands.

"If he had only cursed or fought or said something," he sobbed weakly. "Anything but what he did."

The wife looked perplexed. She gazed after Tannehill, slouching out of sight over the hill. Her eyes blazed and she drew herself straight.

"Tell me, dear. I'll fix him, the old, miserable—"

Fisher struggled. A paroxysm of coughing took hold of him.

"It's—it's Len!" he gasped. "Quick—Nettie—I'm—"

And the child, watching attentively, saw the breaking of a strange light in his eyes.

Also, she wondered why her mother paled at the words, and why she made no move to carry out her threat.

Tannehill was whipped. He arrived at his cabin and sat down on the bench before the door. Motionless, he sat and thought.

After six long years the crisis of his life was reached and passed. He had been euchred, that was all.

It had been a losing game from the very beginning, and he had only just found it out. His obliging pride urging him on, had led him to believe there was more to him. Perhaps there was.

Then he recalled something that brought a hoarse chuckle into his throat. Ere it was born he strangled it with a curse and took himself to task over the slip.

He should be the last to rejoice over his enemy's broken health. Vic had gone with it in a far more promising clime than these dusty, bleak highlands offered—and Vic had been his only brother.

A while after an idea was born to him. It occupied him, tending first to allure and then to compel. He mused by the hour, half listlessly, his eyes tracing patterns in the rocky ground at his feet. It was late afternoon when he sprang up and headed for town.

Shouldering his way through the crowds, he entered the offices of a mining company. A long conversation with three men followed. The sun was disappearing behind the blue heights of the Sierra Nevadas when he returned to the street.

There was a forlorn expression on his face, and he hesitated on the edge of the board sidewalk like a late arrival beholding Main Street for the first time.

Yet was his uncertainty of purpose and gawkish bearing not without excuse. He, the father of Tiny Hill, the man who had spent months in this peaceful solitude, and who, as discoverer of gold in the district, had made possible the harvesting of fortunes, was now no more essential to the prosperity of the community than the most humble "blanket stiff."

He was claimless. One pocket held a check the other a document. A few hours ago he would have scorned a price beyond the conception of the most frenzied Nevada investor. Now he had sold out for a "song," as it were. He had had to do it, and—who might say it was not the wisest plan after all?

Some one jostled him roughly, and he came away from his regrets and into the present. A man's voice fell upon his ear.

"He made it bigger'n a mule in Dugout. Poor old kid! I recollect—"

Tannehill turned, and the speaker, in appreciation of a larger audience, threw him what he meant to be a patronizing glance. Forthwith he lapsed into silence.

It was Drake! Drake risen like a phenix to the dignity of a silk shirt, tailored corduroys, diamond ring, and a spectacular calabash.

To hide his confusion the college man drew out his watch. More than once in the last six years he had regretted the part he had played in the banishment of Tannehill from Dugout.

It was one of the sins of his early impetuosity, and he did not relish being made to answer for it. Further, he had perforce stayed on in Tiny Hill—fortune was dealing kindly with him

there—knowing the while that this very meeting was unavoidable. So, now, hoping to escape, he muttered a word about a forgotten appointment and hurried off.

But Tannehill overtook him.

"Thought I knowed yer," was his greeting as the other halted apprehensively. "Remember me?"

Drake studied him a moment, then he burst out in apparently genuine delight:

"By George—yes! Let me see—"

"I'm Len Tannehill, the feller yer run out o' Dugout that time. Reck'lect? Yer saved my neck, pard, and I want to thank yer. He's in town. I seen 'im to-day."

The younger man was regenerated over his acquittal. He was attention itself, the essence of high spirits.

"Who do you mean?" he asked.

"Fisher. He's all in; an' I—"

"Poor old Fish is dead, Tannehill!"

The miner frowned, after which he smiled skeptically.

"What are yer givin' me? I seen 'im, I tell yer—"

Drake shook his head sadly. "He died at three o'clock. Hemorrhage, the the bulletin-board says. Guess I'll run out there. Come along and keep me company. It's on your road home."

Together they pushed their way up the busy thoroughfare. The news of the Tannehill sale had spread like wildfire. It was the sole topic on the street, and the animated thousands were discussing the economic advantages of the transfer in no uncertain terms.

In a word, there was open joy among the populace. The camp's impediment was removed. Gold would at last pour out of this undeveloped ground, and the wealth of Tiny Hill would stagger the world.

But Tannehill paid no heed to the biting personalities that at any other time would have struck hard upon his sensitive ear and urged him to retaliate. His self-interest was benumbed.

He shoved through the noisy jam of humanity, unconscious that many knowing him pointed him out to their neighbors with an ungracious remark spoken in exceptionally audible tones.

Fisher was dead, the score had been wiped out by Providence, and the affair was history. Somehow he could not adjust his faculties to this new situation.

For years he had gorged himself upon the bitter-sweetness of a perfect revenge, to such a degree that the basic forces of his intellect had been crowded into a groove, making his every thought and action subsidiary to the one momentous issue.

To-day the promise he had made to himself that gloomy afternoon in Dugout, and which he had subsequently believed to have attained the dignity of an undying vow, had gone down to defeat.

He had prepared this very setting for the climax. He had searched the desert far and near, month after month, from one season into another, just to be *somebody*—to be rich, a nabob, to show her whom he had lost what he had done, to meet his enemy on his own level and smite him with the fury of his hate.

It was Nettie—that's who it was. He had been lonely, eager to love some one worth loving, and he had been blinding himself to the truth. She had conquered him at the moment when he should have been strongest. Moreover, Fisher was her father. Small wonder he had failed.

But as he followed after his companion through the thick of the multitude his mind went back again and again to the fact that Fisher was dead. He strove with himself, seeking to realize the meaning of that fact. At times when his thoughts roamed from habit into the well-worn channel of his gone revenge he would check them in sudden remembrance that the issue was forever closed.

In truth he was akin to a man bereft of his pet hobby, restless, dejected in the intervals to the point of abstraction.

Not until they had turned into a quiet side street did word pass between him and his companion. Drake spoke.

"Do you know what, Tannehill?" he asked reflectively, and went on: "Had I known Gerald Fisher was in camp, he'd be alive this minute. He had lung trouble, I hear. Well, I'd have bundled him out of this country. He was the best friend I ever had, and I'd have gone the limit. Another thing—

"Have you stopped to think that his is the first death in camp? If I cared to be superstitious, I could get all kinds of good evidence of Divine vengeance, or whatever you may call it, in the fact that he died in the camp you discovered. Do you see it?

"You arrange the stage, as it were. Your positions are just the reverse—you're on top now, and he came here to die. It seems as if the thing just had to happen that way—as if the powers that be were evening up an old score.

"Honestly, if you were looking for revenge, Tannehill, you couldn't have got a better— But, say, I'm disloyal to a dead friend. If the occurrence wasn't so significant, so like the finish of that Dugout affair, I'd not have mentioned it."

The other made an offhand remark, and they walked on in silence. Soon they reached the diggings in the gulch. The two handkerchiefs and the old coffee-can lay on the bed-rock. Tannehill climbed down into the hole and got them. When he came back he stood for a moment silent, plainly ill at ease.

"I—I'd like yer to do me a favor, pardner," he said finally in a hesitating voice. "Yer see, I'm leavin' camp to-night on the last stage, an' I—Say, take these over with yer. 'Tain't nuthin', an' it'll come in handy to her, maybe.

"And"—a pitiful attempt at gruffness entered his manner and tones—"and, say, while yer 'bout it, try to get the little kid to come over to the shack. Bein' a bach, I ain't much on kids myse'f; but she's a mite better'n the reg'lar run, an' I picked up a present fur her. Ye'll not fergit, will yer?"

"But—" objected Drake, and he paused.

He glanced at Tannehill, then he looked away at the far-off California range, with its snow-tipped peaks, and a strange light dawned in his eyes.

When he turned back it was gone, and in its place was another. "Gee! You're a mighty good scout, that's all I've got to say," he ended feelingly.

Tannehill topped the rise upon which his cabin stood, and sighed heavily from sheer weariness of spirit. So this was his last home-coming? What must come next?

He was leaving this locality, this scene of his labor and privation and worthy accomplishment. Had Fisher lived, he would have gone; since Fisher was dead, he may not stay. He sank wearily upon the bench.

He was through. Everything that he had started out to do was done. Now he wanted to blot out the past; he wanted to begin all over again. A man in the autumn of his life, with an overmeasure of wealth to his credit, has something more than prospects of genuine, lasting happiness. Destitute old age would never be for him. Others might splash about in the slush of their prodigality, and return to fight the ravages of malady and want, but as for Len Tannehill—

A light flickered in his dull, tired eyes. He looked away, even as Drake had done, toward the mighty Sierran wall, and visualized the prim little town of San Mateo.

He saw its broad, peaceful streets, the spacious splendor of its homes, the long, blue stretch of San Francisco Bay in the distance, and in the foreground Coyote Point, dark and bold over the forest of shade trees.

Then to his nostrils came the fragrance of flowers. He breathed in the warm air hungrily, and across the

picture there crept great, blossoming hedges, and lawns, and sunny foothills all aglow with a riot of color.

A while he studied the scene, as out of its kaleidoscopic beauty there grew the image of a cottage. He knew it. He looked longingly at the rustic bench circling the locust-tree, and at the entrance black through the mass of creeping vines. His brother and he had lived there twenty years ago—before Vic got sick.

Sadness stole into his heart and his breath came hard. He thought he heard the sough of the breeze in the stunted pine—or was it a sigh? And, as he watched for a movement among the creepers arching the door, a woman appeared out of the shadow. Standing on the porch, she gazed wistfully down the path. It was *She*—she with whom he had spent the best years of his life!

In a rush of overwhelming agony he groaned aloud and covered his face with his hands. In vain he tried to break the spell that held him. Trembling, he lurched to his feet and blinked into the gathering dusk. Far away a lighted tent glowed like a huge firefly. A muffled roar rose steadily from the invisible town.

Then of a sudden he became aware of an impatient tugging at his sleeve. He looked around vaguely and at last distinguished the plump baby face tipped up wonderingly at him. The sight of her restored his self-control, and, with the friendly darkness to aid him, he turned toward her with a haggard smile.

"You've been crying again," she chided him. "I know, because I heard you. Why do you feel bad?"

A lump lodged in his throat. It would always be *She*, more particularly now since this little cherub—her child—had kindled a fire in his heart. He gritted his teeth to check a rising flood of emotion.

"I'm kinder out o' sorts to-night," he explained desperately. "By the way—I sent fur yer to give yer somethin' mighty nice. It's that there claim down where yer seen me to-day. It's the Nettie No. 3, an' you an' yer mar'll have more money'n a bank. Give her this an' don't lose it." He drew out the document and handed it to her. "'Cos I'm goin' away, an'—"

"You're not either going away," she contradicted spiritedly, but there was a quiver in her tones. "Mr. Drake said that, too. Two men took my papa off in a wagon. He's awful sick, and maybe he won't come back for a long time. Mr. Drake told me he went to Happyland. I'll be so sad if you go too. You won't go, will you?"

The desert night had fallen. The stars were twinkling brilliantly, and in the western sky the last flush of the departed sun was fading.

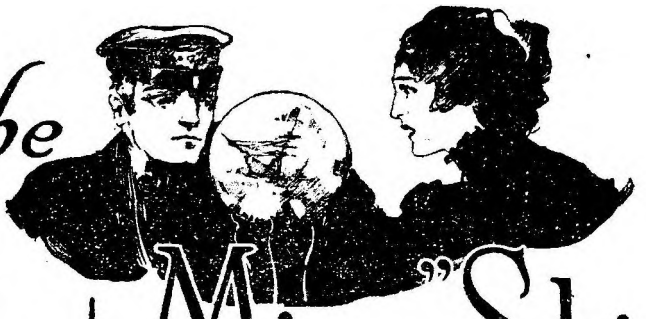
Because he vouchsafed no reply she tried to get a view of his face. For a long time she peered up at him, looming big and black against the heavens. Then she found his hand and knew that he was trembling.

"You won't go, will you?" she again pleaded. But again there was no answer, and, scarcely noticing that strange noises were issuing from his throat, and that something hot splashed upon her wrist, she continued: "Oh, I nearly forgot! My mama said 'Thank you very much for your kindness.' And she told me to say 'My name's Nettie Tannehill, and I'm nearly six years old.' You won't go away, will you?"

A deep hush settled over the wilderness. Out among the ragged hills a man's voice rose in song. "I'm wearing my heart away for you."

It was Drake on his way to the settlement.

Tannehill started and stumbled in the darkness. The wonderful truth went clamoring into his brain. Comprehending, yet fearing to believe, drunk with overwhelming joy, he stared at the dim, tiny figure beside him. Then, with a wild sob, he fell to his knees and snatched the child to his breast—*his* child.



The "Pocket Miner" Skipper

Strange Happenings in Strange Seas

By JOHN FLEMING WILSON

VLADIVOSTOK lay in absolute calm that afternoon. Overhead the Siberian sky was breathless. The waters of the bay had not even a ripple to mar their perfect reflection of the firmament.

The huge, gray battle-ships and transports seemed as if caught in some aerial Sargasso Sea. A single sampan labored through the scene, its Chinese boatman rocking rhythmically at his sweep.

"I'm what you might call a pocket miner," said Captain Reynolds, lighting a fresh cigarette. "True, I'm running that packet out there with the star on her funnel. But she isn't a liner. She's just a pocket miner, as they call it in the Western States."

"And what are you here for?" I demanded.

The trim, agile-looking seaman crinkled his eyelids. He seemed to be gazing at some far horizon. I noticed that his capable hands were clenched.

"I'm hunting for a woman," he said gently. "Of course expenses must be paid. I've picked up a cargo of furs that go to San Francisco. But it's that girl I'm seeking."

I had met him not an hour before under the still October afternoon sunlight. In a city of a hundred tongues he and I spoke English. Language is a bond. I had talked French and pidgin English for six months. We told each other where we were born and shook hands.

"Yes," he went on, "I'm a pocket miner. You've seen 'em in the West—fellows that prospect and prospect and find pockets of gold. That's what I do with the Laughing Lass. I pick up a little salvage off the New Zealand coast, tow in a wreck off Cape Flattery, do a bit of work for some person in Honduras, snatch a few pennies down around the Puamotus. I manage to make a little money. Now I'm after the big thing—that girl."

"Who is she?" I demanded.

Again he gazed out over the quiet bay, his eyes half closed.

"I heard of her first in Honolulu," he told me, in his soft and husky voice. "She is the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Have you ever seen her?" I asked curiously.

"Never," he responded. "I've seen gold and diamonds and jewels of all kinds. I've made a little money. I've pretty nearly covered this world in my steamer. I've looted ports from Saigon to San Juan del Sur. And now I'm after that girl."

"How do you know she is the most beautiful woman in the world?"

"A Kanaka at Lahaina knelt when he said her name. A priest down at Lawak Island on the equator crossed himself when he spoke of her. A woman on Dawera beach bowed her head. Captain Snell, of the Lutie Snell, shot himself for her.

"And 'way down below the line they hear her name and stop. They simply cease to talk and look at the sky and the surf on the white shore and one feels the ripple of the breeze and the faint breath of the water and one knows. She is the most lovely woman in the world. I'm going to find her."

"Where?" I demanded, looking at his set face.

"In this world," he answered me. "Will you go along? I need a mate."

I am a practical man. "How much is in it for me?" said I.

It is funny how dollars are mixed up with romance. He told me he would give me a hundred a month. That is good money. I accepted.

"Where is she now?" I inquired.

"I don't know exactly," he informed me. "We have those miserable furs to deliver in San Francisco. Maybe she is there. You know she goes all over the world."

"How will you know her when you see her?" I ventured.

"She has blue eyes and dark hair, and she lisps," he said simply. "You can tell her by the way she says 'Mister.'"

"Lots of people lisp," I told him.

"I'll know her," he asserted.

That night we sailed down St. Peter's Bay, and pretty soon we crossed the Japan Sea, and inside of three weeks we were inside the Golden Gate with our furs and a little other stuff.

We berthed at Meiggs Wharf, and Reynolds left the ship and I 'tended to things. When he came down again he merely said, "Are we all clear?"

"Holds clean and hatches off for a fresh cargo," I told him.

"Ballast coming down this afternoon," he said gently.

"Where do we sail for?" I demanded.

"The girl. I've found her. She's down on Corcovado Island."

"Off the Peruvian coast," I retorted. "That's some distance!"

"Not to get a girl like her," he said quietly. "We've the coal aboard?"

"Yes, sir," I said. His manner impressed me.

That night we were down off Pigeon Point, and I asked him bluntly how he knew that the girl was on Corcovado.

"It seems to me," I said, "that she is a rather elusive person. How is it that a girl—you say the most beautiful in the world—wanders over half the globe?"

He stared out across the windy stretch of water and I saw his lips tighten.

"She tells fortunes. I haven't just got it into my head; but she was brought up to read people's hands and look into a crystal ball and study the stars and tell you your future. She's no fraud. And she is the most beautiful creature in this world. Please lay your courses out for Corcovado."

I don't recall his saying another thing till thirty-one days later we raised Corcovado. It isn't much, to be sure—a mere island tucked within eight degrees of the line. But Reynolds sighted it and bowed his head.

"Now I shall see her," he said.

He was wrong. She had gone to Panama. It was there we found her, in the Hotel International. It faces the railroad station and the fringe of Ancon. I sha'n't soon forget seeing her on the balcony. Reynolds had inquired for her, and we were shown up by a black Jamaican.

She rose and looked at us both. Then she fixed her great, gorgeous eyes on Reynolds.

"I went down to Corcovado for you," said he.

I think that she trembled. She did not speak for a moment. When she did open her glorious lips I knew that

she wasn't aware I was there. She laid her hand on her bosom and sighed.

"I have been waiting for you," she said quietly.

"I have come to have my fortune told," he returned, in his low, husky voice. "I am Captain Reynolds, of the Laughing Lass."

She took his big hand in her soft palm and studied it. I studied her. It was true that she was the most beautiful woman in the world, from her dark hair to her slender feet.

You know what the ordinary fortune-teller is. But this girl was the embodiment of the perfume of girlhood. When she spoke again I stepped back.

"Your fortune is, to make money," she said softly. "You have come a long ways. You still have a great distance to go before you find the woman who loves you."

Reynolds dropped his gaze. "Can't you—" he began. I looked away while he controlled himself.

"It is a long ways," she went on dreamily. "I will go with you and we will find the money."

"I have found the woman I love," he answered steadily.

I glanced at her face. She was looking out into the hot, shimmering sunlight as if she saw something far beyond the steaming city.

"There is a thing to be done," she murmured. "I have been waiting for you to come and do it. It is a long ways."

She pronounced it "wayth." I decided that Reynolds must surely have known her before. But why conceal the fact? Yet I realized that when she spoke again she was a stranger to him.

"I read it in my crystal," she said quietly. "I saw you on the bridge of a steamer with a big star on its funnel, and you were doing this thing that must be done. I have seen many things about you in my crystal.

"You have been traveling quite around this world, picking up gold and jewels. You have saved life and property. But there is a greater thing than that to do—the thing I saw you doing in my dreams."

I must say immediately that she always said "thith world," "thith earth"—never "the world" or "the earth." In that lies the key to what I have to tell.

Reynolds lifted his eyes and looked at her. "What is it?" he demanded.

How quickly the patter of the fortune-teller came to those gentle and gracious lips! "We are going on a long journey. You will need to be strong and resolute."

"Where to?" he demanded.

"We are needed away down south," she answered. "I do not know the name of the place, but I can show you."

You and I would have quit right there. Reynolds merely nodded and said: "When do we start?"

"Right away," she murmured. "I am ready."

"The ship's ready, too," answered Reynolds.

"Where does she lie?" she demanded.

"Off Balboa, just outside the entrance to the canal."

I called a *coche* and we drove down that winding road past the cemetery, past the huge gray and white quarters of the canal employees and on to the railroad wharf. Here we got a launch and went out to the steamer.

"Yes, that is the vessel I saw in the crystal," she murmured. "What do you call her?"

"The Laughing Lass," Reynolds replied. "She's a good packet, though she isn't fast. Have you any notion which way we're bound?"

"South," she said dreamily. "I don't know exactly where; but I can show you."

An hour later we were going outside of Naos Island, and as it was my watch on the bridge I saw and heard all that happened when the girl joined

us on the bridge. Reynolds was busy, and she came over beside me and peered out into the hazy sky ahead of us.

"Pardon me," I said, "but might I ask your name?"

"Hosinia Van Broom," she returned slowly. "I was born in Chittagong. My mother was a prophetess and my father a planter."

"I don't understand you at all," I went on, hesitatingly.

"I don't understand myself," she answered simply. "All I know is that I see things in the future and I must obey what my crystal tells me. I take no money. I have plenty myself. I just obey my crystal."

She looked at me with a serene pride that sat well upon her. "You will steer more to the west," she continued. "Swing your ship till I tell you you are on the right course."

We were then steering almost south. I called down the trap hatch to the man at the wheel to port his helm, easily. The Laughing Lass slowly turned her high bows westward.

The girl looked with a peculiar, bright intensity at the horizon. Her bosom heaved slowly. Suddenly she raised her hand. I glanced at the compass and bawled down the course. The wheelman brought the steamer back upon it.

"That is right," she said quietly. "Now steer that course. That is our course to where we must go."

"That will take us right out into the barren sea," I remonstrated. "There isn't a thing that way but water for five thousand miles." However, I noted the course and our departure in the log.

Presently Reynolds came over, looked into the compass and whistled. "Nothing there this side of the antarctic," he murmured. "And it'll fetch us right between Cape Parina and the Gallapagos Islands. Then—nothing till we strike eternal ice. Hum!"

"Plenty of coal?" I asked.

"Nothing but coal. We've fuel enough for six months' sailing, and provisions for a year."

So we sailed down the glimmering Pacific for two weeks. Of course we did our daily sights and kept all the routine of the ship. Yet it was Hosinia Van Broom who really navigated the Laughing Lass, leaning over the bridge rail and staring steadily into the blue distance ahead of us.

When she wasn't doing this, or shut up in her cabin, she was a simply beautiful companion. She was well educated; a lady in every sense of the word, and still as friendly and companionable as a puppy.

"Hosinia," I said one day, "couldn't you tell me a little about yourself?"

She let her great eyes rest on mine a moment. Then she patted her glorious hair and smiled.

"There's not much to tell," she replied; "but I don't object. I was born in Chittagong, as I told you, my mother a native prophetess and my father a planter. I was sent to Hong-Kong to school when I was fifteen.

"I found that I could see things in a crystal, and several times when I didn't obey I was punished. So I obeyed, and it took me down to Sawarak. I managed to rescue six poor fellows that had been wrecked.

"Then I went to Lahaina, in the Hawaiian group, and found a missionary dying of leprosy. I saved him. Oh, I go everywhere.

"I think a good many people despise me because I tell fortunes. But it is my one gift, and I take no money for it."

"How do you explain your gift?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said simply. "But if I—I fell in love with a man I'd lose it. When mother married father, things got dim to her."

One day I saw her staring at the turtles swimming in the blue sea. It was a lovely day, far out from the Chileno coast, and Hosinia fitted perfectly in the scene.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked presently.

"What should one think about?" she returned softly, raising her lucid gaze to mine. "The things to come, of course. Never of the past. The things to come, my dear man."

"And what are they?" I demanded.

"Gales on strange seas, the lift of strange islands in the dawn, strange voices, strange sorrows, and—and strange love."

I stood beside her while the Laughing Lass swung gently on her way through the pellucid and shining Pacific. I glanced at her gleaming coiled hair, the contour of her throat, the glimmer of flesh beneath the shoulder of her thin gown.

"Strange love?" I suggested. "All love is strange."

"There is a love that is not strange," she murmured. "There is a love where it rises between the hearts of a man and a woman as naturally as a flower on a hillside. But neither you nor I can ever know it. We shall know the other. And then—then I shall never see the things to come any more."

She held her clenched hand outward in a defiant gesture. "I will not lose my power as my mother did."

Even as she said this her eyes suddenly narrowed.

