**Land of the Long Night** COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

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# THE ARGOSY.

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# THE LAND OF THE LONG NIGHT.

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

Remarkable experiences of a man who wanders far afield without leaving his home town, and has a secret of his own which is not a marker to one that is kept from him.

***(Complete in This Issue.)***

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BLACK SPECK.

I REMEMBER very clearly the occasion of its first appearance. I believe I had been working rather hard for a few days, the plates upon which I was engaged necessitating especially close application.

It was like a midge dancing in the sunshine at the start, and I drew the curtain closer to shut out the disturbing light. However, the black speck remained. It floated back and forth before my eyes—a tiny, hair-like particle, perhaps a sixteenth of an inch long.

I removed the glasses I wore at the bench and wiped them carefully. They seemed clear enough, but some foreign substance was certainly between my eye and my work.

When I put my spectacles on again, there the speck was, dancing as before. It annoyed me not a little, but I said nothing about it when I went home at night.

However, as it continued to appear from day to day, ever floating within the range of my vision, my curiosity, if nothing more, was aroused.

I happened to meet Pettibridge one morning as I rode down-town, and I mentioned the matter to him.

Pettibridge is of that breed of bluff, cheerful medical men who look you over, put an ear to your chest, hit you unexpectedly under the shoulder blade, and then slap you encouragingly on the back, with: "Ha! You'll be right as a trivet in a week. I'll give you something easy."

He looked me over now, dropping his paper for the purpose.

"Ha-hum!" he murmured, continuing to stare me in the eye. The car was plainly not a place to go through his usual formula, and he was nonplussed.

"Black specks, eh? Complexion bad, too. You *do* look a little seedy, Herbert."

"Then my looks belie me. I feel all right," I growled.

"Ha! You're one of the kind that never will admit they feel out of sorts. Let's see." He leaned forward and with his thumb and finger lifted my eyelid a little. "Ha! As I thought. A little yellow. Man, you're bilious."

"Thanks!" I said. "What'll I do?—and send your bill in the first of the month."

"I'll fix something up for you, and you take it, confound you!" he returned. "You're working too hard, any way. I told you that a year ago."

"Don't you dare play me the trick you did then," I retorted in disgust. "That eye specialist you sent me to that time charged me a hundred dollars."

"You're a fool!" declared Petti-

bridge, with the freedom of a man who swapped knives with you when you and he were boys together. "He saved your eyes. I'll fix you up without any specialist this time."

I faithfully took the medicine Pettibridge sent me, and I reckon it did my liver some good, but that black speck did not disappear.

Sometimes I would not notice it for hours, although I knew it was there all the time. It seemed more persistent while I worked at my bench. Yet whenever I thought of it during my hours of leisure, I found it instantly—just as though I conjured it into being by my thought!

I began to wonder if it wasn't something imaginary.

Then I began to wonder how long a man's liver could play him this trick without yielding to the efforts of the medical profession?

I went to Pettibridge and complained.

"Don't you feel any better?" he asked.

"Better!" I shouted. "I never felt better in my life. But that speck is still floating before me, and I want it stopped. What good are you, any way, as a medical sharp?"

"Herb," he said gravely, "you're overworking."

Now, wouldn't that make you tired?

When a doctor gets to a point where he doesn't know just what to do for a fellow, he springs that old chestnut on him. He advises him to stop work—take a rest—go away. Doesn't want him to die in his bailiwick, I suppose.

"You've got to guess again," I told Pettibridge. "I can't go away, and I can't stop work. Rose and I are going to be married in June."

"I know you're no loafer, Herb; but I tell you honestly I believe you should give up working. Engraving is trying at best, and especially so for you."

"It's my trade," I said shortly. "I can make a good living at it for Rose and myself. Don't talk nonsense."

So he gave me more physic—and the speck grew. After a fortnight it was twice its original size. But I felt first rate, pitched the last of the doctor's messes out of the window, and decided to think no more about the black speck.

Pettibridge had evidently been to Aunt Matilda on the sly, for she, too, began trying to make me give up work. She hinted morning, noon and night that I was "running down" and needed a change. She offered to pay my expenses if I would "take a nice, long trip."

"I'll let you waste some of your good money when Rose and I are married," I told her.

And what did that unaccountable woman do but suddenly burst into tears?

Any one might have thought that my getting married to one of the sweetest little girls who ever lived, and one whom she had known and approved of for years, was bound to be a calamity.