"We are going too far to the eastward," she said authoritatively. "We are going *there!*"

She thrust out her rounded arm toward an invisible point forty degrees to the westward. I swung out till she nodded her head.

I jotted down the course on the slate and figured. Allowing for currents, tide and winds, variation and deviation of the compass, she had changed our course twenty degrees in all. I went below and wakened Reynolds.

"Look here, captain," I said. "Hosinia may be all right and know her business. But either we're bound for a floating island or she's 'way off."

Reynolds sat up in his bunk and pondered this. "I'll find out," he said quietly. "Come onto the bridge."

I wish you could have seen the mixture of bewilderment and strong affection that was expressed in his face. Hosinia turned and welcomed him with a faint smile.

"Hosinia," he said firmly, "can't you give us some notion of where we are bound for? We're steaming into the vacant places on the charts. There's no land for two thousand miles. Describe what you saw that made you bring us this way."

At the moment I suddenly seemed to see the preposterousness of the whole voyage, the incredible credulity of men who would take a steamer out of the known world to satisfy a woman's whim.

Yet, the whole ridiculous affair still had a sensibleness about it that made one loath to doubt Hosinia's good faith and her real ability to foresee the events of the future.

Hadn't hard-headed Reynolds put implicit faith in her long before he had laid eyes on her fair face? Hadn't that native on Lawak believed in her? Hadn't she instantly recognized Reynolds as the man she was waiting for?

She answered his question as simply as it was asked.

"Come below with me," she said. "I will show you."

We turned the ship over to the second officer and followed her to her cabin, which was in the very quarters of the steamer. When we opened the door we gasped.

She had draped it all in black, with only the electric light projecting brassily from the bulkhead. She watched us a moment until the door was closed. Then she switched on the lamp, and instantly from the gloom shone forth a round crystal ball, a lucent sphere resting in a cup of ebony, the standard of the cup set firmly in a hole in the little drop table. A heavy veil lay negligently over the edge of the table.

"If you, captain, will look and say nothing, you will see."

Very gingerly Reynolds sat down before the crystal and pulled the veil over his head, just as the camera-man does. Then there was silence. It was ten minutes before he thrust the veil away and said simply: "I've seen it."

"Then you, Mr. Mate," said Hosinia.

I never felt more foolish in my life than when I sat down and pulled that heavy crape over my head and stared into the dimly lit sphere.

At first I saw merely revolving whirlpools of changing light. I peered steadily into the heart of the crystal. I don't know the exact moment when I realized that I was looking at a derelict.

She was evidently a full-rigged ship; she had lost every stick; only the stumps of her masts thrust up from the deck. The jib-boom was gone, and only the stump of the bowsprit left. She was low in the water. A man on the bulwarks was waving a shirt. The vessel was coated with ice, and a strong wind blew.

That vision faded, and then the crystal became a blank.

"I saw it, too," I said.

"That is where we are going," said Hosinia gently.

"We'll get there," Reynolds announced loudly.

That night the girl came up on the bridge with me and laid a firm hand on my arm.

"You have seen that men are dying and only we can save them. We can't locate their position, but I can always tell when they are ahead. But—"

She paused so long that I looked at her. She had bowed her head and was weeping.

"Only what?" I demanded.

"I—I must not fall in love," she whispered. "If I did that I should lose my power to see, and they would be lost. Oh, I mustn't fall in love! I mustn't think of anybody but those poor men dying on the wreck."

Reynolds and I had a little chin-chin later. He had seen just what I had.

"It's down in the antarctic somewhere," he groaned. "It'll take us three weeks more to make it. We've coal and grub enough; but where do we get off? Suppose she is wrong?"

"Do you believe in her?" I demanded.

"I—I do." he murmured.

Strangest of voyages was that! We swept down the blank Pacific through heat and moderate weather into icy cold gales. Oddly enough, Hosinia no longer changed our course, though she wrinkled her brows as she peered ahead into the smother and seemed to be doubtful herself.

Finally I asked her why she was so disturbed.

"We may be too late," she told me.

"That is so," I remarked. "If they are where you think they are."

For the first time she flamed on me. "I always see right, even in my dreams. If I am wrong, it—it is your fault!"

"For why?" I demanded.

"Because you will not believe me, and you are trying to spoil my power by making me in love with you. Don't you understand that men's lives depend on our finding them?"

Believe it or not, I suddenly understood that I was in love with this, the most beautiful woman in the world. I loved her from her gorgeous hair to the tips of her slippers. I loved her gentle, pure voice and her devotion to what she thought was right.

With that understanding I realized that possibly—some time—she might love me. I dared not trust myself another moment with her. I think I comprehended her duty and my duty; it glorified my love for her.

In this unspoken intimacy we drove the Laughing Lass down into the south till we saw the ice cakes skimming the waves and the frozen sky overhead.

"Hosinia," I said one night, "do you still see clearly?"

"Not very," she confessed. "But we shall soon know."

Oddly enough we did. The morning dawned, a mere flurry of light mixed with snow, and she came on deck and studied the sea and the veiled sky.

Reynolds was on the bridge with me, a somber and subdued figure. The girl leaned over the rail impetuously, staring into vacancy. The quartermaster at the wheel turned the spokes doubtfully. We ate no breakfast. The spray was freezing on the bows and covering the anchors with a hard snow.

"We're pretty well down toward the dangerous parts," murmured Reynolds to me.

"Aye, we're far south of where any ships go," I admitted.

And when the words were out of my mouth Hosinia called out shrilly: "Just ahead!"

Reynolds himself rang the engines down, and the Laughing Lass dawdled over the seas. We strained our eyes into the smother and gradually there developed before us the picture of a dismantled ship, adrift on the gray waters.

She was a desolate and mournful shape, a long, low hull surmounted by short, broken stumps of masts and covered with ice. A solitary figure stood on the quarterdeck and waved feebly a big tablecloth.

"That's what we are after," said Hosinia quietly.

"My God!" ejaculated Reynolds. "I'll bet we'll have a time getting them off."

I took one boat, when we had run up under their lee, and I saw immediately that trouble was plenty aboard that packet. She was sheathed in ice, and every sea dimpled over her as if she were a rock.

Beyond her was an island, also completely icebound. It stood out vaguely against the winter sky.

I made the men pull up to her and I yelled at the top of my pipes.

Two figures appeared at her rail, strangely stiff figures which waved stiff arms. I thought I heard a shrill answer to my hail.

We pulled up right under the lee of the wreck and a third form appeared at the rail.

"We'll take you off," I bawled. "How many are there of you?"

He held up all the fingers of one hand. I surged the boat alongside.

"Come on," I told them.

The wreck rolled far over, and her channels made a swirl alongside of us. One man jumped and we caught him. As she lurched back another leaped into the sea and we got him.

It was five minutes before the next three jumped and we got them—one in a state of exhaustion that made me think he would never reach safety.

"Is that all?" I yelled into the ear of one of them.

"All that's alive," said he in a mumble.

So we fetched back to the steamer and got them aboard. As soon as they were on deck and in charge of the skipper I went off to the wreck again.

"I might as well find out what I can," said I.

Hosinia looked at me and nodded. In her eyes was an expression of misty sorrow. She seemed to have something more to say. But she was silent and I went off to the poor old derelict.

I managed to get aboard with some difficulty and proceeded to explore the cabin. I found that the men we had just rescued had left the lamp burning, and by its light I rummaged through the desk in what had been evidently the captain's room, and found that the ship's name was the Harvest Queen, on a voyage from Hong-Kong to Baltimore, laden with curios and soy.

I thrust the documents into my pockets and opened another door. It gave into a large quarter cabin which was dark, owing to the portlights being thick with ice. I went and got the lamp. By its light I saw that the big bunk was occupied.

Very quietly I stepped over and

pulled back a heavy blanket that covered—a man, a woman, and a baby. They were dead, their pinched and sorrowful faces turned to the deck above them.

How long I stood there I don't know, staring down at this mute evidence of suffering. I tell you, I have never seen such sadness on any living human face as rested there eternally.

Father, mother, and baby departed together on that other long voyage whence we never return to our home port.

I pulled the blanket up over them and went out and put the lamp back in its bracket and went on deck. I hailed my boat, and after some difficulty got aboard the Laughing Lass without wetting even my feet.

Very briefly I explained to Reynolds what I had found, and laid the ship's papers before him.

"What now?" I demanded.

He looked at me thoughtfully and shook his head. "I don't know till I have a talk with Hosinia."

As he seemed inclined to study the papers, I went and found the girl in her room. She was standing up, and before her lay the casket, which, I knew, usually contained the crystal.

"Did you see—the others?" she asked, turning her sad eyes on mine.

"Yes, I did," I answered. "I brought off the ship's papers, too."

"So they have passed out of this world," she said, half to herself. "The three of them."

"How do you know there were three?" I demanded. "Some of the men we rescued say so?"

"I haven't seen them," she responded quietly. "And she prayed so hard for her baby. I failed her in her extremity."

She suddenly threw her arms out in an extraordinary gesture of pain.

"By Heavens! I know five men you saved," said I. "Even if you couldn't reach the Harvest Queen in time to rescue the skipper and his wife you got us here in time to get the living ones and pull them out of the pit. By the way, Captain Reynolds says we must wait till you say the word before we start the engines."

Her amazing loveliness deepened as she hesitated. She was about to speak when there was a knock at the door. It was the chief steward with word that one of the rescued men wished to see me.

"I'll go with you," said Hosinia, "if you don't mind."

"Come ahead," I told her, and we went down into the steaming main-deck, the steward padding just in front of us. We came to his own room.

"He's in here, sir," the steward said apologetically, and stepped aside.

I went in first and Hosinia followed me, closing the door after her. We both stopped by the side of the bunk on which lay an extraordinarily emaciated man whose frost-blackened hands lay motionless on the white coverlet.

I heard Hosinia sigh profoundly. We were in the presence of death. His wings were rustling over our heads and his shadow lay on the man who looked up at us with an expression of incredible sadness.

"What is it you want to tell me?" I asked.

"The log will tell you what happened to the ship. But they tell me you went back to her."

"I did," I answered.

"Did you see *them?*" he demanded huskily.

"Yes," I assented.

"She wanted to save the baby, and we was a wreck then, sir. Me and the old man did what we knew how to do, I being a family man myself, sir. But she died, sir, and the baby died, sir. And the skipper died, sir. So, says I, we'll let them sleep together one night. And we laid 'em together, he and she, and their baby between them. It was a long voyage, sir."

"I haven't looked the papers over yet," I said after a long pause. "How many days had you been at sea?"

He cackled harshly. "Days! The Harvest Queen had been three years drifting down into these latitudes when you sighted us. Ye see, we expected to be picked up almost any day until the last two months.

"Then we drifted into these waters, and the skipper says to all hands that we must be cheerful and his wife knows some one will come and resky us. The men died fast, sir.

"But when the kid died we kind of gave up. We'd been looking for'ad to having the kid to cheer us up. And when it come it died on us. And the lady wasn't with us any more to cheer us up, and the ice—t-t-the i-i-ce."

Instantly Hosinia knelt by the dying man's side and stretched her warm arms across him as if to keep the dark wings above him from brushing his face.

"You say you are a family man. Where do they live? What is your name?"

It was evident that he was making a valiant effort to stave off the coma that was numbing his senses. He managed to pronounce the word "Stevens" and "Oakland."

Hosinia rose, and the dark plumaged bird whose shadow had hovered about us settled down.

With a little moan Hosinia crept into my arms, and I felt her body shaken with deep sobs. Presently she drew away and vanished. I called the steward and the carpenter and gave the necessary orders.

When I had reported the man's death to Reynolds, he said briefly: "I see by these papers that there is eleven thousand pounds aboard that ship. I'll go myself and get it. In some secret memoranda of the captain's I find its location. By the way, that man Stevens was mate of the Harvest Queen."

Of course it was business for the old man to lay his hands on money wherever he could. He was just a pocket miner, after all, and this prospecting trip into the antarctic was no cheap one.

So I sympathized with him, and he went off for the wreck. When he came back three hours later he had the money, all in Bank of England notes and a little gold.

"You've given no directions yet," I reminded him.

"I'll have a talk with Hosinia," he said quickly. "Just stow this loot in the big treasure safe."

It was half an hour later that a quartermaster told me the captain wished to see me in the chart-room. I hastened thither, and found Hosinia and Reynolds staring at each other across the big chart table.

"I've just been telling her what success I had in getting that treasure off the Harvest Queen," he said slowly. "But she says she doesn't know where to go next—we've got to get north out of this ice—until we have all looked at the crystal."

"That is true," she murmured.

"Well," said I, "if she says that, by all means have a look."

"I'm afraid to look!" she cried.

Reynolds smiled. "My dear girl, I've hunted for you for two years. I've trusted you and you've made good. I've something over fifty thousand dollars which you got me. Now be a good girl and find us some more."

I think an outsider would have felt the chill in the air when he had said this. That glorious girl was silent for a long minute. Then she looked straight at me.

"This is the last time I shall ever gaze into that sphere," she remarked. "It has guided me several years. And now that I am going to look into it for the last time, I want both of you to see what I see. Then we'll have our final orders."

She turned sharply to Reynolds and asked: "Will you abide by what you see?"

"Seeing that so far that crystal hasn't made any mistakes, and got me fifty-five thousand dollars, I'm willing to trust it," he said. "Just find out where loot lies ready to my hand."

"Come back at three o'clock," she said simply.

We left, and I went down to the main-deck and saw the other rescued men. They were pretty near dead, but could talk. They explained to me how the Harvest Queen had been dismasted—how they had managed to keep alive for the years that they drifted—how many jury rigs they had succeeded in getting aloft—and one of them said: "Mr. Mate, we done our best for the sake of the lady."

So he died, telling me that for the sake of the captain's wife he and his mates had struggled month after month to save their ship and get her into some port. "We all hoped the baby would have blue eyes like his ma," he concluded.

When I had drawn the blanket over his face I turned and saw Hosinia behind me. She was crying softly, with her lovely hands over her eyes. Again I knew that I loved her. But all I did was to pat her hand.

"Are babies' eyes the color of their mother's?" she sobbed.

"I don't know the answer to that," I told her.

She shook for a moment, and then stooped over the dead man. Her eyes flamed, and through her parted lips the breath went swiftly.

"I found you too late," she murmured. "I have lost my magic. It is dead. All love is death."

I led her away, and as I did so I realized that the Laughing Lass was rolling heavily in a rising sea. There was an undercurrent that worried me. In those latitudes storms reach their highest intensity. Few skippers have ever risked that sea.

Once in her room she said again, "Three o'clock," and flung herself on the bunk.

At precisely three the skipper and I knocked on her door. Without a word she led the way into the next cabin—the one she had draped with black. The light burned on the bulkhead and the crystal ball rested on its stand, apparently unaffected by the rolling of the steamer.

"This is our last sight of the future," she said quietly. "Captain Reynolds, do you look first?"

"This ends it for all of us," he said.

"It is the destiny of us all," she responded.

Very carefully Reynolds sat him down in the chair and pulled the little veil over his head. Nothing was said for a quarter of an hour. Then he got up, white-faced, and went out.

Hosinia took his place, and I saw her bow her head presently. But when she rose and motioned me to the seat she did not leave. I sat down and put the veil over my head and stared into the lucent crystal.

At first I saw nothing. Then a roseate cloud filled the sphere. It remained a moment and then blew away before some invisible wind. Followed a ship with a white star on its funnel. Reynolds and I were on the bridge.

The steamer fled on swiftly till high heads of land appeared, then a lighthouse, then the heights of San Francisco.

It seemed to me that the steamer reached its dock with incredible swiftness, wore into its berth and became still and silent. That scene faded and another slowly developed.

It was the interior of a room and a cradle stood in the middle. On one side stood Hosinia; on the other myself. Suddenly Hosinia bent over and kissed me. The crystal clouded and was a blank.

"I have seen," I said, rising.

She blushed divinely. "What did you see?"

"San Francisco, and a room with a cradle between you and me," I answered gently.

"Do babies have the same color in their eyes that their mamas do?" she whispered.

I looked for the first time full into her gorgeous and tender eyes. "They do," I said, and held out my arms.

She lifted her face to mine and we kissed, very softly, like people who were afraid of happiness.

Then she said into my ear: "Take the crystal and sink it in the sea. Our child must never know this curse."

"Curse?" I echoed. "It has brought us happiness by devious ways. It has brought you to me, and the skipper has eleven thousand pounds."

"Sink it in the sea!" she commanded me. "Let us see only happiness before us. It might—our baby might die, and it would tell us. It must not! *She* must not!"

"How do you know it'll be a girl?" I demanded, looking into her eyes.

She bowed her head. "I looked into the cradle," she whispered.

An hour later Reynolds looked at us with a gloomy eye. "So you've thrown it overboard, have you? Well, 'Frisco it is. But"—he turned a bitter face to the gray sky—"I've always been only a pocket miner. I never found a real vein yet in all my life."

Hosinia cried on my shoulder.

"I'll marry the two of ye this evening and register it on the log," said Reynolds. "I was going to divide up that loot with you. The wedding fee will be two-thirds of eleven thousand pounds, one pound deducted to buy you a present."

He opened the trap hatch and bawled down to the man at the wheel: "North-three-quarters-east."

In response to his gesture I rang the engines ahead. Thus we left the sinking derelict and steamed north.

As I stood my watch the most beautiful woman in the world was by my side, trusting me for the course we were to steer the rest of our lives.

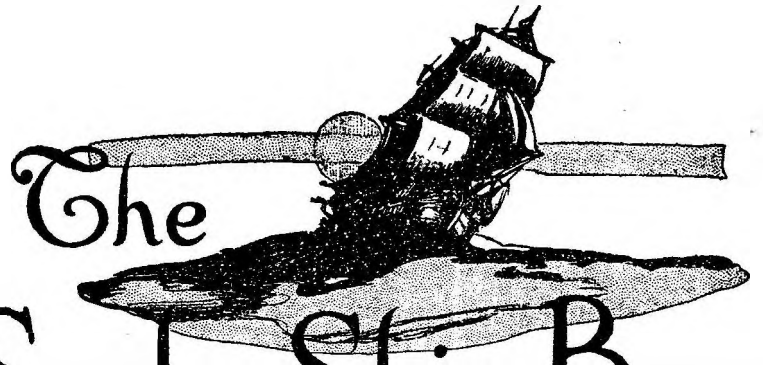
A DILEMMA.

HELLO! why, here's a note from May—
For well that dainty hand I know—
I wonder what she has to say,
When last she wrote 'twas long ago.
My heart I swore was hers alone—
And so it was for that brief time—
I humbly worshiped at her throne
And vowed my perfect faith in rime.

But 'twas not that which made us part—
Although my verse was not the best—
We soon were cured of Cupid's dart,
And then—you well can guess the rest.
What news now will this letter bring?
It's friendly at the start: "Dear Jack,
I'm to be married in the spring,
And so please send my picture back."

Well, that's a nice request to make—
Her picture—what else does she say?
And so she wants it "for my sake,"
And signs it: "Yours as ever, May."
Not mine now, that time long has passed—
Her picture—two hearts o'er it crossed—
Where was it now I saw it last?
Confound the thing, it must be lost!

Flavel Scott Mines.



The Snake-Skin Bracelet

by Perley Poore Sheehan

JOHNSON watched his visitor take another greedy sip at his rum. The uncanniness of it fascinated him. The fellow would talk for a long enough interval and seemingly forget his tumbler; then he would start, stare blindly for a moment at the trembling brown liquid, and jerk the glass to his lips with the gesture of a man dying of thirst.

Not that he drank heavily. He had been there an hour, and his grog, three-quarters water to begin with, was only half finished. He was perhaps sixty years old, had a grizzled beard, and wore earrings.

"Oh, yes!" he said, resuming the disjointed conversation; "I've been around the world seventeen—eighteen times, but I will never go no more—*plus jamais!* Back to France as soon as I can get a boat, and then Pierre Duclos will plant cabbages. Since my affair of Madagascar"—he pronounced it Madagas*carr*—"since my affair of Madagascar—"

He made another grab at his glass, and drained it at a single gulp.

"I must tell you."

Which he did.

Many very strange people come to Marseilles. You can drink more strange liquors there, smoke more strange tobaccoes, have more strange things happen to you, than anywhere else in the world—not excepting Saigon or New York.

It was toward the close of the Colonial Exposition there. On the streets you saw six turbans to one hat.

I had been drinking beer that evening with Baptiste Dupont, of the *Messageries Maritimes,* and it was already late when there came up to where we were sitting a certain big Hova from Tamative.

You don't know who the Hovas are. *Bien!* The Hovas ruled Madagascar before the French came in. They owned it, and all the other tribes of the island were their slaves.

They were proud, and—I tell you what—when the French came in and broke their power and carried their beautiful Queen Ranavalo away a prisoner they didn't like it.

But I knew this Hova well, for I had sailed two cruises with him on the Anne-Marie. Rabawani was his name, and he was six feet high and very strong and straight. All other negroes were afraid of Rabawani. They said he could work sorcery and had the gift of the evil eye.

But *pouf!* A white man mocks at such things until—until something arrives that brings him wisdom.

But, even so, I never mocked at Rabawani. No, Rabawani was not a man to make fun of. He was proud and lithe like a tiger. And at times I could see things in his face that made me think of all those aristocratic Hovas we put to work when we freed their slaves and took their queen away.

Some day perhaps they would come back. I shouldn't like to face ten regiments of Rabawanis—no, not me.

Eh, bien! This man Rabawani came up to where we were sitting and looked at me in a way which gave me just a little secret tremble, for his eyes were fixed and black.

Then, very politely, he saluted and handed me something. It was a band of dry snakeskin with a large, uncut emerald fastened to it. And before I could ask a question Rabawani spoke up and says:

"*Monsieur le capitaine*, she who sends this to you wants you to come to her without delay."

I stared up at Rabawani. There wasn't a twitch or wrinkle in his big brown face. I looked at Baptiste.

"Go ahead," he told me with a grin.

Then I stared at the thing in my hand, and it seemed to be urging me most of all. It was a snakeskin bracelet, and it made me tremble a little.

For with that big emerald it seemed to have all the mystery of all the snakes that ever lived. I had seen a slave-girl once in Zanzibar with a bracelet like that, and she—

So by and by I told Baptiste good night. "And, Rabawani," I said, "you may lead the way."

He led me straight down to the Vieux Port, and along the dark, deserted quay to where a small rowboat was tied. We got in and he rowed me, speaking no word, through the shipping and past the fort to just outside where lay a bark.

The tide was running strong, and Rabawani in making his way up to her passed close under her stern. I read her name. It was the Anne-Marie.

"*Tiens,* this is strange," said I to myself; "only this afternoon I was talking to Captain Lafayette of the Anne-Marie, and he said nothing about having a lady aboard. Neither had he been drinking."

Still, many queer things can happen in Marseilles.

"Is Captain Lafayette aboard?" I asked Rabawani carelessly.

He answered me yes, and I suspected no evil as we came over the side onto the dark deck. But then, as Rabawani followed me, *Ban!*

The little boat we had come out in had had her bottom smashed, and was filling as she swirled away.

I didn't like that, I tell you. Rabawani and I had been seen rowing away together in that small boat perhaps.

Then the wreck of that small boat comes sweeping into the Vieux Port with the tide, and the harbor police would say: "Too bad; our old friend, Captain Duclos, is drowned!"

No, I didn't like that; and I turned to tell Rabawani so, but suddenly a score of black men were swarming about us—Hovas, all of them.

"Where is Captain Lafayette?" I demanded very loud. I wanted to attract attention.

For answer some one seized me by the shoulders and brought his face very close to mine. It was Rabawani, and what he said was this:

"You are Captain Lafayette!"

Then before I knew it he was dangling that big emerald from its snakeskin right in front of my eyes. For a while I saw it shimmer there like a phosphorescent fish-hook.

After that it got smaller and smaller, farther and farther away, until at last it looked like the starboard-light of a ship in the sky, and I felt myself falling over backward asleep.

That's what happened to me on the deck of the Anne-Marie in the harbor of Marseilles.

Did you ever smell Mozambique? If so, you will recognize it when you

smell it again. You can tell Havana by the smell, Saigon by the smell, Toulon, Naples, *Alger, Barcelone.*

When Rabawani put me to sleep I was still smelling Marseilles. When I woke up I noticed the land breeze—very warm, very peculiar, something like the inside of a coconut, and I knew that it was Mozambique.

Then I felt the burning of liquor in my throat and a pain on top of my head. I was in a bunk in a strange cabin. A strange negro was standing there at my side with a black bottle in his hand

"What is the matter?" I asked.

The negro grinned and clicked out something that I didn't understand, but offered me another drink.

I looked around. I recognized it. I had drank in that cabin before, but it was with my old friend, Captain Lafayette. I was in his quarters, aboard the Anne-Marie. I sniffed again—Mozambique! Then the door opened, and there was Rabawani.

I confess it—I began to be frightened. How did it come about that I woke up in Mozambique when I went to sleep in Marseilles? And why should Rabawani come walking like that into the captain's cabin, as though he owned the ship?

Rabawani looked at me and I looked at him. Then I noticed a white man just behind him, and I felt a little better.

So everything was all right, after all. A little too much rum perhaps, and that was all. But the white man was looking serious.

"How did it happen?" he asked, coming forward and taking my wrist.

"He slipped and fell in the companionway, doctor," said Rabawani.

It was all news to me, so I listened.

"When?"

"An hour ago."

"Unconscious ever since?"

"He showed life when we poured the rum into him."

"He's had too much already," said the doctor.

"Yes, he drinks a lot," Rabawani answered; "Captain Lafayette drinks a lot, but he's a mighty good skipper. Captain Lafayette—"

He started to call me that again, when suddenly I remembered. I saw it all.

"Lafayette's murdered!" I shouted; "I'm not Lafayette—I'm Duclos!"

I tried to jump out of my berth, but the doctor and Rabawani held me.

"Hold on there, M. le Captain!" said the doctor, trying to calm me. He turned to Rabawani. "I told you he had too much," he said.

Worst of all, I felt myself going—going—just as I did back there in Marseilles. For a time I was crazy with fear and rage. Then I got a grip on myself—began to think.

What brought me to? What woke me up? Was it the crack on the head or the rum? Rum—Rabawani said it. And I had enough sense to smile a little and give in and to call for rum, rum!—and say that I felt all right again. So Rabawani gave me rum, although the doctor quarreled with him and wanted to give me bromid instead.

At last the doctor went away, and I pretended to sleep. Soon Rabawani came and stared long at me in the face, said strange words in Malgash. But stronger than his spells was the brown liquor at work in brain and artery. I thought that this very night I would escape, tell my story to the port authorities, and have Rabawani arrested.

Rabawani spoke in Malgash to the negro who had been guarding me, and presently both went out, taking the bottle of rum with them.

By and by I crawled out of my berth. The ship was at anchor. I looked about me. Log, sextant, chronometer were all there in good order. Ten o'clock! I looked at the log and found my own writing—Zanzibar, Aden, Suez, Port Said, Marseilles.

Dieu! What had happened to me? Who was I? What had I been doing? What was I doing now?

I crept up the companionway and

out onto the deck. The ship seemed to be deserted. Far away over the port rail I could see the lights of Mozambique. No ship was near us. All the boats were gone. I looked over the side, meditating a jump. But there was a streak like fire in the water right below me, and I remembered the sharks.

I heard voices forward, and I sneaked up to an open hatch, where a light shone up from below. Half a dozen negroes were there around a grindstone, sharpening knives and daggers.

I listened. I know only those words of Malgash which every sailor knows. I heard them all—women, gold, liquor, blood.

Again fear took me, sent me staggering away. What if I should fall asleep again? What if I again become Captain Lafayette? What then? What will they make me do? What will Rabawani make me do?

That is what is in my heart and makes me so afraid. *Mon Dieu!* I must have rum—the only way to conjure off the spell of Rabawani, to keep me what I am. I prayed—prayed for rum, rum! as a Christian asks for grace.

There was a storehouse amidships, and as I crept past that I smelled what I was looking for. But the door was padlocked.

Into the galley I went and, *sapristi!* —there was a bottle of rum right off. I took a long pull; then, as I heard the sound of many boats coming out from the shore, I ran below to my cabin, shoved the bottle under my mattress, and tumbled in.

Two minutes, five minutes later Rabawani himself came into my room and stood looking down at me. For a while he was talking to himself, and I could feel that he was making passes over my head. Then he said in French: "Captain, wake up."

I turned over and opened my eyes.

He said: "We are sailing to-night for Mojanga. You take the ship there direct; but, if we arrive in the daytime, you lie off until after sundown. Understand?"

I understood. I was beginning to understand better than he thought. Mojanga! That was the shipping-port of the West Madagascar gold-mines.

"And in the harbor," Rabawani went on, "you will see a steamer with a long, slim funnel and two masts—the President Loubet. You will bring us alongside of her close enough for us to get a couple of grappling-hooks on. Got that?"

When he asked me that question, my friend, I was so overcome I could scarcely answer. If I had suspected at first, now I was sure—Mojanga, the gold port; the President Loubet, the government steamer that carried the gold to Tamatave — the President Loubet, with her little crew and all her innocent passengers, colonists and their families, that she always carried up from the south!

Rabawani was watching me intently. Perhaps he saw my expression change. For: "You move along, quick," he said, "or I'll give you another crack on the head."

Aha! So I hadn't fallen down a companionway, after all! He had struck me. In my heart I swore two things: to kill Rabawani and save the President Loubet. But how?

When I got on deck I had a chance, for the first time, to get an idea of how many men we had on board. There must have been more than a hundred —all blacks. And from the stray words I heard—Spanish, Portuguese, English, French — I learned that the Anne-Marie must have been taking them on all down the east coast of Africa.

They crowded around me like black ghosts. More villains were never seen collected together on a single deck. It was a congress of sin and ugliness. Some of them had already cast off all clothing, if they ever had any.

Others had added to their decoration in savage ways—nose-rings, red

and yellow breech-clouts, bead necklaces. What chance would the passengers and crew of the President Loubet have with them?

At the wheel was a tall pirate of an Arab who seemed to understand his business. He wore sea-clothes, and the way he talked I saw he was an officer.

Aloft were a dozen men shaking out the sails. They evidently had enough able-bodied seamen aboard besides the naked savages. I turned to the man at the wheel.

"Keep her steady east-sou'east," I said; "and let her have all the canvas she can carry. If this breeze holds, we ought to raise Mojanga to-morrow afternoon late."

That was the time limit I had. But what was I to do? I walked forward, picking my way among the savages. They were so thick it wasn't easy.

And then, as I looked forward over the dripping bow toward Mojanga, and I thought of the French people there—the women and children, so unsuspecting—I became desperate.

There were good sailors aboard. They would know it if I gave them a false course. I couldn't run them on the rocks. They knew the coast too well for that.

I might blow up the ship, but how could I ever reach the magazines? Besides, I doubted if there was much powder on board. Again, if I signaled a passing ship, they would cut my throat.

They'd kill me, anyway, when my work was done; but if I died too soon, what would become of the Loubet?

Should I burn the Anne-Marie with all on board? I decided to do it if I got the chance. But I felt, even then, that I was being watched.

We dropped Mozambique, then some of the savages brought their war-drums up. They were beginning to celebrate, and their music made me sick. I went below to my cabin. I had to think.

I thought of the next night, and of Marseilles, and of how foolish my plans had always been when all the time I was to die like this.

While I lay there Rabawani again came into my room and looked at me by the light of the swinging lamp—uneasy about something. Perhaps he suspected. I groaned and stirred, as though I were ill.

He seemed interested, stepped softly toward me like a panther. He leaned over me.

Then all that I had been thinking about—my fear, my sadness, my hopes—flashed up in my brain like fire; and before I knew what I was about I had him by the throat.

I held him, I tell you, although his first lunge, upward and back, pulled me clean out of my berth. And I didn't even touch the floor. I wrapped my legs around him and my fingers sank and sank. I felt only that. I saw only red and black.

Presently I was standing there dazed, catching my breath, Rabawani on the floor. One of his arms was stretched out, the hand like the claw of a mammoth bird. Just over the hand was the snakeskin and the emerald.

I took them off and put them on my own wrist. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I must do something quick. I searched him, found a bunch of keys and a revolver. These I put in my pocket, then I put out the light.

The last I saw of Rabawani! A man who sleeps and has a nightmare. Did he ever wake up?

Once on deck, I was no longer afraid. I had my nerve back—got it back by striking my first blow.

First I thought of the man at the wheel. There was the greatest danger now. The deck was covered with sleeping men. It was sultry and there was but little breeze.

By the stars I knew that it would soon be dawn. It was so dark that the man at the wheel didn't know who I was until I stood beside him. He asked me what I was doing there, and I think he trembled some.

"Call some one to relieve you," I said.

He asked me why.

"Because," I said, "he who sends this wants to see you." And into the light of the binnacle I shoved the snakeskin bracelet.

Was it that he went yellow, or was it the first flash of the tropic dawn that made him look like that.

But when he saw what I had at the wrist he called a sailorman to take the wheel, and he started down the companionway.

He tried to look back at me when he was half-way down, but he never got the chance.

I learned the *savate* many years ago, and I planted him a *coup* in the back of the head that sent him senseless to the deck below.

Next, I ran to the storehouse. I had but one idea. There may be powder there—enough to blow up the ship. If not, I'd start a fire.

As though their instincts warned them, the sleepers began to stir. Some looked at me and chattered. Others were silent, evil, suspicious.

I unlocked the storeroom door and closed it behind me. In the darkness I scratched a match and looked around.

There was no powder there; a few kegs of biscuit, a ham, three barrels of pork, flour, and—a hogshead of rum!

Sapristi! I had prayed for rum. Here was a hogsheadful. My heart began to jump, just why as yet wasn't sure.

I went to the door. I heard the crowd outside calling for their morning grog, while the cook was swearing. He must have missed that bottle I took in the night.

What shall I do? I had an inspiration, threw open the storehouse door.

"Rabawani gives rum to every one!"

The crowd came my way. The cook was out on the jump. He was a powerful Portuguese black, and when he saw the storeroom door open his eyes glistened.

I guess Rabawani had held him down close. With him was a naked old chief with a feather head-dress. The three of us went back into the storeroom together. We started to tap the hogshead, but that was going to take too long.

"Roll her out on deck," I commanded, "and lash her to the rail."

Excitement spread. There was such pushing and gibbering, howls and frolic, I tell you, that I was glad that Rabawani and that Arab mate of his were deaf.

In the storeroom there had been a pile of pannikins and dippers. By the time the hogshead was in place every one seemed to have one.

Then, as the cook fumbled with a wooden faucet, the crowd opened, let in a naked Malgash with an ax. He gave a whoop, knocked in the top altogether.

Rum shot up into the air twenty feet. Before it came down again the crowd was crazy. Those nearest began to bale up liquor like men in a leaky boat.

They shoved their arms and heads in, screeched and gurgled. Those behind them fought and shoved and climbed over each other. Men were going to the deck ten at a time.

A gang of Somalis broke out of the mob, shouting and laughing. They carried a big tin bucket that slopped over as they walked. Other groups staggered away with stew-pans, tin cups, and pitchers.

Suddenly I felt the old ship yaw and looked aft. Even the wheel was deserted.

A red mist had smothered the sun, but the breeze was rising, and we still carried all sail. No need now to burn the ship.

There was a dory swung from a pair of rickety davits just for'ard of the waist. That part of the ship was deserted.

While the mob rioted, I half-hitched the falls, cut them both at once, and the little boat slid down to the water

like a tired duck. I tied her fast; then, while she bobbed alongside, got over some bread and water.

As I took my last look there were fewer around the hogshead, except for those who were dead to the world.

The deck was reeking. There was bellowing and queer song. Some of the more sober ones had brought out their drums again and were booming out a drunken death-dance. And as I cut loose at last and drifted astern, I heard something else. It was a shriek and the sound of blows. They had begun to fight.

I knew then that the President Loubet was safe. I knew that those aboard her—the colonists and their wives and children—would get safely away to Tamatave.

I cared no longer what might happen now. I was in the middle of Mozambique Channel, alone in a dory; but I did not care.

The Anne-Marie was melting away in the red mist. The breeze made her canvas snap, and she straightened up one moment like a lady surprised in sleep.

Again she yawed and started off. But she knew that something was wrong, I guess. For, by and by, with the tomtom music and the yells and the shrieks getting more savage ever, she tacked again, and then, as though she, too, were drunk, began to stagger back toward Mozambique.

Just then I felt something cold against my wrist. It was the snake-skin bracelet. I cast it into the sea.

The old man had drawn out a soiled newspaper clipping, which he asked Johnson to read. It was merely a two-line Lloyd report of missing ships—the French bark Anne-Marie, Captain P. Lafayette, last reported at Mozambique.

A REPROACH.

THE room is ablaze with countless lights,
The faces catch the glow;
Like the song of hidden water sprites
The rhythmic waltz strains flow.
And I am one of a dozen men
Who bow before your throne.
Ah Rosalie, I remember when
I was the only one!

Last summer I was the only one
Who waited for your smile—
When we rowed about the lake alone,
And tramped for many a mile.
Then there were dozens of girls around
As fair as they could be,
Yet in my eyes you were always found
The only one for me.

Now, when I ask for a single dance
You hand to me your card—
Ah, sweet indeed is that smile and glance
But fate is very hard;
For every dance on your card is gone—
There's not an empty line.
And a certain "F" has five alone—
What! Are those dances mine?

Flavel Scott Mines.

Breaking the Marriage Monopoly

by Howard Fay

MISS DEBBS walked serenely into the "old man's" office. She was a demure little piece of femininity, about eighteen years old. She had hair of rare gold, a pair of heavenly blue eyes, and as neat and trim a figure, in her gray, tailor-made dress, as I have ever had the pleasure to see.

Now there were two things about which the "old man" was notoriously cranky; he insisted upon concentrated attention to work from his men, and the perpetual absence from his office of women.

When Miss Debbs appeared all the fellows made a dash for the rail, and this unusual commotion brought the "old man" to his door.

When he saw the cause of the disturbance he frowned, turned abruptly to reenter his office, paused, looked at the girl standing by the rail, then went over to her.

"Well, Miss, what is it you want?" he said very bruskly.

"I wanted to see Mr. Worthington, sir," she answered tremulously.

"I am Mr. Worthington."

"Oh!" said the girl with a little gasp. "I am Miss Debbs." And she blushed very prettily.

"Well?" said the "old man," growing impatient.

"If you please, sir, Mr. McLean, up-stairs, told me to call and you would give me a position."

"Oh, he did, did he? Well, you go right back to Mr. McLean and ask him when he began running my office."

I may mention that McLean was the most noted rival of our firm, and that a great deal of animosity existed between the two men. The "old man" always prided himself that no one could "do him," but McLean had several times come very near it.

"But, sir," continued the girl, "he told me positively, yesterday, you would be ready for me this morning. So I came prepared to work, and besides, my mother—" Here she wiped away a furtive tear. "You see, sir, I support my mother, and—and, I have not had work for several weeks."

The boss happened to glance behind him, and seeing us all staring, he opened the wicket and escorted the girl into his sanctum, scowling at us as he passed.

What took place inside no one ever knew. But, bomb No. 1 burst when Miss Debbs appeared minus hat and gloves and came over to my desk.

"Please, sir, Mr. Worthington said you were to put me to work."

I gazed at her speechless, but finally managed to say:

"Put you to work?"

"If you please, sir."

"At what?"

"He didn't say, sir," and as I started toward the sanctum, she added: "If you please, sir, Mr. Worthington went out the other door."

I didn't wonder he had, for I knew he would not care to face the staff for a while after this episode.

I consulted the bookkeeper and cashier and we decided to put her at the telephone and inquiry desk, as we felt it due the office to exhibit the prize we had captured. So we ousted Rufus, the present incumbent, and installed Miss Debbs.

Bomb No. 2 fell when the boss appeared with Miss Debbs's hat, gloves and hand-bag.

"Walton," he said, "that young woman who was here has gone, and she left her stuff in my office. Please find her and return it. I left her to go up-stairs and tell McLean a few things. Why! Walton, what does this mean?"

He had just caught sight of the inquiry desk.

I started to explain, but Miss Debbs floated past me and reached for her things.

"It's—it's all my fault, Mr. Worthington. If you remember, you remarked, as you went out, that if Mr. McLean had said you would give me work, of course you would; and to wait until you saw Mr. McLean. I waited, but as you did not return, I got Mr. Walton to start me. It seemed a pity to be wasting time. Of course, if you have changed your mind—"

Again she wiped away a tear.

The boss glared at her, then began to laugh.

"I—I—well, I guess the joke is on me. Hang up your things, Miss Debbs; and Walton, I wish to see you."

Then he disappeared in his office.

Concentration and order soon got to be things of the past. Miss Debbs got to the office at all hours; worked when she felt so inclined, and generally demoralized the staff.

Every one, from Rufus to the "old man," was, figuratively speaking, at her feet. And after she left we learned there was not an unmarried man on the staff who had not proposed.

Whenever the boss spoke to her about punctuality she would wipe away that furtive tear. And twice, when he talked of getting a new operator, she turned her big, liquid eyes on him and murmured "Mother."

I was several times called into the sanctum to discuss her.

"Hang it all, Walton," he said on one occasion, "what can we do about that girl? She has demoralized you all. And as for system! Great Heavens! there is none now. I hate to say anything to her, for I take it she has never worked before, and I guess her mother depends upon her earnings. She has never told me so directly, but then you know her way. Just murmurs when I speak to her. Poor little girl! It is a pity she is so shy."

Thus things went on. Miss Debbs practically ran the office. Not that she knew it, she was too demure, and I often imagined her fright if she should think such a thing.

Like most girls, she had fads. First books, and we got her all the latest novels. Then "The Island," and I know she received invitations from Rufus up to myself. I knew I was foolish to go, and I was always in dread of being seen by one of the staff, but I went. Her next fad was fancy work, and it used to amuse me to watch the boys sneaking in sofa-covers and bits of printed cloth.

During the winter she contracted a cold and was forthwith the recipient of everything from cough-drops to smelling-salts. The boss sent her home in a taxi, and for a week we worked in suspense.

In the spring she got the idea that the office looked cheerless, and one day a man arrived with window boxes filled with flowers. The boss *was* mad and the things he said—well—Miss Debbs, as usual, floated over to him.

"Oh, please, please, Mr. Worthington, don't blame Mr. Walton. It was I who ordered them. It makes the office so cheery, and I intended paying for them. But, of course, if you—if I"—here she got her handkerchief—"have done wrong—"

What need to go further. The boxes remained and the firm stood for them.

Then she ordered several leather cushions, with mottos burned on them, for the settees outside the rail.

Our curiosity was greatly aroused one day when a Mr. Fuller came in, and after staring at her went over and shook hands.

"Why Miss Debbs!" he said, "what happened? I hope he didn't die or get sick, did he?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Fuller, he never came," and her eyes began to fill.

"Poor girl! Poor girl!" he said.

At various times after that three other men came in and asked almost the same questions.

Before we could fathom it all, bomb No. 3 exploded.

Miss Debbs arrived on time one morning and took a seat outside the rail. I rushed forward.

"What is the matter, Miss Debbs?" I asked; but before she could answer the boss came out to see why he could not get a connection.

"Hasn't that girl—" he began, and then saw her. "Miss Debbs, will you kindly remove your things and get me Westley 8930?"

"But—but, Mr. Worthington, I can't," she replied; "you see, sir, I have left."

"Left! Left what?" said the boss.

"The office, sir."

"Why—" and Miss Debbs murmured several words, of which we only caught one, "marriage."

The "old man" turned and surveyed the staff.

"Which one?" he asked.

"If you please, sir, not here," she answered, blushing.

"Hum! Well, we are very sorry to lose you, Miss Debbs." The boss always could rise to the occasion. "And, speaking both for myself and my staff, we wish you every happiness."

"Thank you, thank you, sir"—and she floated over and shook hands.

Then, preceded by Rufus with her books, the bookkeeper with her cushions and fancy-work, and me with her flowers, she made her way down-stairs to a taxi.

The office was sad and lonely without her, our one consolation being in selecting her presents. For, besides one from each member of the staff, we sent her a handsome solid silver tea service, and the boss came across with a check for two hundred.

We each received little notes of thanks, though none got invitations to the wedding. However, a chosen few, who could not possibly attend, were invited to a wedding breakfast.

The next week Mr. Fuller threw bomb No. 4.

Not seeing Miss Debbs, he inquired for her. I told him why she had left, and, my curiosity getting the better of me, I asked if he had ever known her.

"Of course, I did, Walton. She used to work for me, but left to get married. I guess her fellow must have jilted her. I hope he turned up this time. When did she come here?"

"About eight months ago," I answered.

"Eight months—let me see; that's about the time she left us."

While he was speaking the other men who had talked with Miss Debbs came in.

"Say, Walton," said one, a Mr. Gordon. "That golden-haired girl who was here—her name was Debbs, wasn't it?" I nodded. "There!" he said, turning to the other man. "I told you so."

Just then the boss came in.

"What's the trouble, gentlemen?" he said.

"Nothing," answered Gordon; "only that that Miss Debbs you had here used to work for us." He included the others with a sweep of his hand.

"For us!" exclaimed the boss, while the staff jumped to their feet as one.

"Sure, Worthington, for *us*, and furthermore she left each of us to get married. When did she come to you?"

The boss, speechless, turned to me and I told him.

"There you are, Worthington," continued Mr. Gordon. "She left Fuller at that time *to get married*. She worked with him a year, and before that she was with me, and left, *to get married*. Before that she worked for Hancock and Finley here, nine and twelve months respectively, and left them *to get married*."

"And she is still Miss Debbs," said the boss.

"Sure—that is the joke."

"Gentlemen," the boss replied with dignity, "there is no joke. You are mistaken. Why, the Miss Debbs who was here—our Miss Debbs—wasn't a day over seventeen."

"Seventeen, rot!" replied Gordon, laughing. "She is twenty-four if she's a day. Did you give her a good-sized check, Worthington? We gave her from a hundred to a hundred and fifty, besides all the presents she got from the office forces. Well, there is no use kicking. The joke is on us. You wouldn't have thought it of her, would you? Such a shy, demure, unsophisticated girl! Now would you?"

McLean, who had come in unheard, laughed and said as he made for the door:

"Done at last—eh, Worthington?"

"Not by a damn sight!" shouted the boss, and disappeared into the sanctum.

The next morning he came over to my desk.

"Look here, Walton," he said; "get into a taxi. Go as fast as you can, get that girl, and bring her here."

His voice and looks did not speak well for Miss Debbs.

I found Miss Debbs getting ready to go out. She was dressed in something all white and fluffy and looked adorable.

When I delivered my message she got rather pale, but quickly recovered herself and allowed me to help her to the taxi.

"Would you mind driving through the park?" she requested. "I don't feel very well."

And she certainly looked shaky.

There is no need going into the details of the drive. Suffice it to say it was the most enjoyable one I ever had. Not that I am greatly given to driving with women. She talked a great deal, and I know that I said lots of things I had no intention of saying.

We drove down-town, made two stops, then went back up-town, and when we finally reached the office it was after two o'clock.

The boss was in a towering rage and the staff in a great state of excitement, while through the sanctum door I saw the faces of Fuller, Gordon, Hancock, and Finlay.

"Walton!" thundered the old man, "what the devil kept you so long?"

As usual, Miss Debbs floated over to him.

"Please, Mr. Worthington, it was all my fault."

"I am quite aware of that fact, thank you," replied the boss. "We sent for you, Miss Debbs, to give us an explanation of the swindle you have been perpetrating in town."

"Swindle? Mr. Worthington, you—" and Miss Debbs opened her eyes in surprise.

"I said swindle; but fraud or graft or anything else will do as well. You didn't think you could work such a game on a lot of business men without being found out, did you? You see, I have all your accusers here, Miss Debbs."

And he pointed to the group in the doorway.

"I—I don't understand," replied Miss Debbs falteringly.