But in the feminine mind wedlock and tears are usually associated; why, I have never discovered.

And Rose *was* the dearest little girl one ever saw. She was not a person to cry over at all. Even to look at her fresh young beauty, her fluffy hair, the pretty blushes that came and went in her round cheeks, was a thing to delight anybody but a grim anchorite. I had delighted in her company when she was a child, for I was ten years her senior. Now I loved her heartily, for although she was vain and not a little fickle in small tastes, she was likewise blessed with a sunny disposition and I knew that she loved me.

She had been bred to luxury, but my expectations from Aunt Matilda Bolis, with whom I lived, equaled any dowry Mr. James Olyphant could give his daughter.

As a matter of pride and family arrangement, the old Scotchman was to portion his niece, Enid, when she married, too. Enid was living in a near-by town now, teaching—she was an independent young woman. I understood that Brentwood Pratt was engaged to her, and Rose told me that her cousin and the young lawyer would likely be married almost as soon as ourselves.

A little cloud had risen during the past year upon the horizon of our matrimonial prospects.

As Rose's father grew older, I saw that he grew more purse-proud and arro-

gant. I was not a man to fawn upon another, and he seemed to have taken a dislike to me.

"Man, when ye marry my daughter, ye end her girlhood instanter!" he said to me once. "She's but a child yet. 'Tis a domned shame!"

"She doesn't think so," I returned; "and she'll be twenty-one in June."

This was to remind him that she would be her own mistress before the time set for our wedding day. But of late he had set afoot a scheme that, although I should have been a selfish boor to oppose it, I knew to be directly aimed at my peace.

He decided to take Rose across to Scotland before our marriage. The early spring is not a nice time of the year for such a journey, but he was insistent, and Rose was too good-natured and too desirous of pleasing him to object.

I thought his arrangements for departure were being made with almost indecent haste. The plan seemed to trouble Aunt Matilda much, too. One evening she broke out into quite a tirade against my sweetheart's father. I put this down to natural spleen on my aunt's part, however; she and James Olyphant had never got along well together.

Mr. Olyphant booked passage for the next week Monday, and I determined to take at least one day from my work to spend with Rose. There was still good sleighing, and we agreed to drive over to Fourscore on Saturday morning, call on Enid, whom Rose wished to see before she went to Europe, and return at night.

I hastened my tasks on Thursday and Friday, and my eyes, of which I had been taking great care according to the oculist's orders during the past year, plagued me a little for this excess of labor.

My left eye felt swollen and feverish before the close of work Friday afternoon, and the presence of that floating speck before my vision made me nervous.

"Confound the thing!" I muttered, throwing down my tool at last, and raising my eyes to see the dancing speck between them and the unshaded window.

"What's the use of doctors, any way? If this speck is the result of liver trouble, what's the matter with Pettibridge? Can't he cure a simple malady?"

I removed my spectacles and wiped the lenses carefully. Then I peered at the speck again before readjusting the glasses. It was still there, now grown to be nearly a quarter of an inch in length.

I closed my right eye; it was plainly visible with my left, ever moving before the pupil, now fast, now slow, like a thread floating in the air.

Then I closed my left eye, opening my right, and instantly felt something like a shock.

The speck had disappeared!

I winked both eyes rapidly and opened them to their widest. Had the thing gone as suddenly and unexpectedly as it had first come into my range of vision? No; there it was again. Once more I closed my left eye. With my right I could not distinguish the speck. Yet with my right eye closed and my left eye open I could see it as plainly as ever.

I did not know at first whether to consider this discovery amazing or as worthy of no notice. Pettibridge told me I was suffering from biliousness; he had been treating me for that malady. Floating specks before the line of one's vision was a symptom, he declared, common to bilious patients.

But here was a case where the person affected could only see the speck with one eye. Could a man be bilious on one side without the other half of him being affected?

I stopped work right there for the day, and I must admit I was much puzzled and not a little disturbed in my mind as I wended my way homeward.

I wanted to see Pettibridge there and then, but I knew he was out of town. A man doesn't like to go to a strange practitioner and make an ass of himself by asking stupid questions.

And in the morning I was so busy satisfying Aunt Matilda that it was quite safe for me, "in my present state of health," as she expressed it, to drive Bob Angle's team of grays hitched to

the smart cutter he sent around at eight o'clock, that I didn't have a thought for the doctor.