"You don't, eh? Perhaps I can explain. You applied for work and I gave you a position, did I not?"

"Yes, sir."

"And previous to coming here you worked for these gentlemen at various times, did you not?"

Miss Debbs looked at them and hung her head. "And you left them to get married, did you not? Just as you left here *to get married.*"

Miss Debbs bowed her head.

"And on the strength of your marriage I gave you two hundred dollars, and these gentlemen gave you anywhere from one hundred to a hundred and fifty; besides that, you got presents from every one in the office. Now we find you had no intention of getting married. In fact, you never got married—"

"But — but I did, Mr. Worthington," Miss Debbs interrupted.

"Indeed! And pray may I inquire as to who was the lucky *man?*"

The boss was in fine sarcastic mood.

Miss Debbs hung her head and blushed very prettily.

"Mr.—Mr. Walton, sir—we were married on our way here. If you please, sir, that is what delayed us."

We bowed to the staff.

A LIFE'S SPECULATIONS.

When a wee child I used to wonder why
The bright stars fell not from the bending sky,
For I no sky-line saw to hold them by.
When told of angels up beyond the blue,
I used to wonder if the winged crew
Flew races when they'd nothing else to do.

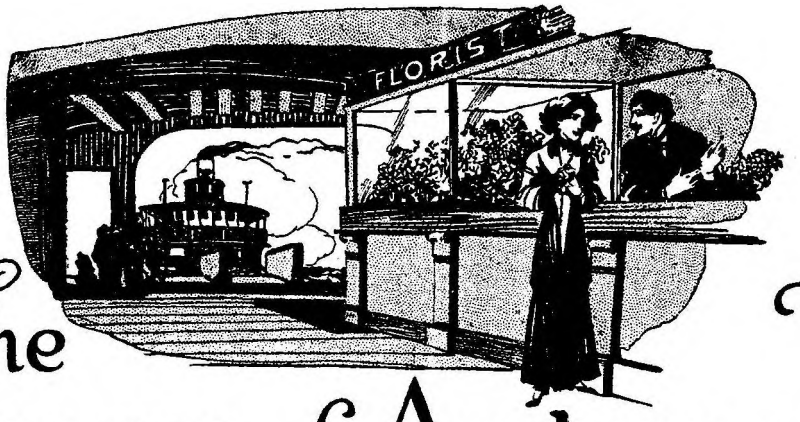
A little later, as around I played,
And saw that young girls were so frail and 'fraid,
I wondered why on earth a maid was made.
No mortal use the timid things could be
That a philosopher of six could see—
So great a mystery was the sex to me.

A few years more, when youth's expansive flame
Put my philosophy of six to shame,
A greater mystery the sex became.
Next into college I for knowledge went
And wondered at the time so vainly spent—
Four years for learning things not worth a cent!

A year of lounging in that sacred place,
Then round the world to see the human race
I wandered, and my spirit grew apace.
More than seven marvels had the world for me,
And this the greatest: why the poor should be
Slaves of the rich men when they might be free.

But having had sufficient time to cool
My fancy in this tough world's roughest school
I give up life's conundrums as a rule.
Yet such is habit—howsoe'er we try—
The other day I fell to wondering why
In Yankee taverns they serve cheese with pie.

Henry W. Austin.



The Rescue of Andromeda

By Charles Carey

SHE came to the ferry-house every morning to take the eight o'clock boat—a slender, little wisp of a girl with gray, Irish eyes and a determination to the lift of her chin that seemed too strong for so fragile a creature. One thought somehow of an ant struggling to carry off a piece of bread fifty times its size, of an automobile engine trying to drive an ocean liner.

Constantin noticed her first as she lingered one day before his stall wistfully eying the banked-up color of a mass of pink chrysanthemums marked "ten cents apiece."

She fumbled a moment in her purse, then, evidently calculating the cost of car fare and kindred necessities, breathed a sigh and half turned away. Constantin recognized that she was not a customer.

Ordinarily that would have dissolved for him all further interest in her; but now he yielded to a sudden rash impulse of altruism. Constantin's Greek soul could understand the unsatisfied yearning for beauty; still he did not entirely forget the instincts of commercialism.

Stooping hastily under the counter, he picked up a big American Beauty rose which had broken off from its long stem, and which he had intended to wire for bargain custom later in the day.

"Here, lady!" He held it up. "I geev' you a present!"

She hesitated uncertainly, then, observing his boyish eagerness and the friendly clash of his white teeth, accepted the offering.

"Oh, thank you!" She smiled dazzlingly. "It is lovely. My children will be delighted."

A shadow flecked for a moment Constantin's satisfaction in his generous deed. He began to regret the rose, which, overblown, could have been disposed of to a profit.

"Ah! You married, eh?" he questioned coldly. "You got kids?"

"Oh, no," she cried, a swift blush dyeing her cheek. "You don't understand. I was speaking of the children at my school. I teach a kindergarten over on Staten Island."

Constantin's teeth flashed once more like the sunlight coming from behind a cloud. He dived under the counter for a spray of asparagus fern, only slightly damaged, to supplement his previous gift, and nodded appreciatively as she twisted it and the rose into a nosegay and pinned them on the front of her gray jacket.

The incident ended there, however, for just then the doors were thrown open to the slip, and the waiting crowd made its usual wild stampede for the boat, sweeping along the little schoolma'am in its surge.

But as the big doors swallowed her up she turned to smile again and wave her hand in good-by; and Constantin remained so preoccupied for ten minutes thereafter that he actually gave thirteen carnations for a dozen to one of the chaffering women it was his especial delight to circumvent.

After that it became the custom with Constantin to watch every morning for the little gray-jacketed figure, and, despite the fact that Saturday and Sunday were his two best business days, he now grew to regard their weekly return with gloom and disaffection because on those two mornings she stayed at home.

He made it his habit, too, always to have ready for presentation to her a little bouquet of damaged flowers; and if occasionally a dewy La France bud or a spray of lilies-of-the-valley crept in, which under no interpretation could be classed as culls or seconds, he would shrug an impatient shoulder at the chidings of prudence.

"I guess I can be a good sport sometimes, maybee," he would mutter. "Beside', eef I work off the bum stuff on my nex' customer, w'at ees the diff'?"

The schoolmistress, on her side, also learned to look forward to the wait in the ferry-house as a pleasant episode of her daily trip, never in her innocence and unconscious feeling of racial superiority ascribing any more serious motive than that of simple kindliness to the attentions of the dark-eyed son of Hellas.

So they glided into a sort of intimacy; and as a good deal can be said in a conversational interchange of ten or twelve minutes a day, if it extends over a period of several months, they came eventually to know all that was to be known about one another.

The girl, Constantin learned, was not filling a regular city position as kindergartner, but, owing to her inexperience and lack of normal school training, had been compelled to take a poorly paid place in a small Staten Island *crèche*, or day nursery—the half-baked charitable project of a group of fashionable women who met their promised subscriptions to the institution somewhat irregularly according to the status of their bridge debts.

Consequently, as she confessed, even the pitiful stipend that she earned was often in arrears, and frequently she was put to dire shifts to buy her necessary commutation ticket and provide for her room rent.

Still, with that insistence on a residence in Manhattan which becomes with so many people almost an obsession, she clung stubbornly to her stuffy hall bedroom on the upper West Side, and took the long journey by ferry and subway twice a day, rather than seek the cheaper and more convenient accommodations of the island.

She had to arise every morning with the cold, gray dawn in order to reach her work in time; her breakfast, when she could crowd it in, was a glass of milk and a cracker taken hastily from her dresser while she did her hair; for luncheon she got along with a couple of raw eggs obtained from a woman near the *crèche* who kept chickens; and at night, on her return to the city, she was so tired that she could do little else than tumble into bed.

In short, her tale was one of a distressful struggle against overwhelming odds, with defeat and shipwreck only too plainly on the cards whenever her valiant spirit should succumb to undermined health and strength.

The florist, on the other hand, had ambitions and an outlook. He was not like these other low-down Greeks she saw around, he proudly averred; he had education, having studied two years at the college in Athens.

Moreover, he was a property owner in his own country, he boasted, referring somewhat grandiosely to an inheritance he possessed of two olive orchards, although neglecting to state that the size of both put together was hardly more than that of a New York City back yard.

Also, he had prospered since coming to America, and now had in view the purchase of a flower-shop up-town and a candy-stand at Coney Island.

"Eef I got married, I make eet pay beeg," he assured her with a slantwise glance from his black eyes. "My wife she could tend to the candy place in the season, w'ile I hustle in town weeth the flowers."

Failing these personal topics, he would descant to her on the beauties of his country, to which he hoped some day to return.

"Come, I weel tell you—w'at you call eet?—a fairy tale of my people," he would say, having learned that his rendition of the old Homeric myths and legends was always able to coax a smile to her lips; and then he would recite how Paris, "he got a mash on theese Helen and run off weeth her, same as that chauffeur do weeth millionaire's wife I see about in paper the other day"; or how Ulysses had traveled around in his "steamboat" on his way back from "that beeg scrap at Troy."

His favorite narrative, however, was of the adventures of Perseus, who evidently stood chief with him among all the demigods and heroes.

"Ah, he was a wise guy, that Perseus!" He would wag his head. "Listen, how he got heem hees wife. There was, you mus' understand, a beeg animal, like that brontosaurus they got up to the Museum Nachel'istry, I guess; and theese animal he come up out of the sea every little w'ile and tear up the country. So, the keeng he make a bargain and he say to that animal, eef 'you don't come no more I geev' you my daughter, Andromeda, to eat up."

"'Sure,' say the animal. 'I seen that daughter of yours, and she just the same as a ripe peach. Chain her up on the seashore and I come get her some day w'en I feel hungry.'

"Well, the keeng did eet to save hees country, but he feel awful sorry, and he offer a thousand dollars and the Lizzie to w'atever young mans keel that old brontosaurus 'fore 'w'at he eats her up.

"The young mans all scared, though, 'cause they know no one got no license to fight that beast, no more than you have to be w'ite hope and challenge that Jack Johnson; so they all stand back and say: 'Let George do eet.'

"Then Perseus, he have bright thoughts. He notice that brontosaurus have eyes like a fish w'at look straight ahead and sideways, but not up. So he tell the keeng, 'I'll be the goat,' and he go to hees uncle, Hermes, w'at had that Glenn Curtiss skinned to a finish.

"'Uncle,' he say, 'lend me them aeroplane slippers of yours, please. I want to fly some myself.'

"Hermes, he keeck and shake his head, no. He say: 'Boy, you sure fall into one of them holes in the air, and then your mother blame me.' And he wouldn't let heem have them aeroplane slippers.

"But Perseus watch hees chance w'en Hermes ees asleep, and he swipe them slippers and he fly off to the seashore in them same as a bird.

"Just as he got there up comes old brontosaurus for Andromeda; but Perseus fly down from above w'ere brontosaurus can't see heem, and stick in hees sword and chop off the brontosaurus's head. So he win the thousan-dollar purse and the girl, and they get married."

But the time came, as the days grew more languorous, and spring lapsed into summer, that the schoolmistress smiled but faintly at Constantin's stories. Her formerly brisk step lagged now when she came to the

ferry-house, and her cheek had lost all its color. Indeed, she looked like nothing so much as a drooping lily.

"Eet ees that dam' school w'at ees keeling her!" cursed Constantin, and to his mind the *crèche* became the monster of his favorite fable.

"I wonder w'at that Perseus would do to those school?" he speculated. "I bet he scheme out a way to feex eet."

Then one morning his way suddenly became clear. She told him as she came to the stall that day that she did not expect to return at her usual hour in the afternoon; she had a number of reports to make up, it seemed, and would be detained until late in the evening.

At Constantin's hand lay the morning paper, in which he had just been interestedly perusing a lurid account of the exploits of "Jakey, the Firebug," a wholesale incendiary, whom the authorities after a long chase had finally succeeded in rounding up. The flaring head-lines caught his eye now and gave him an inspiration.

Like Perseus, and with the craft always so dear to the Greek heart, he would at one stroke wipe out of existence the monster threatening his Andromeda, and at the same time by his prowess win the lady.

All that day he pondered the details, and by six o'clock when business was over had his plan perfected. Balancing his cash and closing up the stand, he thrust a bottle of kerosene in his pocket and started for the island.

The situation of the school, he discovered when he reached it, could not have been improved for his purpose. It was a small frame structure to itself, detached from all the other buildings of the institution and thickly surrounded by trees and shrubbery.

Scouting around through this, Constantin could see through the windows the little kindergartner bending over her desk, still engrossed in her wearisome task. The spectacle of her pale fatigue gave the last necessary courage.

Noiselessly he proceeded to barricade the door so as to shut her off from escape until he should rescue her and win her devotion—and then she'd marry him! Then, stealing around the building, he built under each window and at the four corners a heap of dry wood and tinder and paper, liberally drenched with the kerosene. There should be no mistake about the annihilation of the monster.

But before actually setting the match which would emancipate his charmer an approaching step along the path to the school alarmed, terrified him, and he dodged back into the bushes to wait until the wayfarer should pass. But the step did not turn off; instead, it came nearer, and at last the stalwart form of a young man emerged from the dusk and made directly for the door.

"What the—" Constantin heard him mutter as he paused in evident bewilderment before the barricade. "What does this mean?"

The stranger did not wait long, though, to find out. With a sweep or two of his strong arm he sent Constantin's sticks and wedges flying, and, bursting open the door, called excitedly:

"Estelle! Estelle! Are you there?"

She came forward in answer to the summons, and with a little, weary gesture of surrender permitted herself to be gathered in the stranger's arms.

"This is the end!" Constantin heard him grumbling. "You've got to stop this slaving away here, sweetheart, and let me take care of you. It's not going to be next month, either, as you said. I intend to marry you to-morrow and take you away for a good long rest."

Constantin sneaked back to the rear of the building and began rapidly dispersing all traces of the pyres he had made.

"I don't theenk I weel take that candy-stand at Coney Island," he observed gloomily. "One store ees all a man can tend to by heemself."

A Rabbit Ragout

by I. F. Ferris

AFTER a supper consisting only of thin gruel, Red Libby sat glowering at poor little Blitz as though holding him responsible for our plight. Frequent sups from his bottle served to increase his resentment, and finally he staggered to his feet and made for the little man crouched in front of the fire.

"I bin thinkin' about you for some time, you little shrimp!" roared Red, towering over the other. "You bin loafin' around here, eatin' our grub, and never even splittin' a bit o' firewood. It's time you did something! I'm hungry, I am; now, there's my cap. You just make a rabbit come out'n that as you did a couple of weeks or so ago, so's we can have some stew, or, by gorry, I'll wring the neck off'n you!"

What freak of wanderlust or ill luck had brought the conjuror into our Maine logging-camp at the start of the season we were never able to discover.

He had turned up one afternoon from nowhere, and announcing himself as Professor Blitzendorf, a former partner of Hermann the Great, had stated that he had come to make us a visit. His title was entirely too long and too complicated for any one in the camp to attempt, and it soon became shortened to Blitz, with which he seemed quite content.

Sandy McHugh, whose Scotch name in no way signified his parentage—he being a French-Canadian who had strayed across the line—announced it as his firm belief that Blitz had really been the public performer that he claimed.

"I t'ink I ban see her in vaud'ville to Montreal," asserted Sandy, getting his genders mixed in his earnestness. "I ban sure she ban on de stage las' year dis time, but I t'ink she escape, maybe."

The first few nights Blitz had been the most respected member of the community. He mystified us with his tricks performed with the greasy, tattered pack of cards which the camp owned; and on one occasion he was greeted with storms of applause when he borrowed a huge coonskin cap from Red Libby and, after numerous fantastic passes, produced from its recesses a jumping, wriggling rabbit.

To be sure, a little bunny had been lurking about camp for some days, picking up such scraps as might fall

to the ground at meal-times, but no one had ever been able to get near him; and the very fact that Blitz had been able to capture it without the use of firearms, and to secrete it within Red's cap, only to fish it out again at the proper time, was enough to convince Red that the little man's powers were indeed supernatural.

After that Blitz took it for granted that his welcome was interminable. He made himself entirely at home, ate voraciously, and declined politely but firmly all suggestions that he might take a hand with an ax. He actually produced a razor from one of his pockets and shaved every morning, a procedure that was strictly tabooed by the rest of the camp.

In fact, the conjurer had taken on quite a jaunty aspect compared with his appearance when he first arrived. His little black string tie was always adjusted to a nicety, his hands were the only pair in camp that were not stained with pine pitch, and he even devised some way of blackening his shoes with the charred ends of the firewood.

We were growing just a little bit tired of him when the first big snowstorm appeared and hemmed us in. The worst of it was that the logging magnate who directed our destinies had sent us off, in the first place, with only a moderate amount of provisions, intending to forward the regular winter's supplies before the roads were blocked.

Now they were blocked in earnest, we were running short of eatables, and it might be a week or more before a team could break through with its load. The one who stormed most at this condition of affairs was Red Libby, whose six feet four inches of manhood demanded four square meals a day.

And Red, as was his wont when disgruntled, had produced from some secret hiding-place his personal stock of whisky. We knew from experience that when Red got short of fodder and long on whisky that it was apt to result in trouble.

He was reputed to have killed his man once in a drunken brawl in New Brunswick; and it was said to have been the fact that Red was the most efficient foreman known to any lumber trust that, aided by influence, resulted in his release on parole after he had languished in jail all summer.

Blitz rose to his feet, frightened, white-faced and shivering, and faced the giant raging in wrath before him. He tried to speak, but the words he stuttered out were disconnected and unintelligible.

"None of yer heathen gibberish!" yelled Red. "You can't cast no spell over me with your devilish chatter. It's up to you to make good, and make good now."

In vain the little man tried to explain that he was not in good shape for conjuring that evening; in vain the others tried to dissuade Red from his intention to wreak his passion on the shivering culprit unless he produced a rabbit from the coonskin cap which he held in his trembling hands, turning it this way and that.

One might as well try to move a hundred-foot pine as to move Red when his obstinacy was aroused. He kept crowding closer and closer to Blitz as he repeated his demands, the other retreating step by step, expostulating, begging, pleading.

"You won't do it, hey?" growled Red, as they brought up against the side of the shack. "Then I'll put you out of the way right now!"

As he spoke he whipped a piece of rope from behind him and swung it about the neck of his victim, pulling it taut with a vicious jerk that brought a yelp from Blitz like the squeak of a mouse when it feels the claws of a cat.

"By Tam! She ban goin' hang him!" muttered Sandy McHugh. "*Nom du petit chien*, she mus' not dat!" and Sandy threw himself on Red's shoulders and clasped his arms around his neck.

It took only a moment for the woods giant to shake him off, but the moment was enough to make the rest realize that Red's mood was dangerous, and they projected themselves into the fray, shouldering their way in between Red and the white-faced Blitz.

But Red kept fast hold of the rope, and stuck to his purpose as firmly as though it was the one thought in his mind. It was Sandy who at length persuaded him to defer the execution of the victim until the morning, hoping that by that time his fury might have diminished somewhat.

But Red only consented to this on the condition that Blitz remained bound through the night, and he personally tied the rope around the little man, lashing him to one of the bunks and placing the coonskin cap in his pinioned hands.

The little crew of men lapsed into silence. One by one they dozed off into sleep, all but Sandy and Red. Even Blitz, exhausted by the struggle and his fright, dropped his head on his bound hands and fell into slumber.

But across from him sat Red Libby, his eyes glaring like a cat's in the flickering light of the dying fire, his hand raising the bottle to his lips at intervals, as he watched his victim crouched in the dusk of the shadows.

And from the corner where Sandy McHugh lay curled up in his blankets like a ground hog in his hole, a pair of bright eyes watched every movement of the giant lumberman.

It would not do to try and set the little conjuror free. Red, unlike most men, was a light sleeper when saturated with whisky. It would make too much noise to try to untie the victim and get him out of the shack, and once outside there was no refuge for him except death in the snow-banks of the woods.

Sandy's little ferret eyes kept watching, and Sandy's wiry figure kept moving imperceptibly and noiselessly, until when at last Red's big head drooped on his breast as he sat holding the end of the rope in his hands, Sandy was within a foot of the door of the shack.

Very, very slowly the Canuck rose to his feet; noiselessly he picked up a pair of snow-shoes from the floor; without a sound he drew open the shack door inch by inch until he could squeeze through to the outside. The blast of cold air caused Red to stir and half awaken; then, feeling the end of the rope still within his fingers, he dozed off again.

Just before the cold light of the winter dawn came filtering through the oiled paper window-panes of the single window, the door opened again noiselessly, and Sandy slipped in and wormed his way back into his corner, passing by the sleeping Blitz and pausing just a moment as he passed.

A ray of light from the rising sun smote Red Libby on the face, and he woke with a roar that shook the ceiling of the shack. Blitz started up in affright, only to fall helplessly to the floor, bound by his ropes.

"Now, ye little devil," Red yelled, "unless your Satan and his imps have helped ye out, ye swing to hell now! See if your witchcraft will save yer neck!" and he gave a twitch to the rope.

"*Mais non!*" cried Sandy. "She cannot de trick do unless she de pass make. She mus' de hands untied have!"

Grudgingly Red consented, and Sandy helped the trembling Blitz to his feet and thrust into his numbed hands the coonskin cap. "Now mak' de pass," he ordered; "mak' de pass over de *chapeau!*"

As if in a dream Blitz did as ordered, waving his hands back and forth in the motions that he used in his card tricks to distract our attention. "Mak' de incantation!" ordered Sandy, and Blitz complied, his lips moving with words that seemed very like a prayer.

"Now," cried Sandy, "let us de *chapeau* see; maybe she have a rabbit made."

He placed one hand on each of the

conjurer's, guiding them to the brim of the cap, while Red stood with a supercilious sneer on his face, his murderous eyes fixed on the little man's countenance with a glare like an angry beast before it springs.

No one saw the knife-blade open in Sandy's hand, as in apparently helping Blitz to explore the cap he thrust his own hand inside. The cap wriggled queerly a moment, and then out jumped a little brown hare, which in its fright landed square in Red Libby's face.

"The devil himself!" roared the giant, scared into soberness, and with one bound he wrenched open the shack door and ran out into the open as if all the imps of the nether world were after him, while Blitz stood staring stupidly at the result of his conjuring, his eyes starting out of his head with astonishment.

When the load of much-desired provisions appeared at noon the conjurer was bundled up in the sled and sent back to Bangor, a trip that he seemed quite willing to make; and he did not even leave a farewell for Red, who was still roaming the woods, and who, we knew, after his fright had spent itself, would return in time, sobered and ashamed.

Not until the sled and the ox-team which drew it had been lost to sight among the pines did Sandy reveal his share in the escape.

Then he chuckled.

"Me, *mais,* but I am one grand conjurer," he laughed. "Yes'day I get ze grand hunger, an' I mak' de trap for de rabbit out'n de clear, 'way back in de woods where de snow she no fall t'rough de tree so very mooch. Las' night I go. *Hélas!* Ze trap he is empty! But I watch an' watch from de cover of de pines until ze leetle wee rabbit she come, hop, hop, hop, into my trip. Zen I catch her wiz my bare hands. *Sacré!* but she bite.

"But I tie heem legs wiz a bit of string an' put her in zee cap, an' w'en ze Blitz, she open ze *chapeau, Sapristi!* I cut de string. Ah, she will make one good ragout, zat rabbit; vat you zink?"

CLARINDA'S FAN.

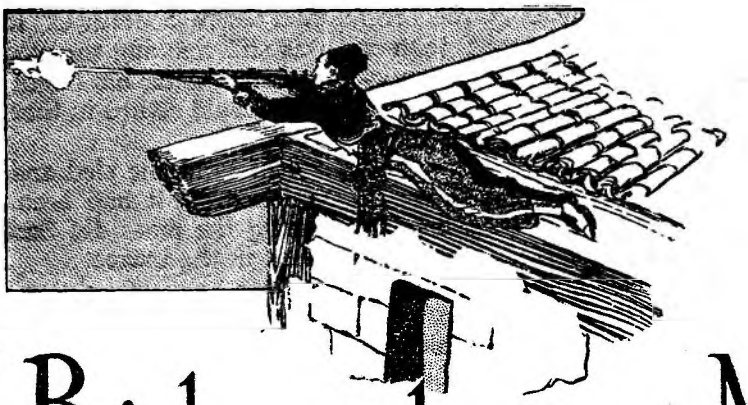
A DAINTY thing of silk and lace,
Of feathers and of paint;
Held often to her laughing face
When I assume the saint.

Too dainty far to mix with these
Old pipes, cigars, and books
Of bachelordom—rare life of ease,
Rare friends, rare wines, rare cooks.

'Twill smell of stale tobacco-smoke
Ere many days, I fear;
And hear full many a rattling joke—
And feel perhaps a tear.

Why is it here? Alas, for me!
I broke it at the ball.
"Apologize—repair it!" See?
Five dollars gone. That's all.

Elliott E. Shaw.



The Bishop who was Not

by H. Bedford-Jones

PERSONALLY, I detest these introductions; but in this case, as you will see, it is necessary. I had often noticed the man in the Greek café—an old, meager chap with snowy goatee, sunken eyes, and the general look of a wreck of fortune, though he was always neat enough.

On this particular evening he was at my table alone. I nodded to him, flung down my gloves, and a book I had with me—the official estimate of the Régiments Étrangers. As I sent Christoff for *pilafe* and *baklava*, the old man's face suddenly broke into a singularly winning smile; he leaned over and gently touched the little book.

"May I, if you please?"

"Certainly," and I handed it to him. For perhaps fifteen minutes he pored over it, and not until our *café Turkiko* had been brought did he look up, a sudden new life in his faded eyes. He held out the book, open.

"Just glance over that, and that."

I read the two passages and looked up, half comprehending. He smiled again, and this is the story that he told me. I took shorthand notes on my cuff below the table, so that I managed to keep some of his phraseology. This is the story he told:

It is good to find some one in this city who is interested in such things, sir. I was one of Captain Danjou's sixty-five, and one of the five left after we held two thousand Mexicans all day; but it is not of that I would speak. You read the other passage? *Bien!* It is perfectly true, although but a scrap of it is given there.

During the early part of that terrible struggle in Mexico, out of which only the Legion came with honor, I was a private of the first rank in the second company of the First Regiment. I am an Englishman — *mais n'importe*. We were sent out with a mixed battalion to occupy a fairly large town up in the hills, and, if you remember, every effort was being made to conciliate the Mexicans to our rule, which proved to be a bad thing for Maximilian in the end.

Well, we took the town easily enough after a little sniping, but the poor devils of Mexicanos were imbued with the idea that we were all savages and idolaters. There was a large monastery outside of town, which shut its gates and refused to communicate with us. At that time my chum was a splendid chap called Victor, an Alsatian. Of course I knew nothing about his past, but we stuck together for three years until he left the service.

Pauvre Légion! We were wild to raid the monastery and the fondas; and our poor general, that first day in the town, nearly went crazy until he hit upon the excellent idea of placing us on guard over the *other* troops. Victor and I were posted at the door of the church, when our general and Ducroix, our own company captain, approached.

"Ducroix," said the former anxiously, biting his mustache, "we're in a devil of a fix here. Everything is shut up and the people mortally afraid. How would it be if we held a parade celebration of high mass to show them we are good Christians?"

"Very good, *mon général*," and *le vieux* — the "old man" — turned to me. "Smith, rout out that *calotin* of a curé and put him to work. Victor, take a dozen men and decorate the church with palms and flowers from those gardens. Sergeant Bern, you will have the drummers and buglers ready for the salute at the elevation of the Host."

Well, the men were drawn up in the square, while our battalion did the hard work, as usual. I went for the curé, only to find that he had skipped out of town before the fight, which I reported to the general.

"*Diable!*" he growled. "Colonel Beauvau, ride out to that monastery and get a monk if you can. *Vite!*"

The colonel obeyed, while we all remained on parade. Everything was ready except the celebrant, the balconies and house-tops crowded with curious and frightened people. Beauvau came back alone, swearing at the monks, and the general was just giving the order to break ranks when Victor stepped out and saluted Ducroix.

"Well?" snapped *le vieux*.

"It occurred to me, *mon capitaine*," spoke up Victor coolly, "that if you cannot find a priest to celebrate mass, you might use me for that purpose."

Every one within hearing grinned, wondering if Victor would get the *cra-paudine* for such a joke. The general pushed past Ducroix, his eyes snapping with rage.

"What does this mean? Are you mad?"

"No, *mon général*," and Victor remained as calm as ever. "I happened to remember that I was a bishop when I entered the Legion, and have not yet been unfrocked, to my knowledge."

You can imagine the gasp that passed down the files as the word ran back. The little group of officers stared in perplexity; in those times even a general hesitated to interfere with men of the Legion, so that it was our captain who stepped forward.

"Come with me, *mon enfant*." He took Victor by the arm and they vanished in the church like brothers. Five minutes and Ducroix returned.

"We can proceed with the mass, general. The bishop is now being vested in the sacristry."

Do not smile, my friend. Ah, I assure you that there was nothing of sacrilege, of jest, that day! It was terrible to us who knew Victor and ourselves. Do not imagine that men, because they reck little of life, reck little of God also.

We, who had been pleading to raid the monastery above the town, shed more than one tear that moment when our comrade blessed us. I think it was more sacred to us than anything else could have been.

Eh bien, that is the true story of the little paragraph you read in the book here. Now comes the story that is not in the book. You are in no hurry? Allow me to order more coffee—or let us take mavrodaphne.

Now, in the months that followed Victor and I grew closer than ever—*corps et chemise,* as we used to say. But never did I or any other man mention that high mass to him; and, although the story spread through the army, men knew better than to comment on such things. If you remember, we left two thousand of the Legion dead in Mexico, so you can see

how we won our sergeant's gold chevron before three months. And then the storm burst.

We were transferred to the third company together as sergeants. One day I received orders from Captain Danjou to select what men I liked and ride north to a little place named Altos del Rey. A company of zouaves was stationed there, and all our troops were being concentrated; I was to order the zouaves in with all haste, as even then the hills between us were filling with the rebels. It was a ticklish job, my friend.

I selected Victor, five stalwart Bavarians, and our Prussian adjutant, Schmidt—you know, my friend, our adjutants were not like those in the British army, for they were not even commissioned officers. The eight of us cantered off through the hills one bright sunrise, trusting to reach Altos del Rey by night.

No one dreamed that the crisis was so near. *Nom d'un pipe!* What fighters they were, those Mexicans! We came to no town until two in the afternoon; as we had brought no rations, we were hungry—and thirsty.

When we rode into a village, with Altos del Rey only ten miles ahead, we halted to improve the shining moments of liberty. At one end of the village, by a little mountain stream, stood a small mill, if I remember rightly, of adobe.

I stayed with the horses while the others foraged. We had barely been in the place five minutes, and Ernheim, one of the Bavarians, was just coming out of the *fonda* with a ham and a jug of meal, when I heard a crack. Ernheim hiccuped and went down with a bullet through his jugular.

A moment later the others were in the saddle, Victor catching up the ham as he ran. From the houses around, from the ends of the street, and from the hill slopes ahead came smoke and bullets; we were caught in a perfect ambuscade, and I saw instantly that the mill offered our only hope.

We rode through the men ahead of us, shooting them down like dogs; but as we did so my horse went down, and Bauer, another Bavarian, was shot through the heart. A moment after, all of us wounded, we reached that adobe mill and got the gates together. Then began a terrible battle — six against a hundred.

We had brought carbines and revolvers, being on special duty, though Schmidt wore a sword as adjutant. The rebels were irregulars, guerrillas of the hills, and braver men I have never met—no, not in the Legion itself.

Four times did they charge us across the open, and each time we shattered them before they reached the gates; Schultz, another of the Bavarians who had been drilled through the abdomen, sat against the wall and loaded for us as we shot.

It was nothing but a little mud tower, and we were on the roof, with our horses in the patio below. When we had driven them back for the fourth time they settled down and opened a dropping fire on us from the hill above and the nearer houses of the village. As there was no ammunition to waste, we put Victor on guard and polished off the ham and a jug of mescal that Schmidt had clung to. A few moments later Schultz called faintly to Victor.

"*Mon camarade,*" murmured the blond Bavarian, handsome as Michelangelo's Jove, "I'm going. I fear God, Victor—give me absolution—in heaven's name!"

Victor looked down at him a moment, holding his hand, the tears running down his bronzed cheeks. We had all loved the big fellow dearly—he was a baron, I believe.

"I—I—God help me!" cried poor Victor, going to his knees. "I will hear you."

We moved away to the parapet, while the bullets slumped into the mud walls, sending hard chips flickering all around.

Schultz died happily. At least I had the satisfaction of potting two of

the rebel leaders before he passed—I remember thinking savagely that he would not travel the last trail alone. *Hélas!* At such times, my friend, I fear we hark back to our Viking blood most shamefully!

Schmidt, Victor and I, Bauer and Danjou held a council of war under the parapet. We were all slightly wounded from that first terrific storm of bullets, but none of us seriously.

"No use trying to ride through them," said I. Schmidt grinned as the man at whom I had fired crumpled up and hung half over the parapet of the nearest house.

"No, that would be madness," he added. "When night comes one of us might slip through, leading his horse silently as far as he could. We might get the Zouaves that way."

"And in the mean time they'll burst in," said Victor quietly. "*Tiens!* No matter if they do, Smith! There is only the one narrow stairs up here to the roof; one or two could hold that against an army, and they can't burn the place down."

"Right," I nodded. Schmidt forestalled us all by claiming the honor of messenger, which perforce I awarded him. We said no more, but confined our attention exclusively to the enemy.

Twice more before sundown they tried to rush us after furious bursts of firing that ripped the adobe parapet to shreds, but without harming us; and twice we drove them back, making every shot count. It was dead sure that with nightfall they would attempt to finish matters, though for the present we stopped their gradual closing in.

As the sun hung on the western hills I saw Schmidt lay down his carbine and come to Victor. The latter went white beneath his bronze.

"I am not of your religion or any other, *mon vieux*," said the Prussian softly. "But there is something — I do not know—I feel that your blessing should go with me."

Poor Victor! I do not know what lay behind his tortured face, but one can imagine many things. At the light which crept into his reckless eyes I realized that before long I would make a similar request myself—though God knows I had as little religion as any Légionnaire in those days. So Victor and Schmidt moved away and talked together.

Slowly the daylight faded out and the little puffs of smoke gradually changed to splashes of flame from village and hill, which began to creep nearer. Danjou went cursing to the roof with a slug through his shoulder.

"Better be off, Schmidt," I said. He nodded, unslung his cartridge-box, caught up his revolver, and was gone. We had decided that it was of little use to keep the gates shut below.

Once the rebels got up to us our best chance was to hold the narrow stairway that opened out on the roof, for it would only pass one man at a time and was quite steep.

We heard the creak of the gates, and nothing more. We were sparing of our ammunition now, and Victor came up to me.

"I am going to try it also," he said softly, but not so softly that Danjou did not hear. The man ceased his cursing and dragged himself over to us.

"Victor," he said, settling himself comfortably near the stairway, "we are caught like rats—"

"*Touché!*" sang out Bauer from the other side, and joined us, tying up a shattered right elbow. Danjou continued calmly:

"We're a bad bunch, *camarades*, so no use crying over spilled milk. Schmidt won't get through, and you're a fool to try it, Victor. But before you go, *mon gars*' — well, you understand. In the daytime it's nothing; but now, with the darkness all around and *le bon Dieu* touching you on the shoulder—why, things change."

"*Oui*, things change!" echoed Bauer. At the instant there came a sudden burst of yells, shots, and more yells; then silence, and Victor's voice broke the starlit night like a bell.

"That was Schmidt — he felt that he would go down."

I am not going to tell you, my friend, what Victor said to us there. That was a moment that can come to a man but once in all his life, and you would not understand, for the circumstances made profane things seem sacred to us. We thought we would all die that hour, and our reserve was swept aside.

Well, the dropping fire was creeping nearer, and presently Victor was gone. I had been raked across the brow — here, where you see this light scar — and we got all the carbines and pistols together, sat down comfortably against the parapet, and waited.

A second burst of yells and shots thrilled up across the night, and almost with it there came a rush at the gates below. A moment later the little mill was filled with men, and the first appeared on the stairs.

I caught him amidships with my carbine. Danjou dropped the man behind him, and their fall must have swept the rest down the stairs. They tried it again, but our spare carbines and revolvers accounted for four more before they gave it up and crowded back into the darkness beneath. Then came muffled roars from below, Danjou crumpled up dead, and bullets ripped through the adobe and thatch roofing.

"Lie on the parapet!" I yelled to Bauer, and he understood. We got to the parapet, which was four feet high and a foot wide, and lay down side by side. Bauer held his pistol in his unhurt left hand, and when the firing ceased and they made another rush on the stairs we gave them such a hot reception that they broke back, leaving the stairway choked with dead and wounded men.

Fortunately, there was nothing combustible about the old mill. After shooting through the roof again they tried still another rush and uttered yells of surprise and dismay when our bullets greeted them once more.

There was nothing they could do; unless our ammunition gave out we could hold that place indefinitely — until with the daylight they could pick us off the parapet from the hillside.

"Come over here, Smith!" exclaimed Bauer suddenly. "There's a cursed flea biting me and I can't get at it with my good hand for fear of rolling off."

Occasional shots were still coming through the roof, so I crawled over and scratched his leg, laughing at the nerve of the man. Hour after hour we lay there, waiting for the dawn to end—hungry, cold, and thirsty.

"Poor Victor!" said my comrade. "I wonder if we'll meet him in hell, Smith?"

"I trust so," I replied with a hard laugh. "We'll certainly meet plenty of the legion there."

Well, my two or three little scratches sent me off into a delirious raving after a bit. I remember Bauer holding me on the parapet, his legs wrapped about my neck desperately, while he banged away at the stairs; they must have rushed again and gone down under his single fire.

It was nearly dawn when I came around; Bauer had me down on the flat roof, careless of bullets, and was pouring mescal into me until I choked to life.

"Buck up," he ordered, shoving a carbine into my hand. "It's nearly dawn, so we might as well pay the score like Légionnaires. *Vive la Légion! Vive la France!*"

I imagine that we were both a bit off our heads, for we yelled like madmen until we were hoarse. The dawn was creeping over the hills when the first bullets began tearing up through the ceiling.

For the first time we thought to fire back in the same fashion, and after a fusillade of shots from our revolvers Bauer suggested that we go down the stairs and die fighting like men. Mescal is not good on empty stomachs.

We started down the stairs arm in arm into a reek of powder-smoke. I

released Baer's arm so he could shoot, and to our surprise we cleaned out the one room below in a moment — the Mexicans taking us for devils incarnate!

We put after them, out through the gates into the open—and at the precise moment when we should have been potted like rabbits a wild yell went up from the curving road ahead, and toward us came running the sturdy little zouaves, shooting as they ran.

Yes, my friend, it was Victor. He had got through safe—dashed through the rebels, though his horse was badly wounded, and died a mile farther on. That delayed him, and when he reached Altos del Rey the zouaves swarmed out to the rescue within ten minutes, barely reaching us at dawn.

What became of him? Oh, he was decorated for that—and by Maximilian himself, mind you. But perhaps it was because the emperor heard about the famous high mass; they said he laughed over it—poor fellow, he had little enough laughter in Mexico! And I? *Mais non!* Later it was, under Bazaine, when we let them annihilate us before Orleans and so saved the army, that they gave me this.

And the old man very lightly and reverently touched a tiny red ribbon in his buttonhole as he pushed back his chair and bowed to me. But I sat there for long, thinking many things.

IN THE GARDEN.

THERE'S a light in the window: the curtains half drawn
Let a golden ray fall on the sweet-scented lawn;
And I see now and then at the window a face
Of the dear little angel who lends to the place
All the charm one imagines that paradise knows—
And it blooms in the night like an opening rose.

In the parlor I know there's mama with her book,
Too absorbed in the story to pause or to look,
Or to question or wonder, and here at the gate
I am waiting for courage and blessing the fate
That has brought me so near to the dear little lass
Who is watching for me, peering out through the glass.

It is eight by the clock in the old belfry tower,
And the moonlight is soft on the slumbering flower.
Quick, she slips from the window! I listen and catch
"Pit-apat" in the hallway, and "clock!" goes the latch,
And down through the arbor she hastens, and I
Am persuaded 'tis best to indulge in a lie.

"I was just coming in when I saw you come out"—
She is smiling—I wonder if that implies doubt,
When, alas for the fears of a too timid youth!
She confesses: "Now, Paul, you're not telling the truth,"
And contributes a very unnerving "Ha-ha!"
And a hint that she thinks I'm afraid of mama.

Oh, you dear little woman, how well you divined
What it was that so troubled and worried my mind!
It was easy enough to ask you just to bless
With a word, when I'd reason to hope for a "yes";
But it wasn't so easy a matter to go
To mama when I'd reason to look for a "no!" *Paul Mederst.*

"Navy Style"

by Eric Levison

"AND I tell you that, under certain circumstances, all men will act in exactly the same way!" The youngest midshipman aboard the U. S. S. Mexico — Midget, for short — pounded on the table, by way of emphasis, as he aired his views of mankind in general, and men of the navy in particular.

The lieutenant shook his head thoughtfully. "Wrong again, Midget," he advised. "But what makes you think so?"

"Think so?" The Midget was scornful. "I don't think so; I know it! Precedent, man, precedent; that's why I know it."

"But any one, Midget"—the lieutenant smiled—"may establish a precedent."

"Don't you ever believe it!" the Midget flashed. "Listen to this:

> "We are very slightly changed
> From the semi-apes who ranged
> India's prehistoric clay.

—and that's true, isn't it? Why—"

"Don't think, Midget, that I'm trying to belittle your friend Mr. Kipling," the lieutenant cut in. "But you know you can't take that literally."

"That doesn't alter the fact." The Midget seemed pleased with his argument. "All men under the same circum—"

"Oh, all right; have it your way." The lieutenant threw his cigar aside. "But give me just about five minutes," he added, "and I'll show you just how absurd your arguments can be at times."

"Fire ahead," laughed the Midget and settled himself comfortably.

The lieutenant bit off the end of a fresh cigar and began:

"For a man like 'Buck' Malone, Brisbane, Australia, isn't the best place in the world. It's too—well, it's too 'wide open.'"

"Buck Malone?" There was a question in the Midget's voice.

The lieutenant struck a match and puffed for a moment industriously.

"Yes; Buck Malone, coxswain U. S. S. Monongohela. I first made his acquaintance while officiating at a 'deck court' when the Monongohela was in Brisbane. He was brought on deck, bleary-eyed, dirty from a night spent in the brig, and reeking with odor of whisky.

"I was young then—very young—and I felt the responsibility of my first deck court.

"'Well, what have you got to say for yourself?' I tried to put the skipper's rasp into my voice as I addressed Malone.

"'Nothin',' he growled surlily.

"It was my first deck court, you know. 'You must remember, Malone,' I said, although it did sound ridiculous, as he was several years my senior, 'that you are a petty officer and should set an example. This time I'm going to let you off, but remember—'

"He muttered something that sounded like, 'Aw, wot t' 'ell!' and shuffled for'ard.

"After that I kept an eye on him. He was on his third cruise, and his records were a sight. Nothing serious, but it seemed as if he just couldn't let the 'booze' alone. The crew didn't think much of him, for he blustered a lot, swore, and played the bully generally.

"Ashore, it was said, he was a veritable terror; wrathfully demanding what he wanted, and usually getting it. In short, he was of that good-hearted, but 'rough-neck' type that has caused so much adverse criticism against the seaman ashore.

"The equipment yeoman, Struthers, was the exact opposite of Malone. Gentlemanly, well-behaved, studious, and with a spotless record. If anything, he was too good. There are such men, you know."

The lieutenant puffed his cigar reflectively. The Midget was silent.

Presently the lieutenant continued:

"The girl was a soft-voiced, dark-skinned little witch, whose eyes had that 'as-you-like-it' look in them. She played with Malone, Struthers, and several others, I believe.

"Malone was on the starb'd, and Struthers was on the port watch. So they were never ashore together.

"One morning Struthers approached me and, saluting, said: 'Sir, I have to report Cox'n Malone jumped ship last night.' That was all. There was no hesitation in his speech or manner, and he did not seem ashamed of the fact that he was 'squealing' on a shipmate.

"I didn't answer him; but, as a matter of duty, passed the word for the master-at-arms to arrest Malone for leaving the ship without permission.

"Later I learned that Malone had gone ashore and found Struthers with the girl. He had called Struthers aside a moment. There was no fight—Struthers was not of the fighting kind. The result was that Struthers returned to the ship and Malone remained with the girl.

"Of course, Malone got a deck court; I didn't officiate this time, and went to the brig for three days for 'jumping ship.'

"How it came about I never knew, but the next day there were many scowling faces among the men and much muttering of a squealer. Men eyed Struthers askance, and related a tale of how Malone had once half killed a seaman in Guantanamo for squealing on him. In the brig Malone was swearing—as I learned from the master-at-arms—that he'd get that d——d pen-pushin' squealer if it was the last act of his life.

"Frankly, I think it was Struthers's intention to 'beat it' before Malone was released, but he didn't have the chance: for on the morning Malone came from the brig, Struthers went to the sick bay.

"In half an hour a working party was piped ashore to build a shack. They raised the yellow quarantine flag above it and moved Struthers in, bag and baggage. The surgeon had diagnosed his case as smallpox.

"The crew was piped aft, and the skipper, after explaining the risk, asked for a volunteer to stay with Struthers. Malone stepped out before the skipper had finished speaking, and, followed by the wondering eyes of all of us, went over the side with his bag, hammock, and ditty-box and entered the shack."

The lieutenant stopped to relight his cigar and smiled at the Midget. "Well, now," he questioned, "what did Malone do?"

For a moment the Midget seemed to be puzzling with the picture of that lone shack on the Australian coast with the yellow, quarantine flag above it. Then he answered emphatically: "He punched the very devil out of him. That's what he did!"

The lieutenant laughed and shook his head. "Wrong, Midget. On the contrary. The surgeon brought aboard all sorts of stories of how Malone was treating Struthers like a baby; singing to him and spinning interminable yarns.

"Often, so the surgeon said, he had found Malone holding Struthers's hands to keep him from scratching himself. Malone hardly slept at all; he seemed worried that Struthers would want something and he would not hear him.

"This lasted for about a month or so.

"Finally, one morning, Struthers returned to the ship. Malone was kept in the shack a few days longer, but he, too, was soon back on board.

The Midget drummed impatiently on the table as the lieutenant stopped.

"Well, go on," he demanded.

The lieutenant smiled reminiscently.

"About three months later we were in the Brooklyn navy yard. It was a Sunday morning, and the crew was loitering on the fo'c's'l; I remember distinctly Struthers sitting on the capstan. Malone was aft, giving a final touch to his boat. He had avoided Struthers since we left Brisbane.

"When he finished his work he walked for'ard, and went straight up to Struthers on the fo'c's'l. Conversation stopped as he neared the capstan and addressed Struthers.

"'You all right now?' he growled.

"Struthers smiled. 'Yes, thanks.'

"'You sure you're as well as you ever was?' was the next question.

"'Sure,' laughed back Struthers.

"Malone backed off. 'Then, you dirty squealer you,' he demanded, 'come down and fight!'"

The lieutenant stopped abruptly.

The Midget's fist crashed on the table. "By George!" he ejaculated. "That's what I call a man!"

"And you think, Midget," the lieutenant guyed, "that all men under the same circum—"

"Aw," interrupted the Midget, reaching for the matches, "pipe down, will you? Don't rub it in."

WHEN LOVE BEGINS.

When love begins the pulses go,
But no longer sluggish, tame, or slow;
But, looking down from heights of bliss,
Man learns to know what rapture is,
And all his feelings finer grow.

How very gay the ardent beau,
How all his thoughts with fervor glow!
What wondrous happiness is his
When love begins!

Ah, there is one who can bestow
The ecstacy I fain would show—
A beauteous, captivating miss—
You smile, Clarisse? I'll take a kiss,
For by your eyes I see you know
When love begins.