As I was settling the robe around me and gathering up the reins, while Bob's man held the horses' heads, whom should I see coming up the block but Pettibridge himself. He had another sawbones with him—I know the breed now so that I can spot them that distance away.

"Hi, hi!" shouted Pettibridge. "Where are you going, Herb?"

"Over to Fourscore with Rose. I'll see you later."

"We were just coming to see you," he cried, as the horses started. "It's important."

But Bob's span hadn't been out for three days and they were on the *qui vive* for a run.

"You'll have to wait till to-morrow," I shouted back, and the next moment the grays whipped me around the corner.

Afterward I wondered what he meant by saying *we* were coming to see you? Did he want a consultation of physicians over a bilious patient?

"If he springs another specialist on me," I told myself, "I'll pitch 'em both out of the house."

I promptly forgot Pettibridge and all other doctors when I arrived at the Olyphants' and saw Rose coming down the steps to greet me. In her white furs, a little, close-fitting pink hood, and a muff half as big as herself, she looked like a French doll.

I kissed her under cover of tucking in the robes, and old Olyphant scowled at me from the library window, but Rose did not object.

The grays were off in a moment; we left the busier streets, struck the pike to Fourscore, and the horses settled into a long stride that whipped the light cutter over the frozen track most delightfully. The wind cut our faces and made the tip of Rose's nose red, but the sun was warm upon our backs and we were as jolly as grigs.

In fact, before we had gone many miles we found the March sun rather too warm for the good of the road. The track became sloppy, and now and then a hoof broke through and the horses slipped and snorted with fright.

"We will have to come back in a boat," declared Rose, laughing, as the spray began to fly over the dashboard.

And it really looked as though we should have to ferry across Foxcroft River by night. The water was rising close to the danger-point, and men were shoring up the bridge as we crossed at a slow walk so as not to vibrate the structure.

I remember that it struck me at the moment that it might be the part of wisdom for us to turn around and go back. I knew that an ice-bridge had formed a few miles up stream, and if that gave way in this thaw, with the river running so full, wooden spans would have little chance in the flood.

There was only one practical road to and from Fourscore. Any other way home would be out of the question. It was a thirty-mile drive by this road, and the horses were well winded when we reached Fourscore. I could not think of giving them less than a four-hour rest, and of course the girls had a lot to say to each other.

I had never seen much of Enid Olyphant. She was slightly built, like Rose, but whereas Rose had the loveliest, sunniest, most fly-away hair, Enid's was black; she had narrow, delicately penciled eyebrows of the same deep hue, and her complexion was as olive as an oriental's.

I reckon most men would have called Enid Olyphant pretty—that is, men who had not been fortunate enough to see Rose.

I hunted up Pratt, who had hung his shingle out in Fourscore, and invited him to lunch with the girls and myself at the hotel.

He was delighted, I could see, but I was not sure that Enid was happy in his company. One is seldom sure of a girl's feelings, any way.

We started from Fourscore at five o'clock. The moon was shining pale in the eastern sky; I had figured on her light for the latter part of our trip, and no clouds disappointed me.

The night opened as clear as a bell, still, sharply cold after the going of the

sun, and with that atmospheric pressure which carries sounds to enormous distances.

The silver throats of the bells delivered tones echoed from the hillsides miles away; a shout set all the dogs to barking within the radius of the farms which checkered the Foxcroft Valley.

From the river itself, long before we came in sight of it, our ears were greeted by a roar like the soughing of the wind through a pine forest. Rose thought this rising murmur of the full current most delightful. It troubled me.

I wondered in what condition we should find the bridge. The country on this side of the river was most unsettled. There were a few dwellings, although across the river was the village of Engleton.

An old tavern, half of it dilapidated and unused, that had once been a stage station when the turnpike was a private road, was the only habitation in sight of the bridge on this side of the Foxcroft River. It was not a nice place, although one might get a bite to eat there at a pinch.

And when we came in sight of the roaring stream, its surface foam-streaked and littered with tumbling ice-cakes and broken timbers, I made a virtue of necessity and suggested to Rose that we stop at the tavern and have our supper, as it was bound to be late before we reached home. To tell the truth, I wanted to make inquiries about the condition of the bridge before venturing upon it.

The river was vastly angrier than it had been in the morning, but I did not wish to frighten Rose. A dirty-looking hostler took the grays back to the hotel shed, and the woman who welcomed us into the stuffy little parlor was but slightly more attractive than the man. She had such an unpleasant leer and looked Rose over so covertly that I was half sorry that we had stopped at all.