Nathan M. Levy.

The Log-Book

By the Editor

Four things greater than all things are
Women and horses and power and war.

AFTER all is said and done, and the small, black coffee is served, that little couplet tells the history of the world.

We are still barbaric, and worship power and war. There is more money being spent and more men bearing arms to-day than ever before in the history of the world.

Conflict attracts the attention of everybody—our stories and moving-picture films and stage spectacles run to bandits, battles, big business breaking competitors, captures and escapes, slaves (white), and the taking of treasure.

Sifted down to the bare basis, the whole business is as primitive as when the cave men went around picking their teeth with war-clubs and smashing their neighbors' heads in order to get their supply of skins, fish, meat, caves, spears, and daughters.

The man who works in an office all day and sells galvanized pails wholesale and watches the zinc market fluctuations, likes to read about fights with swords and guns and dead and wounded and swishing seas and ships and all the rest of it.

The pale young man who wears flowing Windsor ties and writes poetry about pirates while he lives upon the income of the fortune founded by his father in the hardware business, has the right idea. As a matter of fact the most piratical thing he ever saw was a tango tea—pronounced "tongo tay" if you want to show ee-claw.

It is a whopping lot safer to take one's piracy that way, and the pirates don't care anyway, those who are dead being awfully dead, and those who are alive being pretty busy, thank you, and not income taxers.

(Reginald, pass the lady-fingers. Believe me, if you want to see a real pirate try to tip a waiter two bits. He'll show his teeth, including the back fillings, and will have Sir Henry Morgan lashed to the fife rail when it comes to looking stern and severe.)

What I set out to say is that we all want to take our exercise by proxy. We want to read about somebody else or see somebody else getting all het up by playing polo or baseball or raising hob in Mexico.

Pretty soon it will be the open season for baseball, and what eighteen particular men are doing in Pittsburgh, or Boston, or the Polo Grounds, will engage the attention of several millions of men, women, boys, and girls.

Do you think Mexico will have a look-in at the news when that baseball season starts? No, and echo answers no, that being what an echo is for.

The cashier-lady in the restaurant will ask me what I think of the Giants, as she hands me the nickel change, and I won't know what to say, because I couldn't really tell you who the Giants are, and she'll think I'm a queer sort of young man, which perhaps I am.

"Well, we smashed 'em again," the office-boy will announce gleefully, and when I want to know who is smashed, and how long it will be before they recover, he will look at me half in pity and half in scorn.

I don't blame the ball-players for taking their business seriously, because that's what they are paid for. Not

that I don't take anything which I am not paid for seriously, but that the business should be capitalized for millions, and that it is a safer venture than a steel business or importing, is the amazing part of it.

It is the desire to see somebody "smashed" that makes it pay, the inherent tribal instinct to be a partizan, to take sides, to hate rival tribes, and root for somebody or something.

If you don't believe we are still barbarous, repeal all the laws against prize-fighting and see the industry boom. It would be the biggest business proposition in the world.

Admitting that I don't know anything about baseball may stamp me as a foreigner or some other harmless sort of person. Perish the thought. I am American born, with a French accent, use violet perfume, and shoot from the hip.

Having reached this point in the discourse, you will probably think that I despise baseball and enthusiasm of any sort. Nay, nay, not to say neigh. It only proves what I set out to say—the best thing about the present civilization is its very barbarity.

When we don't like fighting in literature and the diamond, good night, and hello Julius Cæsar, meaning that we will have gone the way Rome went, which is a favorite simile for those who knock turkey-trotting, horse-trotting, and all the little pleasures of life.

Some say that Rome committed royal hara-kiri by living too easy. Others blame the baths. I don't know, not being there, and not believing anything I don't see, but I do observe that history tells us the fighting was all done, Rome having whipped everything her same size and weight, and some that were bigger. When we have to stop fighting in some way or another then we begin to complain of our health.

The tired business man is never anything more than tired as long as he stays in the ring and fights to keep his business going, but the minute he lays off to rest or retire, he might as well order a tombstone with trimmings.

War is a devilish thing, in which a man goes very hungry at times, loses more sleep than is good for him, and does a month or more very tiresome running around before he gets five minutes of excitement worth while. I wouldn't advise anybody to go to war, there are so many other ways in which to be uncomfortable.

Fighting is bad, especially if the other fellow has a longer reach, and I don't want to advise anybody to fight in the hope of salvation or health, unless they can be assured of ten thousand dollars, win or lose, ringside.

Piracy has gone out of date and favor since long-range guns came in, except among Chinese and a few others who will have their little fun if they are hanged for it. Arctic exploring is too cold, and you may be dead before you can get your picture in the papers, and desert travel is too hot.

I confess I don't know how to preserve the fighting spirit, and the time is coming when we'll all be very mild and harmless, and we'll be going around all forehead and glasses, just thinking-machines, reading of the crusades and other wars, and taking our excitement all second-hand.

In the mean time I hope to keep your pulses quickened with lively tales, and for June we have

Gold Grabbers

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

and an old favorite of THE ARGOSY comes back with a full book-length novel of mining and fighting in the West.

This is the story of a young mining superintendent who bumps into the most peculiar set of mixed-up fights that ever were heard of, and yet there isn't a thing about the story that will strain your credulity, if you have such a thing.

There is a girl, of course, and villains and thieves, but there is nothing

of the worn-out plot in this story. It runs as smoothly as a six-cylinder car, and you have finished it before you realize it, for there isn't a dead space in the whole book.

I might say a lot of pretty things about it, but the fact that it is given to you is proof enough of my faith in it. You'll like it, and I am sure you will be glad to welcome Mr. Cook back again with a yarn that is as good as anything he ever wrote.

The novelette in the June number is

The Thing That Was Caeser's

BY GEORGE BRYDGES RODNEY

author of "Sailing With Morgan." It is laid in the Orient, mostly in the China Sea, and it has more originality than most stories I have seen in a dog's age. The story is about a little silver box, made from the thirty pieces of silver which Judas received for his betrayal.

It has been in existence for ages—Cæsar had it—and in its track goes war, just as behind "The Wandering Jew" went pestilence. The war in Turkey, the war in Mexico—war, war, war—is hooked up with this silver box.

There is a fight with Chinese pirates that is a masterpiece of description, and as Rodney knows his country at first hand, you can rely on him for accuracy of color and detail. This is a story you will remember long and enjoy reading. If you read "Sailing With Morgan," you know the finished workmanship of Rodney.

There are some short stories in the June number that are exceptional, and which I made special effort to secure. They are by Captain W. R. Foran, whose work is more or less familiar to ARGOSY readers; John Fleming Wilson, one of the best writers of sea stories living; Hugh Johnson, who has done some fine stories about the army, and P. G. Wodehouse, already famous.

Foran's story is laid in northern India, Fleming's on a reef in the Pacific, Johnson's in Jolo among the Moros, and Wodehouse writes of Coney Island and New York. That gives a pretty wide range from cover to cover, and as these four writers know their art, I commend the short stories in the June ARGOSY to your serious attention. I think these stories will prove to you that THE ARGOSY is buying the best fiction of the best writers, and has a table of contents which should make any reader satisfied that he is getting the best product his money can buy.

FROM THE ADMIRAL'S DESPATCH BAG

This month I am giving you, along with the usual batch of letters, brief excerpts from letters which have piled up in my desk. Many of these letters were very good, and deserved being published in full quite as much as many others, but in order to give everybody a chance to express even a brief opinion, I have grabbed a sentence or two from them.

The same old warfare over Jackson is going on, in prose and verse, and with these few words to save space, I turn the merry mélange over to your tender mercies.

Hello, Old Missouri!

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I come to you with a few lines that you may know we get THE ARGOSY out here in old Missouri and enjoy it immensely. If I miss a copy I feel like a schoolboy missing a holiday.

I don't suppose this will find its way to publication, for I am not a college graduate, neither am I an army officer or any of those whom you seem to favor with space in your record; again, that doesn't alter the fact that I am going to tell you of the pleasure I get from your publication, even if I am only a clerk in a country hotel.

Believe me, all your stories appeal to me, and I have no fault to find because the

writer of a Western story doesn't know sage-brush from greasewood, or a California saddle from one of the "center fire" type despised by the cow-puncher of Wyoming twenty-five years ago. That doesn't matter so he tells the story well and the main points fit their places.

"Mesquite Ranch" was good, though I admit I can't recall anything like the country described in either Wyoming, Montana, the Dakotas, or Texas. However, as I said before, those don't count if the story is well told and teaches a lesson that is worth while. I like to unload my ideas from time to time even if you don't think them worthy of space (others pay for them), and I have the pleasure of writing. THE ARGOSY has given me many a pleasant hour, and it has kept well to the front of all fiction publications, therefore it has served, and for that let us be thankful. Like *Rip Van Winkle*, I will say, "May you all live long and prosper."

WYLDER H. WALTERS.

Hannibal, Missouri.

Argosy Still Pleases Him

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Far back in the misty chamber of memory I can place a shadowy figure bearing a small package, entering the kitchen of our old farm home "down in Maine." It was my father returning from the post-office with THE ARGOSY. Thus the magazine, born but one year before me, became my boyhood chum, and it is still with me, and I hope it will be one of the blessings of my old age.

Never before have I attempted to scale the walls of the editor's Log-Book. Many a smile must light the face of our editor when he views the ruins of our whims and fancies as we endeavor to point to that which we think he should choose in the making of our magazine.

Our ARGOSY's increasing growth, prosperity and popularity alone stands as a fitting monument as to his selection of authors. What a contradiction of opinions there is in the Log-Book!

One approves of "The City of the Unseen," and sings praises to the gifted author, James Francis Dwyer, and at the same writing voices prejudice in regard to Mr. Jackson's "Ambushed," "First Law," *et cetera*. But I have read them all with enjoyment. "Winged Feet" was the best in the year. Jackson's vivid descriptions give us to understand that time is the curse of the idle rich, that occupation is humanity's friend and forces us to feel the loving personality of the little heroine dancer *Luneska*.

We thank you, Mr. Editor, for the grand stories of the past, and will gladly leave the future entirely to your wise care.

T. FREEMAN NOYES.

R. F. D. 1,
North Yarmouth, Maine.

Back to the Flagship

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Greetings from an old reader. I left the good ship ARGOSY last year and shipped in "furrin waters," but could not resist the temptation to sail under the old colors once more. You've got one great idea in your complete magazine. No more monthly waits. I miss William Wallace Cook's tales, also A. P. Terhune's, but I have become reconciled to the youngsters. You have two fine authors in John Moran and George Washington Ogden. Give us some more of them. Fred Jackson's "Winged Feet" was his masterpiece. As for H. P. Lovecraft:

With scathing lines
He undermines
Our humble, meek suggestions,
And when he signs
What he opines
There is no room for questions.
He ramps and roars,
He shouts, he soars,
His opinions never vary;
You will agree,
It's plain to see
He consults his dictionary;
also,
I think, indeed, he has no sense
When he has no *love* for Jackson,
For, unlike the bard of Providence,
His *craft* brings satisfaction.

J. C. CUMMINGS.

5714 Blackstone Avenue,
Chicago, Illinois.

Breaks Long Silence

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I've been a silent reader of THE ARGOSY so long I can keep silent no longer. What is the matter with THE ARGOSY? One cannot compare the present ARGOSY with the past ARGOSY. The difference is too great. Our present ARGOSY is rotten. The stories are so silly one doesn't care to read them. Wake up to the fact THE ARGOSY is failing every month. I am glad you print no more short stories. The last ones were simply not worth reading. THE ARGOSY would be fine now if the reading was good. The change in the serials is first rate, also the complete novelette. Why so many kicks about Fred Jackson? I think "Ambushed" the finest story THE ARGOSY ever had.

"Winged Feet" was a good love story. Terhune's stories are fine. Hope to see some more soon. The stories that I enjoyed most were "Breaking Into West Point," "Larkin of the Free Range." Why not have some more like that.

And why not some good short stories when you have any. "A Forty-Four Caliber Joke" was no joke at all. Give us some more stories like "An Enemy Hath Done This," "Easy Money," and "The Motor Buccaneers." Why not have some more *Hawkins* stories. They drive away the blues. Three cheers for "The Hawkins Ambulator," in December, 1910. Don't give us any more stories like "Out of Algiers," "The Border of Blades," "The Waters of Strife," and "Ysabel of the Blue Bird." They surely were not interesting. Most likely many of the Log-Book readers will think I have poor taste for reading material. But am also certain there are many who side in with me too. Hoping to see better reading in the future ARGOSY,

(Mrs.) K. EUGENE.

Marshall, North Dakota.

I can't quite understand how you say THE ARGOSY is entirely ruined and then say "Ambushed" was the best story we ever had. Certainly hope to have more stories like those you say you like, but in order to meet the tastes of so many readers, the authors have to be varied from month to month. Some of the stories you didn't like seem to have been very popular, and some that you did like, others did not care for, which is why editors die young.—EDITOR.

This Lad Converted

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Have just read my letter in the March ARGOSY and its attendant comment. I *did* finish your December number, but found nothing that came within a mile of your old style. But your present issue has changed all that. I am inexpressibly delighted with the idea of cutting out the serials, and the "shorts" make it look like home again.

As to your question inquiring why I missed THE ARGOSY two years, I was but a boy of thirteen, and as I lived in the country, and the two nearest points kept no ARGOSIES, I *had* to do without. Before that I constantly bought the magazine, as far back as I can remember. Now I am where I can get 'em, thank goodness.

I am sure the majority are in favor of the magazine as it used to be, but the way it is now is very satisfactory. Keep Edgar Franklin, and here is a word for *Hawkins*. Now, "brother," if you are not averse, in a spirit of fair play, give my letter a chance and you will be obliging a boy reader.

C. D. MYERS.

Hendricks, West Virginia.

You said in your former letter that you had looked at the contents page and didn't like the new ARGOSY, although you hadn't seen it for two years. Give me a fair show, lad, and your well-written letters are always welcome, even as a critic. Also, remember that there are about half a million others who have to be considered, and that increasing sales tell how the majority feel. —EDITOR.

Some More Verse

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Lovecraft has dropped from rime to prose,
To shew that what he knew, he knows.
I say that really to my view
'Twas little that he ever knew.
He mentions that three faults remain.
It's up against him there again.
I rather think there is no more.
His letter makes the number four.
He says a novel he will write,
Our ardent passions to enlight.
Each reader then will have to carry
The latest published dictionary.

JOHN RUSSELL.

404½ Zack Street,
Tampa, Florida.

Sees Steady Improvement

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I can see no reason for the many criticisms of stories and authors in THE ARGOSY. I have been reading it for six years, and it is improving with each issue. "An Enemy Hath Done This" was so good that I was oblivious of everything else while reading it. "Georgia Girl," in her defense of Mr. Jackson, is a girl after my own heart. As for Mr. Lovecraft, and the rest of the "knockers," they are in the minority, and are worthy of no consideration. So on with THE ARGOSY, and let Jackson be unconfined.

A. L. ROSSITER.

4206 Whitman Avenue,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Wyoming to the Front

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I don't know how much praise you can stand without suffering from undue ex-

pansion, but without indulging in fulsome flattery I will say THE ARGOSY has improved some. I like to have some short stories, as they are convenient for short times of rest.

I see there is some adverse comment on Jackson. He is a little abnormal in the handling of his favorite subject, but we do not want commonplace in fiction, as we have enough of that in life, and if it were not so we would not spend our time reading fiction.

Now as feeling grows intense,
Some with more vanity than sense,
Try to air their classic knowledge
To show that they have been to college;
Try to ape old Homer's style
In rime that's scarcely worth the while
To spend the time in reading.
So arrogant is every line of his dogmatic screeding
Till each one has had their say
And the tumult of battle dies away,
I think, indeed, it would be best
To let poor Jackson have a rest,
And Lovecraft try his bitter spite
On some other poor luckless wight,
I have no doubt his victims will survive,
And in spite of criticism thrive
When the voyagers of THE ARGOSY their bickerings forget,
Then you can print a Jacksonette.

RICHARD FORSTER.

Rothwell, Wyoming.

Liked "Mesquite Ranch"

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Have just finished "Mesquite Ranch." Keep Katharine Eggleston on your staff. I wish you would hurry and give us some more *John Solomon*, "he's hall right." If we get more of H. Bedford-Jones, Captain Foran, Terhune, Franklin, and Dwyer, we won't mind so much Jackson. I started "Winged Feet," but could not finish it—the first time I have missed any story.

I wish that Dwyer would write a sequel to "The City of the Unseen" and show what happened to *Iris*, *Ned*, and *Hooper*. I like the new way of having no serials very much. The Log-Book has become very interesting lately on account of the comments on H. P. Lovecraft.

H. R. C.

Cedar Rapids, Nebraska.

John Solomon is scheduled to return in July in a complete novel entitled "John Solomon—Supercargo," a sequel to "The Gate of Farewell." The third novel in the trilogy of *John Solomon* stories will be "The Seal of Solomon," probably next fall. I have just bought some more stories from Captain Foran, laid in India. Dwyer sent me a card from Colombo, Ceylon, last week, and he is now in Australia.—EDITOR.

Opinions of Cow-Puncher

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have been reading THE ARGOSY for eight years, and have never expressed an opinion in the Log-Book. I think you could not better THE ARGOSY at any cost. I get sore at people like H. P. L. I will pay his fifteen cents a month if he will quit reading the ARGOSY. Jackson is great—let us have another like "Winged Feet." Ogden is fine—give us more of him and H. Bedford-Jones. I am a cow-puncher, and certainly would like to loosen up my .44-six on that man Lovecraft. Yours for luck. Excuse pencil, as ink is scarce at the Bijou Ranch.

JACK E. BROWN.

Kellogg, Idaho.

Sees Steady Improvement

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have been a reader of *The Cavalier*, *The All-Story*, and *Railroad Man's Magazine* since they were first published, but I can hardly wait for THE ARGOSY. "An Enemy Hath Done This" was one of the finest stories I have ever read. Some of my favorite authors are H. Bedford-Jones, James Francis Dwyer. Katharine Eggleston's "Mesquite Ranch" was fine. You have greatly improved THE ARGOSY by cutting out the serials. Give us stories like you have been giving us and everybody should smile. More power to you.

J. W. MCENTIRE.

Curwensville, Pennsylvania.

March Argosy Fine

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have read THE ARGOSY for six years, and it is the best magazine of its kind published. I have followed the discussion about Fred Jackson, and I must say that he and Terhune are the best writers you have. I want to congratulate you on the March number. I think it is great, and having each number complete is fine.

R. S. BALDWIN.

Merchants' Exchange Bank,
Hamburg, Iowa.

Wants Argosy Oftener

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I am in favor of making THE ARGOSY a twice a month magazine if you don't give

us a double dose of Jackson. Your complete magazine idea is great, and let us hope you keep it this way. You sure have been delivering the goods. Such stories as "The Waters of Strife," "The Motor Buccaneers," "Out of Algiers," "Mesquite Ranch," "The Secret War," "City of the Unseen," "Sailing With Morgan," and "Desert Loot" are great. Don't forget the other two *John Solomon* stories you have coming. Also give us another Hocking. The short stories have all been good. I would like a theatrical story soon.

EARL R. SMALLE.

962 North Twenty-Second Avenue,
Omaha, Nebraska.

"The Pink Prune Pays," a tragedy of vaudeville, by Clinton H. Stagg, author of "Easy Money," is scheduled for the June ARGOSY.—EDITOR.

Complete Magazine Pleases

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have been reading THE ARGOSY for a long time, and I like the complete magazine idea. Being a traveling man, the short stories help fill in the time between towns. Give us more of Fred Jackson and Bedford-Jones. They are your best writers. I always read the Log-Book, as it is like a heart to heart talk with the man behind the guns. I look forward to THE ARGOSY and wish it came out twice a month.

CHARLES H. NICHOLS.

322 Clay Avenue,
Detroit, Michigan.

I have a fine supply of Jackson and Bedford-Jones in the manuscript safe.—EDITOR.

New Argosy Perfect

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have been reading THE ARGOSY for many moons, and am going to venture a few remarks. The new ARGOSY is just about perfect. Let the short stories go hang and stick to the old way of once a month. "The City of the Unseen" was rotten. "An Enemy Hath Done This" was first rate, and "The Waters of Strife" was great. But "Mesquite Ranch," in the March number, is the best, cleanest, and most refreshing story that I have read in some time. Jackson, in *her* February effort, made a clean sweep, but in her earlier stories she gave one the impression of a woman trying to play baseball. If you have any more like the last one don't be stingy with them, and you might pass the word to the authorities that there are places for people like Mr. H. P. Lovecraft with brain-storms.

K. MORRIS.

Port Huron, Michigan.

Wants More Letters

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have just read the Log-Book for March and write to enter my little knock. It is not against the stories, however, but against the amount of space given this person called Lovecraft when two or three *interesting* letters might have been printed in the space so used. The March issue is a great idea. Your ARGOSY is very entertaining and well made up.

(Mrs.) W. S. RITTER.

Cleveland, Ohio.

Canada Is Satisfied

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

"The Gate of Farewell" can't be beat and also "The Waters of Strife." "Scud o' the Banks" and "Easy Money" were good, too. Just keep THE ARGOSY going the way it is and I won't kick.

B. E. WILSON.

Kenobert, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Sends His Congratulations

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Congratulations! No serials in the March number. The busy man who buys a magazine on a train or to rest himself, consider serials waste-paper. Few care to make the effort to keep in mind the connection between the instalments. I am glad to see long and short stories complete in THE ARGOSY.

W. A. FARWELL, M.D.

37 Commercial Street,
Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada.

Argosy Is Best

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I am enclosing money-order for a year's subscription to THE ARGOSY. As a magazine it is the best ever, and its stories are never beaten and seldom equaled.

BEN T. REITMAN.

Zumbrota, Minnesota.

New System Fine

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have been reading THE ARGOSY five years and always thought it a great magazine, but the present magazine has the old one beat a mile. I don't like to wait for

stories. I see quite a few criticisms of Jackson, and I want to say his work cannot be surpassed. "Winged Feet" was great, and "Mesquite Ranch" fine.

J. HIRSCH.

Box 210,
Field, British Columbia.

Wants Western Stories

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I wish you would give us some more Western stories. I think THE ARGOSY is better than it ever was now. The new covers are fine, for some people thought it was a "blood and thunder" book in the old yellow cover.

FAY WEST.

3034 Sixth Avenue,
Los Angeles, California.

Reader Ten Years

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Along in 1904 I chanced to pick up a copy of THE ARGOSY and read the opening chapters of "Who and Why." Since then THE ARGOSY has been a regular visitor. I have no comment to make on your changes, as you seem to make the magazine better every time you make a change, but I can say that I can get more clean reading-matter out of THE ARGOSY than any magazine I ever read.

J. RAYMOND GOODMAN.

Featherston, Oklahoma.

Argosy Is Unequaled

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

I have read THE ARGOSY for about three years and have tried many other magazines, but find it surpasses them all. Terhune, Jackson, and Hopkins are my favorite authors. Give us more war stories by Terhune—his war stories are the best I have ever read. "Inside Information" and "Ambushed" were very good. I am another *Hawkins* knocker, and think they were about the silliest stories I ever read.

JOHN A. YOUNGWORTH.

103 Ashland Avenue,
Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Two Old Regulars

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

We wish to express our thanks for the great pleasure we have had in reading THE ARGOSY for the past twenty-five years or more. The first story was "Snow, Ice, and Water," or rather, that is the one we remember as one of the first we read. It was printed in pamphlet form at that time and we could hardly wait for the next issue, and it is the same to-day. We are verging on the fifties and are still looking forward for the next issue.

E. J. BURRITT.

635 Jackson Avenue,
Evanston, Illinois.

GEORGE P. LEONHART.

1617 Florence Avenue,
Evanston, Illinois.

Oklahoma Likes Argosy

EDITOR, ARGOSY:

Find enclosed money-order for a year's subscription to THE ARGOSY. I have been reading it regularly for seven years, getting it from news-stands, but I am moving to where I cannot get it. I am lost without it, for I like it better than any magazine I have ever read.