Yes, we could have some supper. Would we eat it here in the public parlor or would we take a private room? And all the time she leered at us and fussed about, helping Rose off with her furs and wraps.

It made my nerves crawl to see her, and I am afraid I told her very bruskly to serve what she could in this room.

I even disliked leaving Rose alone while I went out to make my inquiries about the bridge. And my worst expectations were realized regarding that.

The water was over the flooring, and it seemed to me that, in the keen moonlight, I could actually see the span wavering under the pressure of the river.

A jam of ice and timbers had gathered above the bridge, and this was pressing against the structure. The bridge being so far from the village on the other side of the river, and the countryside being so thinly inhabited over there, nobody considered it his business to watch the span. I stepped upon it, wading through water and slush half-way to my knees, and felt the bridge quaver and shake under the reiterated blows of the massing drift above. It was likely to be swept off its piers at any moment.

"I will not trust Rose's precious life on that thing," I determined, and hastened back to the tavern.

All we could do was to turn about and drive the twenty miles back to Fourscore. The horses would be quite done up, but I knew of no decent place in which to take shelter between this spot and Enid's boarding-house. One thing: if we did not reach home this night, old Olyphant would believe we had remained with his niece. There was no means of communication nearer than Fourscore.

Engleton being shut off from us, and the flag-station on the P. & L. S., two miles away, being closed, of course, for the night, we could not communicate with our friends in either direction. It was not a pleasant consideration, especially when I took into consideration the character of this tavern and the appearance of the people who ran it.

I found the objectionable landlady sitting with Rose and making herself very friendly.

Rose is simple enough to make a confidant of a stray mongrel pup. And that old woman wasn't half as harmless as a strange cur would have been.

"She's very nice, I think," Rose remarked, pouting a little when I said something like this after the woman had gone. "And, oh, Herbert!" she added, with a blush, "how do you suppose she knew we were sweethearts?"

"She must be a mind-reader!" I grunted.

I was sorry we were to remain for supper. During the meal I told Rose that we should have to turn back, and why.

"How romantic!" she exclaimed. "Of course Enid will take me in, and you can go to the hotel. You can wire father in the morning."

But I didn't think it was half as romantic as she seemed to think. It was not a nice position at all. Of course we had been around together a good bit, before and during our engagement, and had not been hampered much by chaperones.

But this situation verged on the unpleasant, to say the least. I did not wish our friends to know that we were here alone at this confounded road-house. I had seen enough to assure me that it was not a tavern of good repute.

So I hastened the meal—"indecently," Rose said—and hurried the hostler to bring the horses around. He was so slow about it that I went out into the yard to see what was the matter.

The grays were eager for their stable now, and this man was evidently a poor horseman. They had become fractious and I could not trust him to bring them around to the front of the hotel. So I leaped into the cutter myself, seized the reins, and told him to let them go. Instantly they sprang into their collars and whipped the sleigh out from under the shed.

The hotel yard was barred by deep shadows, and moonlight is not the surest illumination at best. There was no lantern at the gateway.

As the horses dashed down the lane toward the highroad, that confounded speck again began its gyrations before my eyes. It almost blinded me. At the gateway the grays suddenly swerved. I could not just see what was the matter, but I tried to pull them back into the middle of the way. That was fatal.

A rain barrel, heavy with its accumulated weight of ice, had fallen upon its side and rolled half across the pathway. In pulling the horses back into the center of the track I brought the left runner of the sleigh against this barrel. How I kept my seat and hung on to the reins I do not know. The grays snorted, reared on their hind legs, and then dashed forward with a force that threatened to demolish the cutter completely.

The left runner crumpled up like paper, and we swung out of the lane upon the pike a wreck. I heard Rose scream, for she saw the accident from the piazza of the tavern.

But I could attend to nothing save the horses. They ran for several hundred yards before I could pull them down.

By that time the light sleigh had been wrenched almost to kindling wood. Little was left but the seat and the dashboard; I was standing on the snow where the flooring should have been.

The man ran after us and seized the heads of the horses.

"My goodness, sir!" he exclaimed. "I thought you was a goner, sure!"

But the danger I had escaped impressed my mind but slightly. What troubled me was the situation of Rose and myself, marooned at this confounded tavern with probably no other vehicle to be had for love or money.