WARREN ASH.

Steedman, Oklahoma.

Radiograms

Give us some more Fred Jackson. Miss Eggleston is great, also "Waters of Strife."—(Miss) E. LESALLE, Lowell, Massachusetts.

We all wish you would give us the magazine as it was for so many years.—EMMA D. ENGLE, San Francisco, California.

I think you have the right idea in cutting out the serials.—MILO CARTER, Mineral Ridge, Ohio.

I have been reading THE ARGOSY fifteen years, and your present make-up pleases me immensely.—AUGUST JENSEN, Denver, Colorado.

I am for THE ARGOSY first, last, and all the time. H. Bedford-Jones is the best author I ever read.—T. W. B., Villanon, Georgia.

I have read THE ARGOSY since it was *The Golden Argosy*, but the new style is O. K.—J. L. SAVAGE, Christiana, Pennsylvania.

Your March number is a dandy. Fred Jackson is your best author.—SIDNEY CLAY (no address).

ARGOSIES all over the house. "Mesquite Ranch" was great.—E. A. S., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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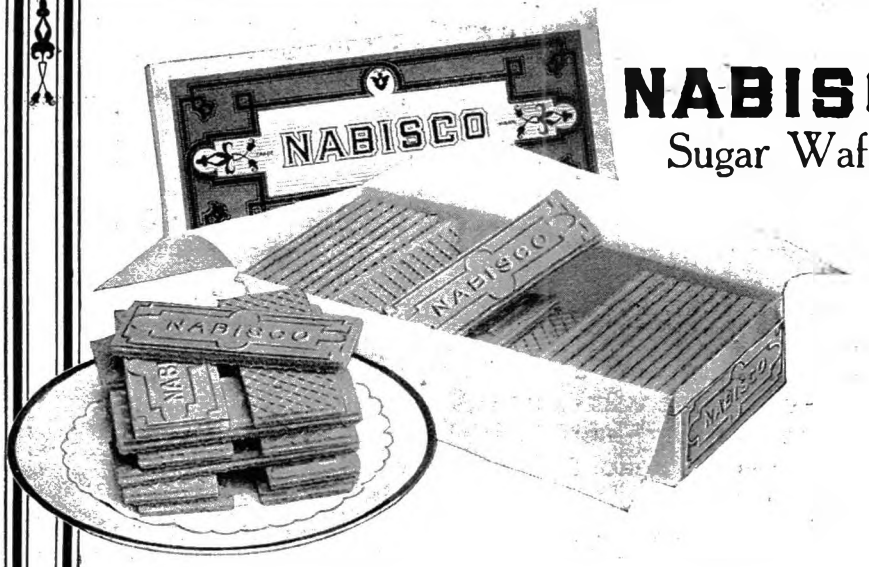

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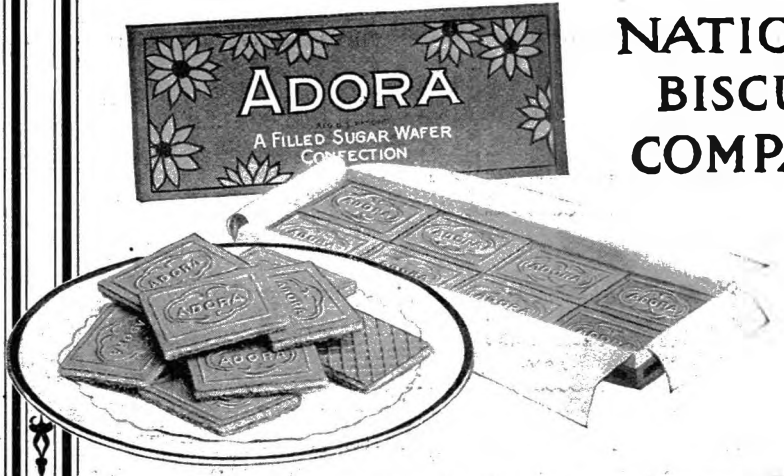

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY

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Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
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LISTEN—take that money you have saved up against the day of opportunity—invest it in a Long Popcorn Crispette Machine and make fortune smile on you—build up a big paying business. Think of the fortunes made of 5c pieces—street cars—moving picture shows—5 and 10c stores. Everyone will spend a nickel—everyone likes Crispettes—children—parents—old folks. You don't need any experience—you can start anywhere—in a store window, a small store room where rent is cheap, or the kitchen of your home. The Crispette machine and Long's secret formula to the man of limited means is a Gold Mine—a sure way to independence and fortune—to make money from the start.

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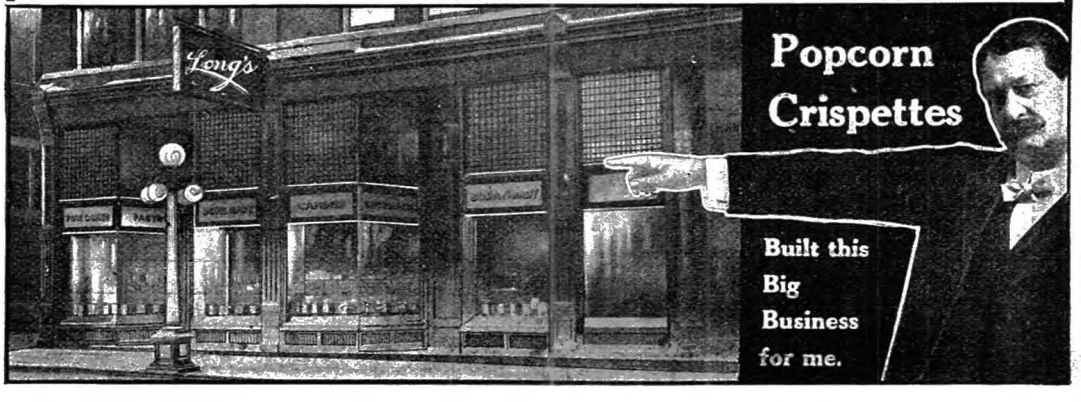
The big spring and summer trade is waiting for you right in your own city. Send for my free booklet "Dollars & Sense In The Crispette Business." It tells the whole story—how and where to start—how to succeed, proved by the experience of others. It's worth reading even if you don't start. If you are looking for a good thing and easy money, send for this book—**TODAY.**

W. Z. LONG, 867 High St., Springfield, O.



2-4

Popular Educational Food Campaign

Eggs in wrong combination and an excess of starchy (paste making) and fatty foods make people sluggish and cause dull, splitting headaches, lack of memory and concentration, drowsiness and inertia. A complete change to "digestible" brainy foods (suitable meat, game, fish and suitable dairy foods, combined with suitable vegetables and fruits according to the new brainy food plan) produces the most marked improvements in a few weeks.

G. H. BRINKLER
Food Expert

Brainy Diet

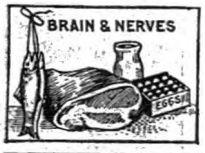
A thin man, after being out of work nearly a year through weakness, was restored in three weeks to hard work as a carpenter at full pay. In such cases the change from wrong combinations of foods, an excess of starchy, cloggy, death producing foods to energizing foods causes a literal transformation.

Another person, deaf in the right ear, owing to a discharge caused by an excess of mucus making foods (cream, butter, cheese, etc.) completely eliminated the catarrh thereby restoring his hearing by taking correct combinations of suitable foods.

A case of kidney and bladder trouble of ten years' standing was saved from a surgical operation, and the objectionable discharge relieved within ten days, because the loss of control was due entirely to the constant irritation from certain irritating foods and drinks.

Prurigo or "Itch," chronic, beyond the remedies of doctors and skin specialists completely disappeared within three months.

A chronic sufferer, weighing 415 pounds, unable to exercise, reduced over 150 pounds (in public life, under many witnesses), gained strength and firmer flesh, and lost rheumatism.



Tomatoes, Lemons, some fruits are solvents; Green Vegetables are laxatives; etc.

Over 100 similar cases certified by Official Investigating Committee

During nineteen years of personal experiments, I have learned to produce in myself **rheumatism, catarrh, sore throat, tonsilitis, constipation, double chin, swollen glands, kidney troubles, shortness of breath, rough scaly skin, dandruff, sores, boils, pimples with white pus, blackheads, rash, and other symptoms at will** by eating of different classes of foods in excess for several days or weeks according to the symptoms desired. AND I CAN RESTORE MYSELF TO GOOD HEALTH IN A FEW DAYS BY CORRECT DIET. The foods which cause expectoration, catarrh, cough, constipation, tumors, etc., are specified in my booklet which has taught many to cure themselves.

"The New Brainy Diet System" sent for 10 cents. Send Addresses of Sick Friends to

G. H. BRINKLER, Food Expert, Dept. 52E, Washington, D. C.

Would You Accept This 30-Day Offer?

Standard of the World. Endorsed by Government and Railway Officials. Harris-Goar's enlarged Easy Credit Plan now enables you to own one of these superb Elgin Watches without missing the money. Write for Free Catalog.

17-Jewel Elgin

Now, during this Special Sale, is the time to buy this elegant 17-JEWEL Elgin. Thoroughly factory tested, fitted in a beautiful Gold Strata Case, Factory stamped and Guaranteed 25 years, hand engraved, plain polished or with your own monogram, and our startling offer is to send you this celebrated 1914 Model free of charge for your approval

No Money Down

Because we want to prove to you that the great volume of our business actually enables us to do better by you than any other Watch or Diamond House in the World, and that on this particular watch, we save you nearly half for it sells regularly at $20 to $22, while our

Special Price is only $12.75

We don't want you to send us one cent—not a penny. Merely give us your full name and address that we may send you this superb 17-Jewel Elgin on approval, and if after you receive it and want to keep it, then pay us the sum of

Only $2.00 a Month

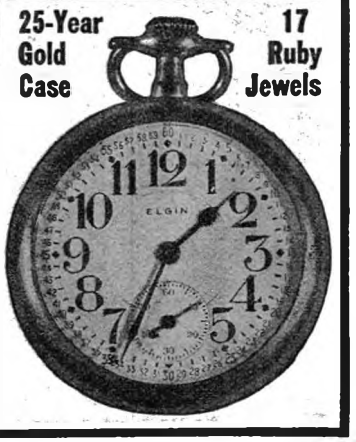
But if after you have worn it 30 days FREE and don't want to keep it, send it back at our expense. You assume no risk whatever. You do not buy or pay a cent until we have placed the watch right in your own hands for your decision. We want no security, no interest, no red tape—just common honesty among men. Write for our BIG FREE WATCH AND DIAMOND BOOK today. Do it now!

HARRIS-GOAR CO., Dept. 1250, KANSAS CITY, MO.

The House That Sells More Elgin Watches Than Any Other Firm in the World.

3 Fine BOOKS FREE

MR. HARRIS wants to send you his three latest Books FREE—one the story of "The Diamond," its discovery, where and how mined, cut and marketed, the other, "Facts vs Bunc," or all about the Watch Business, both at home and abroad, also our Big Free Watch and Diamond Book.



He Mops In Misery Without B.V.D.

A TYPICAL summer day—a typical office scene—a round of smiles at the mingled *discomfort* and *discomfiture* of the man who hasn't found out that B.V.D. is "*the first aid*" to coolness. *You*, of course, have B.V.D. on or ready to put on. If not, march to the nearest store and *get it*.

For your own welfare, fix this label firmly in your mind and make the salesman *show* it to you. If he can't or won't, *walk out!* On every B.V.D. Undergarment is sewed

This Red Woven Label

MADE FOR THE
B.V.D.
BEST RETAIL TRADE

(Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off. and Foreign Countries)

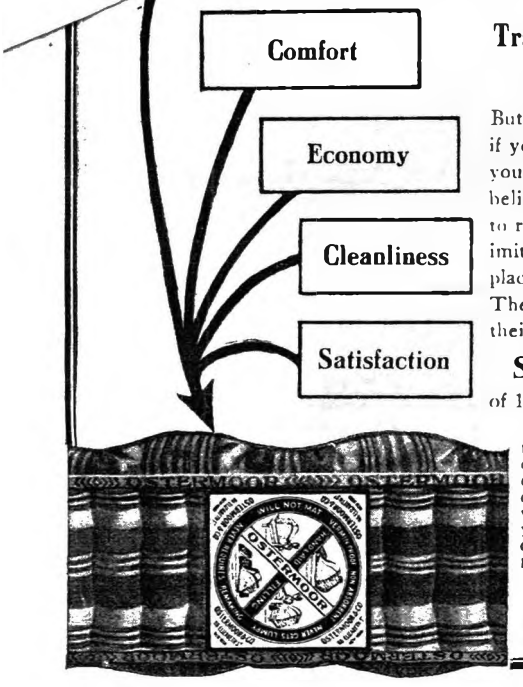
B.V.D. Coat Cut Undershirts and Knee Length Drawers, 50c., 75c., $1.00 and $1.50 the Garment.

B.V.D. Union Suits (Pat. U. S. A. 4-30-07) $1.00, $1.50, $2.00, $3.00 and $5.00 the Suit.

The B.V.D. Company,
NEW YORK.

London Selling Agency: 66, Aldermanbury, E. C.

The OSTERMOOR



Trade-Mark Guarantees Sleep—Comfort—Economy—Cleanliness—Satisfaction

But the trade-mark does *you* no good if you don't insist on seeing it before you buy a mattress—and if you don't believe in the Ostermoor sufficiently to refuse *any* one of the hundreds of imitations which are offered in its place—at a lower price—*of course.* Their cheapness (*not* their *economy*) is their only excuse.

Send for Free Book

of 144 pages, with samples of ticking.

A handsome, full-size Ostermoor mattress, 4 ft. 6 in. wide and 6 ft. 3 in. long, elegantly finished, will be sent to you, express prepaid, same day we get your check or money order. Your money will be returned without question if you are dissatisfied at the end of 30 days. Mattresses packed in leatherette paper and burlap, fully protected.

OSTERMOOR & CO.
110 Elizabeth Street, New York
Canadian Agency: Alaska Feather & Down Co., Ltd., Montreal

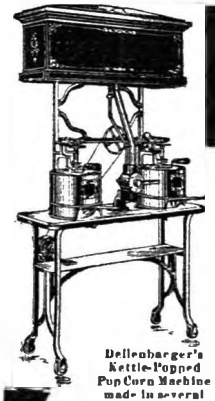
$15.

MATTRESSES COST
Express Prepaid

4 ft. 6 in. wide by 6 ft. 3 in. long—A.C.A. Ticking, 45 lbs	$15.00
Satin Finish Ticking, 45 lbs	16.50
Mercerized Art Twills, 45 lbs.	18.00
Special Hotel Style, 50 lbs	23.00
Extra Thick French Edge, 60 lbs.	30.00
Special Imperial Edge, 60 lbs.	35.00
Ex. Thick Imperial Edge, 70 lbs.	45.00
Imperial Double Stitched French Roll, 80 lbs.	55.00

Mattresses in two parts, 50c extra. Smaller sizes cost $1 less each size.

Get Into The Pop-Corn, Crispette *And Candy Business*



Dellenbarger's Kettle-Popped Pop Corn Machine made in several sizes.

NOTE! We also make Complete Wagon Outfits for Transit purposes. Our booklet describes them.

We Will Start You!

and teach you the business FREE. Tell you how to make the most money with the least effort—how to get the crowds—how to cash in BIG from the very start! We'll help locate you, too, if you wish, and make it so easy that you can start at once and

Pay Us Later From Your Profits

Hundreds of men and women everywhere are making BIG money in the ever-popular Pop Corn, Crispette and Candy Business. We will gladly do for you what we have done for hundreds before you. We make the terms so easy that a very small amount is sufficient to start you.

$600.00 in 3 days that's what one man took in at Braidwood, Ill. Another made $225 in one day. A young woman in St. Louis cleared $50 in 1½ hours. Think of it! Did you ever hear of such a wonderful business? Yet, you, too, can do as well in this easy business of BIG PROFITS. Now then, don't wait—don't think you haven't enough money, GET our proposition first, then decide!

We Teach You the Business FREE

Dellenbarger's Kettle-Popped Pop Corn

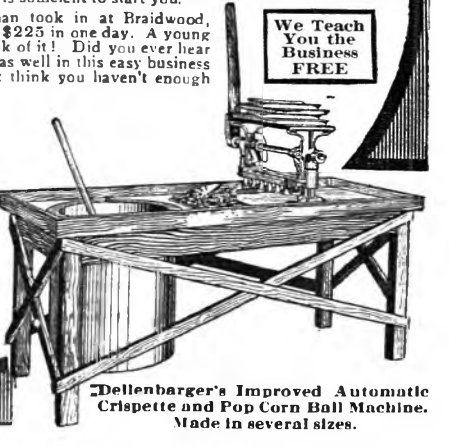
A new process, means—**large, light, fluffy and tender** kernels that melt in your mouth. Makes Crispettes wonderfully rich and delicious—the kind that "wins" the "Come-back-to-get-more" crowds.

Start at Once—NOW!

Send for our big, generous co-operation offer. FREE catalogues and full particulars explaining how we start you on easy payments. Don't put this opportunity off another minute.

Write Today, SURE! before you forget it. Our big offer sent by return mail. It's up to you NOW to act—DO SO! Address

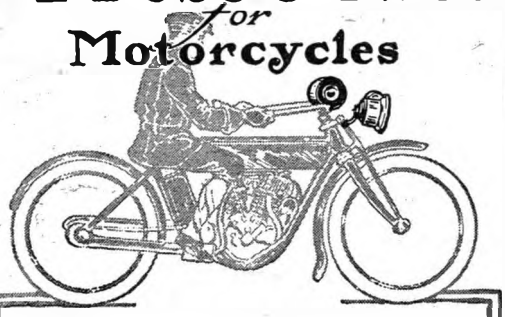
C. M. DELLENBARGER & CO.
619 W. Jackson Boul.,
Chicago, Ill.



Dellenbarger's Improved Automatic Crispette and Pop Corn Ball Machine. Made in several sizes.

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention THE ARGOSY.

Prest-O-Lite
for Motorcycles



The *only* reliable lighting system

Prest-O-Lite spells safety—it is absolutely reliable.

It is simple and sturdy. It stands the rough and tumble work, the jolts and the vibration. Has no delicate connections or frail parts.

Your light may snap out suddenly at a critical time, if it depends on a toy storage battery or any other complicated system.

Prest-O-Lite is *the most convenient* system. Needs practically no attention, has no mysteries, and breeds no troubles.

The first cost is small. The operating expense is no greater than that of a carbide generator, and only one-third to one-fifth that of electric light.

30-Day Free Trial

You can prove all our claims for Prest-O-Lite by our 30-day trial plan. Before buying any other system, insist upon the same kind of a test.

Don't pay for poor light

Any dealer who offers you a combination of equipment, including any other lighting system, will give you Prest-O-Lite instead, if you insist. And if you know the facts, you *will insist.* Tear off on the dotted line, write your name and address below and mail it for complete information about motorcycle lighting.

Prest-O-Lite is ideal for Stereopticons

The Prest-O-Lite Co., Inc.
732 Speedway Indianapolis, Ind.
(Contributor to Lincoln Highway.)

Send information on ALL Lighting Systems to

3 Years to Pay
for the Sweet-Toned
Meister
Piano
$175
30 Days' Free Trial
We Pay the Freight

You are not asked to deposit or pay or advance a cent in any way until you write us and say that the MEISTER is entirely satisfactory and you wish to keep it. Then these are the terms of sale:

$1 a Week or
$5 a Month

No cash payment down. No interest on payments. No extras of any kind. Piano stool and scarf free.

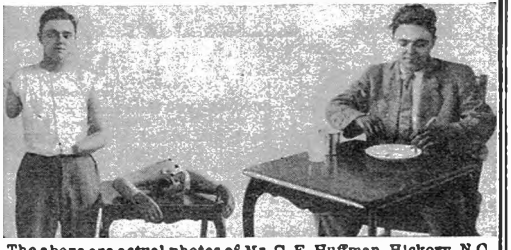
Sold direct from the maker to you at a guaranteed saving of $100. No dealer's profit for you to pay.

Send now for our beautiful Free Catalog which shows eight styles of Meister Pianos.

Our resources exceed $4,000,000. We sell more pianos direct to the home than any other concern in the world.

ROTHSCHILD & COMPANY
Dept. B-23. Chicago, Illinois

Good News For The ONE-ARMED and ARMLESS



The above are actual photos of Mr. C. E. Huffman, Hickory, N.C. He shows only one of many things that can be done with a

Carnes Artificial Arm

Mr. Huffman wears two Carnes Arms. He writes: "I feed, dress and shave myself; carry my suit case as easy as anyone; open and close a door; open drawer of desk or dresser, take out what I want and close it again. As for looks, no casual observer could tell that I wear artificial arms. They are comfortable to wear (in fact feel a part of me), and easy to operate. Would not be without them for any amount of money."

With a Carnes Artificial Arm You can do writing, drawing, sharpen lead pencil, use telephone, clean teeth, lace or button shoes, put on glove, brush coat, tie cravat, brush hair, run automobile, ride bicycle, drive horses, play pool or billiards, do sewing, ironing, sweeping and many other things seemingly impossible but absolutely true.

Write for illustrated catalogue showing fac-simile letters and photographs of wearers of Carnes Artificial Arms. It will absolutely convince you that in the Carnes we have produced an artificial arm and hand that you can really "do things" with and without assistance of natural hand. Endorsed by Surgeons. Adopted by large railroads and factories.

Our Guarantee Offer Call at any of our offices. If we cannot *prove* that the Carnes Arm is all we claim we will pay your round trip expenses. However, we guarantee a perfect fit by mail or no pay. Write for catalog A-5. It's FREE.

CARNES ARTIFICIAL LIMB COMPANY
Main Office and Factory, 904-906 E. 12th St., Kansas City, Mo.
New York, 501 Centurian Bldg. Chicago, New York Life Bldg.
Pittsburg, 703 Arrot Building. Seattle, 2122 Westlake Avenue.

2-16

How would you like to have been the successful rival of King Solomon?

How would you like to have been the beloved of the Queen of Sheba?

Some things to have been?

What?

You had better read

Queen of Sheba

A Complete Novel

By Perley Poore Sheehan

IN THIS WEEK'S

All-Story Weekly

(April 18th)

Also you will find five excellent Serial Stories and numerous Short Yarns. Next week there will be a new story by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Now on sale at all news-stands
Ten cents a copy. $4.00 a year

The Frank A. Munsey Company

175 Fifth Avenue, New York

WE TRUST YOU

$2.95 Brings You This Suit

BE WELL DRESSED

Thousands of men have charge accounts with us and take six months to pay. You, too, can have a credit account with us and we want you for a new customer —your credit is good—**we'll trust you.**

Get 1914 Style Book Now

We Give You 6 Months to Pay

Guarantee Satisfaction

Remember, we save you big money on made-to-order clothes that are better in quality than can be bought elsewhere. No matter who you are or where you live, we'll sell you order made clothes on credit.

Stanley-Rogers Show You How to Take Your Own Measurements—Don't Hesitate—It's Easy—Order Blank Shows All.

We have the easiest special system of taking measurements ever used. You'll like it when you see the simple instructions.

$2.95 Brings You This Suit

This elegant all-wool suit, made in latest style as shown, of fine brown fabric. Sent to you—made to your order—upon receipt of $2.95 and measurements. Order by No. 799 S.

Price $12.95. Balance $2.00 Monthly

No References Asked—No Red Tape

Free STYLE BOOK and SAMPLES

Write for book showing latest styles and fabrics being worn by swell dressers all over the country. **Get your copy now. It's Free. Send a postal for it today.** Write to

STANLEY-ROGERS COMPANY

832-834 South Clark Street CHICAGO, ILL.

$75.00 A WEEK PROFIT

WITH OUR DANDY PHOTO MACHINES

The latest invention in photography. Makes photos direct on post cards or tin types in one minute without the use of negatives or films. *No Dark Room Required. Experience unnecessary.* You can make 500 pictures a day. Finished photos cost from 1c to 2 1-2c. You can easily sell them at 10c to 25c. Small investment. Big Profits. BE YOUR OWN BOSS! Write for new 1914 illustrated catalogue **today.**

NEW YORK PHOTO MACHINE CO.