## CHAPTER II

### GRETNA GREEN.

IT was a mercy that Bob Angle's grays hadn't kicked me as well as the sleigh to pieces. Rose had evidently thought my end at hand, for the first thing I heard after the hostler's encouraging remark was the coarse voice of the hostess, crying:

"He's all right, miss! Your sweetheart ain't hurt, I tell ye."

I glanced over my shoulder and saw Rose running madly down the white track, her hands stretched out to me, her disarranged hair streaming in the wind.

Perilous as my position had been, I

forgot it all on the instant in the knowledge that welled in my heart that this beautiful little creature loved me. I realized that another man was helping the hostler quiet the grays. I dropped the reins, leaped out of the wreck of the sleigh, and received Rose in my arms.

"Oh, Herbert! Herbert!" she gasped. "You—you might have been killed! My dear, dear boy!"

She patted my shoulders and my cheek, kissing me again and again, and talking in her hysteria as though I were a child. And I ten years her senior and growing bald at that!

I laughed her out of her fright. But I could not laugh myself out of the difficulty that confronted me. The hostler managed to get between the grays, and after they were released from the wreck by the other man he turned them about. It was not until then that I saw the face of this second individual.

He was an old man with a patriarchal beard like a frozen waterfall over his breast, a cavernous eye that burned mildly, and a dignified carriage which betrayed muscular energy despite his age. This old gentleman walked behind us silently as we returned toward the tavern.

"Have you a sleigh that I can use?" I asked the hostler, although I knew the query was useless.

"Not a thing, sir. Ain't even got a waggin we could let ye have. Oh, ye'll be comfor'ble here—you an' the little lady—till mornin'."

I noticed, too, that one of the grays halted. They were valuable animals, and Bob Angle would never forgive me if anything serious happened to the span. I told the man to do his best with them, promising him a gratuity for his trouble.

But although I remained cool and Rose was too delighted at my escape from injury to worry, I really felt desperate.

I hated to leave her alone for a moment with that old harridan of a landlady, but I wished to make sure that the horses would be treated properly, and so was obliged to see her mount the steps of the hotel piazza and be received with open arms by the woman.

As I turned into the lane I felt a touch upon my shoulder. It was the old man who had assisted the hostler in freeing the horses from the wrecked cutter. I had not thought to thank him before.

"I am much obliged to you, sir," I said, glancing quickly over his shabby clothing and thrusting my hand into my pocket

And then I stayed my intention, for there was that in his air and look that told me a gratuity to him would be insulting.

He had a most benevolent smile, but his eyes were serious and the hand which he had rested upon my shoulder tightened its grasp as he continued to gaze upon me.

"Young man, young man," he said in a low voice, "God has spared your life most mercifully. Remember that, and do not harm that pretty child, His creature!"

His gesture indicated little Rose as she entered the door of the tavern with the landlady. The old man dropped his hand from my shoulder and turned instantly away.

The red blood mounted to my face and my hands clenched in anger. Yet he meant well, and—why should I be angry? He probably understood the circumstances and knew that they were treacherous.

I strolled into the stable-yard and helped the hostler put the grays into stalls. He brought something to bathe the lamed leg, too.

Meanwhile I asked him who the old man was who had come so opportunely upon the scene of the accident.

"That's old Parson Sanderson. He lives down below there, on the river bank."

"A clergyman?" I asked.

"Not now, mister. He useter have a church in Engleton, but he got too old, 'r suthin', an' they put him out an' got a younger man. Called him 'sooperannimated,' 'r suthin', tho' he'd buried 'em an' married 'em fur quite a spell, jest th' same. He's a decent ol' feller, tho' turrible pious—an' poorer'n Job's turkey."

I remembered now of having noticed a tiny cottage nearer the river as we

drove over the bridge that morning. The old clergyman had been going home when he came to our help.

I went back to the tavern parlor, turning this matter over in my mind. The clergyman's hut—it was little more—would afford us no refuge. The hostler said the old man lived alone.

James Olyphant would never forgive me if I made Rose the subject of slanderous remark. Indeed, I should never forgive myself.

And the parlor was worse than before when I entered. Rose was sitting off in a corner, looking a little scared now, with the woman talking sixteen to the dozen to her, while two rough men and a half-grown girl in a loose calico wrapper occupied the other end of the room.

"You see, sir, 'tain't very nice for the little lady here," the woman said to me, with that leering smile. "But I'll have a fire built up-stairs for you——"

"We'll take a little walk around first," I interrupted sternly. "I'll arrange later with you about our remaining."