Dept. 20A. 106 Delancey St., New York City, U. S. A.

It's No Joke To Be Deaf

—Every Deaf Person Knows That.

I MAKE MYSELF HEAR

After being deaf for 25 years with these Artificial Ear Drums. I wear them day and night. They are perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. Write me and I will tell you a true story, how I got deaf and how I make myself hear. Address

Medicated Ear Drum Pat. Nov. 3, 1908

GEO. P. WAY, Artificial Ear Drum Co., 38 Adelaide Street, Detroit, Mich.

TANGO Hesitation, Argentine, & All New Dances

You can now quickly, easily learn, **in your own home,** to dance the **Tango, Argentine, Castle Walk, Hesitation Waltz, Dream Waltz,** and other popular new dances. The new book, **"The Modern Dances,"** by Caroline Walker, gives authentic, plain instructions, correct diagrams and beautiful illustrations, especially posed by experts. **Anyone can learn.**

The Only Successful Method of Home-Instruction

recognized by Society and Professionals superior to ordinary class or private instruction. Chicago Tribune says: "In 'The Modern Dances,' the movements are clearly set forth and are aided with photographs so that **anyone** can easily master the steps." First two editions exhausted in one month. Third edition now ready. Better than ten dollars worth of private lessons, and costs

Only One Dollar On Sale at best book and music stores everywhere; or send dollar direct to publishers for beautifully bound copy, postpaid. **Money-back guarantee. Order today.**

SAUL BROS., Pubrs., Dept. 13

626 Federal St. Chicago, Ill.

7-15

2-18

Try This Test

Compare a genuine Chalmers "Porosknit" garment with any imitation. Turn both inside out. Examine them. Judge them for yourself.

Take a Chalmers "Porosknit" Union Suit. See how strongly all seams are reinforced throughout—*double*-seamed by cover seaming.

Note that there are no cumbersome flaps to gape open. Stretch the fabric. See the *extra* stitches surrounding each ventilating hole. These, with the lock-stitch, prevent unraveling.

The Elastic Seat

Now, the "stretch" in knit goods is only *one* way. But observe the triangular piece in the back of a "Porosknit" Union Suit. See how this piece of fabric is reversed—the stretch running opposite to the rest. This means full elasticity in the seat. It *gives*—at every turn or bend, with no pull, no bulge, no draw.

There can be no "short-waisted" feeling—no "cutting in the crotch."

"Porosknit" Union Suits stay buttoned while on. They do not gape between buttons. The Closed Crotch is comfortable. It fits.

"Porosknit" is made in *all* styles—for man, for boy. Open in texture, and of soft, absorbent yarn, it keeps you cool by absorption and evaporation of perspiration. Your pores breathe the needed air. The yarn's softness eliminates irritation of the skin.

These features you can *see* and feel.

This Label on every Garment

CHALMERS
TRADE MARK
FABRIC PAT. DEC. 12, 1905.
"Porosknit"
DESIGN PAT. DEC. 19, 1905.
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.
GUARANTEED

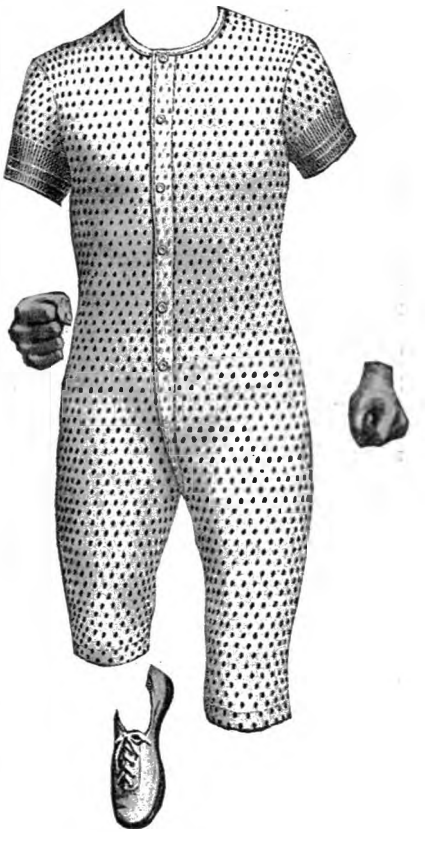
Cleanly Making

The extreme care in making, you cannot see—unless you come to Amsterdam. There, in a modern mill, clean as a new pin, "Porosknit" is fashioned and sewn.

Countless patented machines knit the high-priced yarn into the celebrated fabric. Then each yard of fabric is aerated with hot, dry, pure air, for extra-cleanness' sake.

Other machines complete the finishing touches. Then, each garment is ironed individually before packing. See for yourself how pleasing the appearance in the box—at the dealer's.

Underwear can be made to *look* something like Chalmers "Porosknit." But none can match the genuine "Porosknit" comfort, durability, quality of yarn, elasticity, lightness, *coolness!* None.



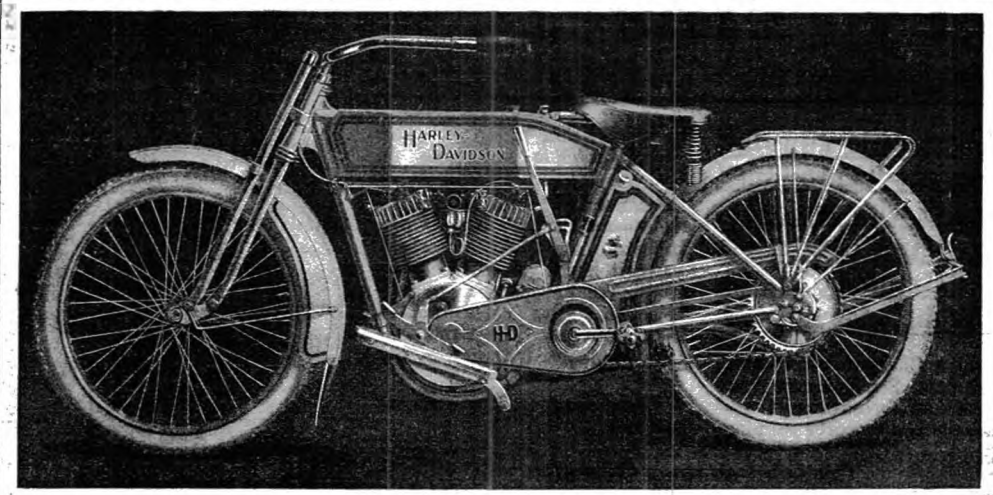
This is Our No-Limit GUARANTEE

"If any garment bearing the genuine Chalmers 'Porosknit' label, and not stamped 'Seconds' or 'Imperfect' across the label, fails to give you its cost value in underwear satisfaction, return it direct to us and we will replace it or refund your money, including postage."

Write for Handsome Book of All Styles

FOR MEN **50c**	Any Style Shirts and Drawers per garment	FOR BOYS **25c**
FOR MEN **$1.00**	Union Suits Any Style	FOR BOYS **50c**

CHALMERS KNITTING CO., 37 Bridge St., Amsterdam, N. Y.



Some Things You Can Do With the Harley-Davidson That Cannot Be Done With Other Motorcycles

You can start the motor at will, without even dismounting or putting the machine up onto the stand. A simple downward push on either pedal operates the patented Harley-Davidson Step-Starter, and starts the motor.

Double Clutch Control

You can operate the clutch either with clutch pedal or by a hand lever. No need to let go of the grips that control the throttle and the spark or to take either hand off the handle-bars. Just a pressure of the toe or the heel and you engage or release the clutch.

Folding Foot Boards

Instead of one fixed or cramped position, the exceptionally long foot boards permit you to assume a variety of riding positions on long tours. These foot boards will comfortably accommodate a rider of any height. The pedals may also be used as foot rests if desired.

Double Brake Control

You can operate the brake by back pedaling on either pedal or by a lever convenient to the foot. This foot control of both clutch and brake gives practically automobile control of the machine, a distinctly new and very desirable exclusive feature.

Ful-Floteing Seat

You can ride over really rough roads in perfect comfort, because the patented Harley-Davidson Ful-Floteing Seat absorbs all the jars and vibrations.

These features are described in detail in the 1914 Harley-Davidson catalog, which will be sent on request. In this catalog you will also find a complete description of the Harley-Davidson protected selective two-speed models.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY, 383 B Street, MILWAUKEE, WIS.

G. M. ANDERSON *as "Broncho Billy"*

"It's funny what a difference a few Clothes make!"

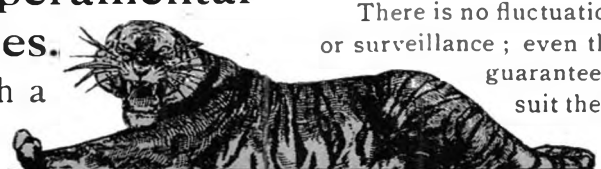
TO get "that Royal Tailored Look" means to get the highest-priced local tailor's result—without his tax or his temperamental uncertainties.

You deal with a ***business man***—your leading men's wear merchant.

And you get a business man's surety of service, with a business man's guarantee.

He sends your measures to the famous Royal Sunshine Shops in Chicago or New York; your clothes are cut and built by custom journeymen who have been schooled in the world's greatest style environments.

There is no fluctuation in Royal Service or surveillance; even the delivery date is guaranteed. You get your suit the day you expect it. Likewise, you get it at a price that makes it economical—$16, $17, $20, $25, $30 and $35.



TRADE MARK REGISTERED

America's Telephones Lead the World
Service Best—Cost Lowest

from London "Daily Mail"

Why is it that Government ownership and management of the telephones is practically always a failure?

Why is it that throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain and the Continent hardly a single efficient long-distance service is to be found? Why is it that in New York one ...

from "Electrical Industries" (London)

THERE is a certain amount of satisfaction in the fact that Mr. Winston Churchill got so angry over the freaks of the telephone the other day that he flung his receiver on the floor. As a member of the Government which purchased the telephone system, he deserves all the torture that Post Office working can inflict. But his rage, ... delicat... which ... doubtless ...

From "Le Petit Phare de Nantes," Paris

"But today I found I had to talk with Saint-Malo, and, wishing to be put through quickly, I had my name inscribed on the waiting list first thing in the morning; the operator told me—though very amiably, I must confess—that I would have to wait thirteen hours and ten minutes (you are reading it right) in order to be put through."

Herr Wendel, in The German Diet.

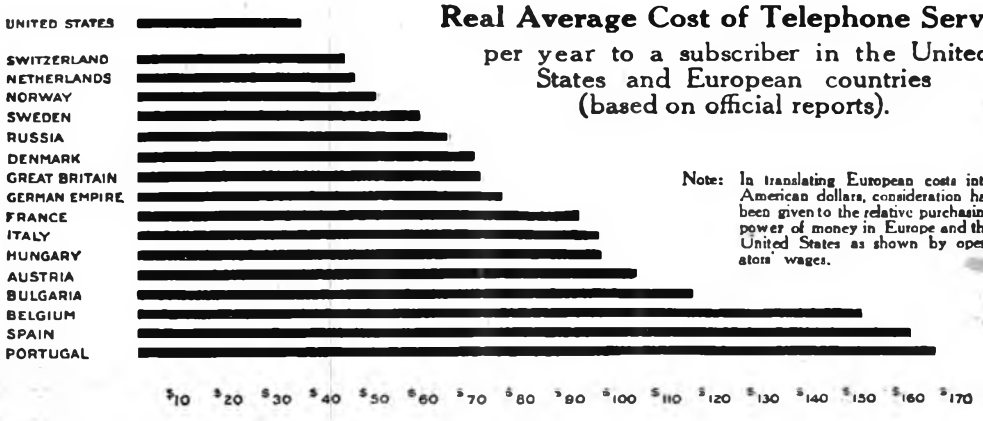
"I refer here to Freiberg. There the entire telephone service is interrupted at 9 o'clock p. m. Five minutes after 9 o'clock it is impossible to obtain a telephone connection."

Herr Haberland, Deputy, in the Reichstag

"The average time required to get a connection with Berlin is now 1½ hours. Our business life and trade suffer considerably on account of this lack of telephone facilities, which exists not only between Dusseldorf and Berlin and between Berlin and the West, but also between other towns, such as Strassburg, Antwerp, etc."

Dr. R. Luther, in the Dresdner Anzeiger

"In the year 1913, 36 years after the discovery of the electro-magnetic telephone, in the age of the beginning of wireless telegraphy, one of the largest cities of Germany, Dresden, with half a million inhabitants, is without adequate telephone facilities."



Real Average Cost of Telephone Service

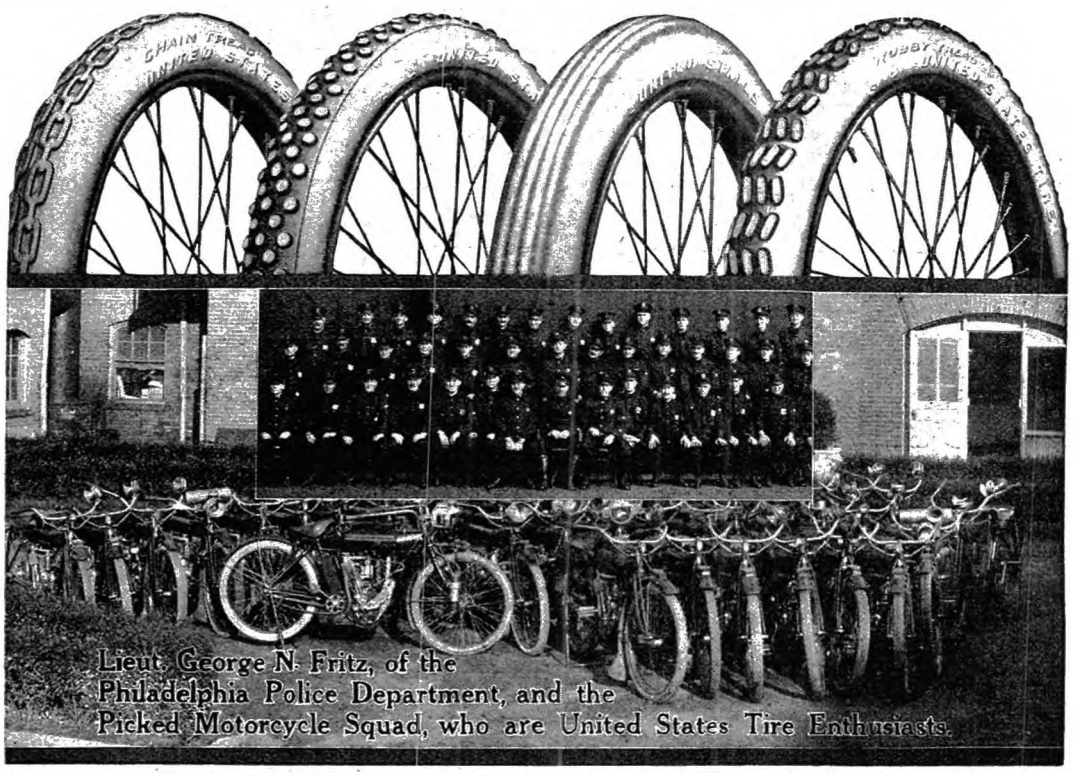
per year to a subscriber in the United States and European countries (based on official reports).

Note: In translating European costs into American dollars, consideration has been given to the relative purchasing power of money in Europe and the United States as shown by operators' wages.

These are the reasons why there are twelve times as many telephones for each hundred persons in the United States as in Europe.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy ***One System*** ***Universal Service***



United States Tires help police departments to rely on the motorcycle as an aid in preserving law and order.

The safety, low cost, reliability and speed of the motorcycle have made it invaluable to the police.

The Motorcycle Policeman gives his tires the hardest of service. His duty takes him over roads that other riders avoid. Frequently he trusts his very life to his tires. United States Tires withstand hard police service everywhere.

That is why a vast majority of police motorcycles are equipped with United States Tires.

You who ride motorcycles for business or pleasure should profit by the policeman's experience. You, no less than he need the safest, lowest cost per mile tires.

Today United States Motorcycle Tires stand alone—in a class absolutely by themselves and are acknowledged to be the standard motorcycle tires of the world.

Their overwhelming popularity is a known fact. In one year—1913—the sales of UNITED STATES MOTORCYCLE TIRES increased 139 per cent.—an increase that is without a parallel in motorcycle history.

NOTE THIS:—Dealers who sell UNITED STATES MOTORCYCLE TIRES sell the best of everything.

United States Motorcycle Tires

Made by the

Largest Rubber Company in the World

FREE

This Handsome 14K

Gold Plated "Bull" Watch Charm

To Every Man Sending 5c for a Sack of "Bull" Durham Tobacco

This Watch Charm is unusually attractive in appearance and design. It is *14K gold plated,* and will prove a decided ornament to any Watch Fob or Watch Chain. We are making this unusual Free Offer in order to induce more smokers to try "rolling their own" fresh, fragrant, hand-made cigarettes from world-famous

GENUINE

"BULL" DURHAM

SMOKING TOBACCO

(Enough for forty hand-made cigarettes in each 5-cent sack)

As many cigarettes are rolled with "Bull" Durham in a year as *all* brands of ready-made cigarettes in this country *combined.* There is a *unique, delightful aroma* to "Bull" Durham that is not found in any other tobacco. It is produced by an exclusive process, known only to the makers of "Bull" Durham. Once you have learned this delicious, distinctive flavor, your taste will *always call for it,* and you will always *recognize* "Bull" Durham anywhere by its savory aroma. There is *nothing else like it* in the world.

Ask for FREE book of "papers" with each 5c sack

FREE Send 5 cents and we will mail you prepaid, anywhere in U. S., a 5-cent sack of "Bull" Durham, a Book of cigarette papers, and this 14K gold plated "Bull" Watch Charm, *Free.* We will also send you an illustrated booklet showing how to "roll your own" cigarettes with "Bull" Durham tobacco. In writing please mention name and address of your tobacco dealer. Address "Bull" Durham, Durham, N. C. Room 1123.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY

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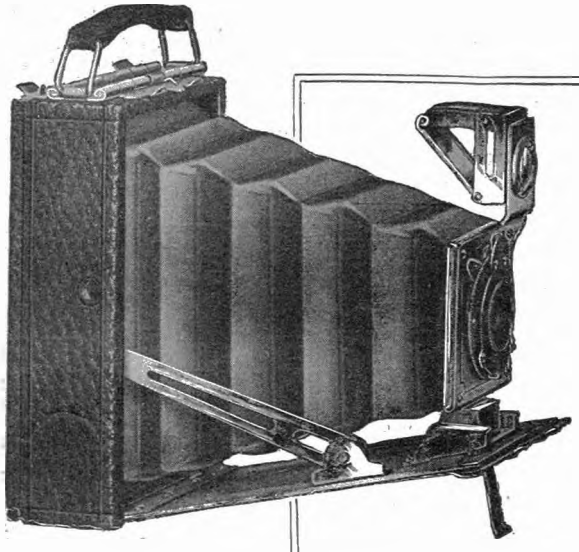


An efficient camera for $5.00

Premoette Jr.

Weighs only 11 ounces

Dimensions 1½ x 3 x 4¾ inches

Loads in daylight

Makes good pictures

A marvellously compact camera, just a trifle larger than the pictures it makes, and so well made, so carefully equipped and tested, that it makes pictures equal in quality to those made by much larger and more expensive cameras.

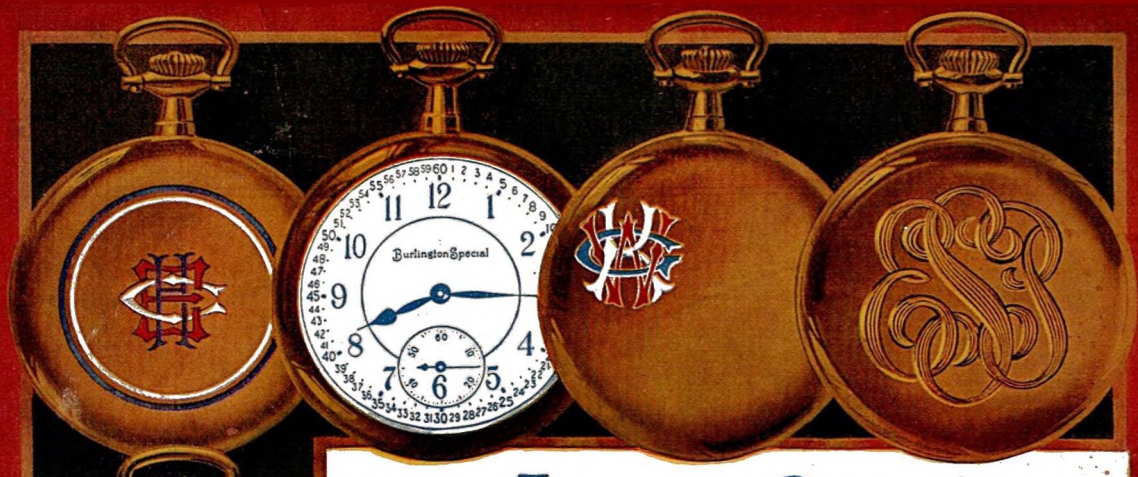
It will go into any coat pocket or a lady's handbag, and will produce sharp, crisp negatives which will yield good size pictures by contact or excellent enlargements of almost any size.

The Premoette Jr. No. 1 is well made in every respect, it loads in daylight, is fitted with ball bearing automatic shutter and carefully tested lens, and makes 2¼ x 3¼ pictures. The Premoette Jr. No. 1A, similar to No. 1 but for 2½ x 4¼ pictures, price $8.00.

Get the new Premo catalogue — a book that no one interested in photography should be without. It describes the many Premo advantages fully — the daylight loading Film Premos, the Premos that take films or plates with equal facility, the Premo Film Pack and tank developing system. It's free at the dealer's, or will be gladly mailed to any address on request.

Rochester Optical Division

Eastman Kodak Company **Rochester, N. Y.**



Just Out!

Newest Ideas in Watches

The latest products of the craft. Exquisitely beautiful. Your own initials handsomely engraved on the superb gold strata case—guaranteed for 25 years. Your choice of ***Inlay Enamel Monograms, Block and Ribbon Monograms, Diamond Set, Lodge, French Art, Dragon Designs.*** Open face or hunting cases, ladies' or gentlemen's 12 and 16 sizes. A watch to suit every taste. And—DIRECT—at the rock-bottom price.

*The **masterpiece** of watch manufacture—19 jewels—**adjusted** to the second—**adjusted** to positions—**adjusted** to temperature—**adjusted** to isochronism.*

Special

A Remarkable Special Offer

For reasons explained in our letter to you (special trade reasons) you can now get *direct* the superb Burlington Watch at the rock-bottom price—the same price that **even the wholesale** jeweler must pay—and in order to encourage everybody to secure this watch at once, purchasers may pay this rock-bottom price *direct* from us either for cash or $2.50 a month on this great special offer! We send watch on approval, *prepaid.*

Sent—No Money Down—Prepaid

Remember, the highest grade watch *direct* (for special reasons, now) at the same price that even the wholesale jeweler must pay! You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing, not one cent—unless you want this *exceptional* offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch.

These Exquisite New Designs

in watch cases are winning favor everywhere. And wherever the great Burlington Watch has been introduced it is noted for its wonderful time keeping qualities. Ask any railroad man what he thinks of the Burlington Watch. Ranchmen, engineers, and men in all walks of life whose duties require them to put a watch to the hardest tests prefer the Burlington because they know they can depend upon it.

In the U. S. Navy

every fighting vessel has the Burlington Watch aboard. The S. S. Connecticut alone has over 200 Burlingtons aboard; the Battleship Georgia has 159 Burlingtons; the new dreadnought Wyoming already has over 100 Burlingtons. Many other battleships, such as the New Hampshire, North Carolina, Minnesota, have over 100 Burlingtons aboard.

Think of the constant vibration, the extreme heat in the boiler rooms, the salt air and the change of climate from the Arctic to the Tropical; if a watch will stand up and give accurate service aboard a man-of-war it will stand up everywhere

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