Rose jumped up gladly and went out with me.

"Oh, that's a horrid hotel, isn't it, Herbert?" she whispered. "And—and I guess the woman isn't so very nice, after all, as you said."

"My dear little girl," I replied softly, "there doesn't seem to be any other place for us to stop until morning. I am very sorry."

"Isn't there a farm-house where they would take us in?"

"None that we could reach afoot. And the people might be no better than these folks. The only other house in sight is that little cottage yonder. That old man who helped us lives there alone."

"That nice old man! What a beautiful beard he had!" she cried. "He—he looked like a prophet or something; like the pictures of those old men that used to be in our children's Bible."

"He is a clergyman—a Rev. Mr. Sanderson, Rose," I said, looking sidewise at her.

"A clergyman!" She stopped and glanced up at me.

"Do you realize that this breakdown is very unfortunate for us, dear?" I said, trying to keep my voice from trembling. "If people learned of our staying here——"

"I know! There would be talk. I hate gossip!"—and she stamped her foot.

"But hating it doesn't kill it."

She looked at me again, then dropped her eyes, and the blushes stole into her cheeks.

"That—that old man is a minister, do you say, Herbert?"

"Yes. We are to be married in June, any way, Rose."

She caught her breath with something like a sob and seized my arm with both her gloved hands, but when she looked up again there was laughter in her eyes behind the tears.

"Is this Gretna Green, Herbert?" she asked me.

"Will you marry me now, Rose, dear?" I asked. "Then no ill-natured tongue can say a word against us. If nothing comes of the matter, we need not tell your father, but have the ceremony performed again on the date already set.

"You are going away from me, too, on Monday, little girl. Somehow, the thought of that makes me almost fearful. But if you are mine—legally bound to me—I know that nothing can keep you from coming back."

"You foolish boy!" she cried, wiping her eyes.

Then she stood on tiptoe and kissed me.

"Take me to that nice old minister, Herbert," she said. "I don't know of anybody whom I should better like to marry us. He must be a *good* man."

I did not oppose this purely feminine reasoning, for the old clergyman had impressed me that way, too. We walked on to the top of the bluff, halfway down which was the hut. There was a glow of lamplight through the thinly curtained window, although the moon showed us the path plainly. My hand was raised to rap upon the door when Rose suddenly seized my arm. I thought her heart had failed her at the last moment, but when I turned she was pointing at the window.

The curtain was a poor affair at best, and did not hide the whole interior of the cabin. We saw an angle of the hearth, an old wooden settee, and upon his knees before it the clergyman, his hands clasped and his face lifted in an attitude not to be mistaken. I was moved to the depth of my heart.

We waited in silence while the old man prayed. Then, when he rose to his feet (I saw that his limbs trembled), Rose turned to me again, her beautiful eyes tear-filled although her lips were a-smile.

"I am not afraid in the least *now*," she whispered. "Knock on the door, Herbert."

I did so. There was a moment's silence, and then the mellow voice of the old clergyman rang out, as it might have from his pulpit before he was pushed aside:

"Enter, in God's name."

I lifted the latch, the door swung open, and the poverty and meanness of the hut were revealed. The sight smote me to the heart.

What manner of people could his old parishioners be, to leave him here without thought for his material welfare—he who had so long been burdened with their spiritual well-being?

A more barren room one could not imagine. He evidently lived and slept in it, for a cot, ready made up with clean, coarse coverings, stood in the corner.

A fire of driftwood burned on the hearth, but the hut was not warm.

There were a few books, the lamp, a table, which held a much-worn copy of the Scriptures, and—that was all besides the settee and a stool.

The old clergyman looked at us in silence. His face beamed as though from some inward warmth, and his fingers were still interlocked before him as he stood awaiting our pleasure.

"I understand that you are a minister of the gospel, Mr. Sanderson?" I said questioningly.

"I am, young man, and have been such for fifty years," he replied simply.

"You—you are not very comfortable here, sir," I suggested awkwardly. "This—this is not what you have been used to in the past."

"I have had comfort in the past. If I bear discomfort now, it is probably good for me. I never question the Almighty, young man," he observed, with some austerity.

"I beg your pardon," I said hastily. "I—I was thinking that it was unfortunate that at your age—and alone——"

"I have a daughter in a not far distant town. I hope to go to her before long, and we shall make our home together again. She used to be my housekeeper, but a sad affliction overtook her——"

"What was it, sir?" Rose asked quickly, but in a timid voice.

"She became blind, my child," he said. "Friends kindly placed her in an institution, where she has learned to help herself in many ways, even to doing needlework that will partly support her. We shall have a home again, I hope, before long. I am only waiting to get to her——"

I understood. The old man was stranded here in the hut, with his few poor possessions, without the necessary funds to take him to the place where his daughter lived.

But although he had been frank with us, he evidently did not care to talk of his own affairs.

"What may I do for you?" he asked.

He had drawn the stool close to the feebly burning fire and motioned Rose to sit down. She sat there, looking at us over her muff, and blushing so prettily that I wanted to kiss her. I restrained myself, however, and sat beside the old gentleman upon the settee. I told him our difficulty, explaining to him our relations to each other and intentions for the future, and showing him how necessary it seemed that, by reason of these untoward circumstances, we should be wed now instead of waiting until June.

Evidently he was much pleased by my frankness. He took my hand warmly when I had finished, saying:

"And I was all but misjudging you, Mr. Pancoast! You see, we are all unwise creatures. I feared you had been drinking and that was why your sleigh was wrecked. The tavern yonder is not an orderly place."

"So I perceive. But I dare not risk

crossing the bridge with Rose—even afoot. There seems to be no other shelter for us to-night. I would be able to set my heel instantly upon any slander that raises its head after this night's adventure. So we come to you to ask you to marry us, Mr. Sanderson. I understand that no license and no witnesses but the signature of the officiating party are needed."

"You are correctly informed, Mr. Pancoast," the clergyman replied, looking benignantly upon us. "I would much rather the young woman's father were present, but she surely has arrived at years of discretion, and you have known each other from childhood, you say.

"Stand together before me, my children," he added solemnly, gathering his scant black coat about his tall form. "You both, I believe, appreciate the grave and momentous step which you are about to take—a step which shall set you apart, that shall make ye twain seem as one flesh in the eyes of men and before your Creator."

He continued solemnly with a fatherly introduction to the real service, which he repeated without the book, having learned it by heart through many, many years of usage. Had we stood before the altar of a great church, with a droning organ, lights, the pomp and magnificence of high episcopal service, the rustling of silken stuffs in the pews, and all that we had looked forward to as sure to be associated with our wedding, I am confident neither Rose nor I would have felt more solemn nor could we have more deeply appreciated the new conditions into which this simple ceremony ushered us.

"God bless you, my daughter," Mr. Sanderson said, when he had pronounced us man and wife.

He took her little hand, but Rose drew his bearded face down to hers, and, standing on tiptoe, kissed him.

"You have made me very happy, sir," she declared.

He turned to me with his deep-set eyes twinkling.

"Where will you find a more honest woman? Ah, Mr. Pancoast, you are to be congratulated!"—and he wrung my hand.

We chatted a few minutes longer, while the clergyman made out the certificate.

I again looked about the poor little place, remembered what he had told me about desiring to go to his blind daughter, and slyly counted the money I had with me. I found that I could spare a certain sum, and this I placed in an envelope, sealed it, and as he gave the certificate into Rose's keeping I handed him the envelope.

He bade us good-night and watched us half-way up the bluff, while the river boomed angrily behind the little cottage. Then he went in and shut the door.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE REVELATION.

Rose "snuggled" up to me as we walked back toward the tavern.

"Now, Herbert," she said, "do you feel a bit more sure of me than before—you foolish boy?"

"I certainly do," I declared stoutly. "Although that wasn't the mainspring of my desire to be married at once. However, I know your father will have to bring you back from Scotland now. You are my wife, dear, and even *he* cannot take you from me."

"But we must not tell him, Herbert. He would be so angry."

"We won't tell him if we are not obliged to. Your going away on Monday may make it possible to keep the matter a secret—at least until you are on the ocean. He won't know you didn't stay with Enid to-night."

"But suppose other people ask? Suppose—suppose the story gets out, Herbert?" she asked seriously.

"Then you have something there that Mr. Sanderson gave you which will refute any ill-natured gossip, my dear little girl."

"Ah! And I am going to give that to *you* to keep for me, Herbert," she said brightly. "It constitutes a claim upon me, doesn't it? Father would never try to keep me away from you when he knows I love you so much, but you can be sure of me with this in your pocket"—and she thrust the certificate into my hand.

I took it with a laugh. It never entered my mind at the moment—no more than it did hers—that the matter was really serious.

What happened the next instant was of much greater moment. I stumbled and came near falling upon my face on the hard-packed snow.

"Dear me, Herbert! Didn't you see that?" she cried. "You might have hurt yourself."

I actually had *not* seen the uneven place in the path. That confounded speck floating before my eyes had blinded me again.

"I'll tell Pettibridge what I think of him for not being able to cure a touch of liver—if that's what's the matter with me," I thought.

We again arrived at the hotel. It was late now, and even the excitement could no longer hide the fact that Rose was both tired and sleepy.

"My goodness!" exclaimed the landlady crossly. "Have you been trapseing around in the snow all this time? You can't get across the river to-night, sir."

I allowed Rose to enter the dimly lit parlor alone and I kept the woman in the hall while I explained to her what I desired. I showed her the marriage certificate.

"You will be so kind as to remember *this*," I said pointedly, "if any inquiries should be made."

"Bless us and save us! A weddin'—a runaway match, eh?" she exclaimed. "Well, well! She's certainly a sweetly pretty girl."

I had to cut short her voluble remarks. I learned that there was a bedchamber on the first floor, off the parlor. The house was now comparatively quiet.

"My wife will occupy that chamber. We shall walk to the railway station and take the early train. I will engage the parlor likewise for the night."

Seeing that I would brook no familiarity, the woman did as I bade her, airing the linen for Rose's couch and helping my little girl in some small matters of the toilet. I think my wife's loveliness and innocence rather subdued the creature.

I ordered a lamp in the parlor for myself; Rose kissed me and retired, and I sat down to my vigil. I heard the landlady for some time, and then gradually every sound about the old tavern died out and I knew that I alone was awake.

I found a paper-covered novel that wasn't so bad, and read until my eye warned me that it would stand no more abuse for that night, at least. Indeed, both my eyes felt swollen and inflamed.

I went to the window and allowed the cool air to lave my eyes and brow.

There had been a great change in the temperature. There was warning of a sudden spring thaw in the air, and as I stood there at the open casement for a few moments it seemed to me as though the voice of the river had changed.

A deeper roar vibrated upon the air, and the grinding of ice-cakes and timbers above the weakened bridge was louder than before. The moon had set, and I could see nothing but a black streak where the river flowed, but I knew the stream must be far above its usual high-water mark.

The road lay between the tavern and the river, so there was no danger of the flood damaging it, but I thought of Mr. Sanderson's little cabin below the bluff and wondered if the old gentleman was not really in danger of having even that poor habitation swept away from him.

I went back to my book, but my eyes gave me such discomfort that I could not read. Then I must have lost myself for some time, and when I was aroused it was in a sudden sweat of fear. The lamp was burning low—was on the verge of flickering out, indeed—and outside the window I saw the gray light of the clear winter dawn. The tavern seemed to rock on its foundations, and I heard a sound that, in my moment of awakening, seemed to me like the roar of heavy surf on a sea beach.

In a moment I knew what it was. The ice-bridge up-stream had burst, and the mass of water, ice and drift it had held back was pouring down the valley of the Foxcroft.

I heard somebody running down the stairs, and rushed into the hall in time to meet the man who had cared for my horses.

"It's busted!" he exclaimed, seeing me. "The bridge is bound to go now."

"Any danger to your outbuildings?" I asked him, thinking of the grays.

"Nop. We're too far up the hill to be touched," he answered, and dashed out of the house.

I went back into the parlor for my hat and coat. I listened a moment at Rose's door, but heard no sound, so I followed him.

The loudest of the uproar had died away. I looked down the stream and saw the last of the bridge beams torn from their fastenings and go swirling down-stream with the flood. The river before the tavern tossed like an angry sea and was filled with cakes of ice and various drift.

During the passage of the accumulated water it had risen almost to the level of the highway; its highest mark was plain along the bluff.

I stumbled across the road and looked down into the swirling stream. The snow had been torn from the river bank and in places the earth had been scooped away, too.

The bridge below was marked now only by two or three splintered piles and still-standing abutments. When I turned to peer in the other direction—up stream—I observed that the flood had swept the bank bare as far as I could see.

And then suddenly I cried aloud. The hostler, who was within hearing, came running to me.

I was pointing up the river with shaking finger, and he looked and understood instantly.

"I'm hanged!" he exclaimed with unfeigned pity. "Old Parson Sanderson's shack has gone! An' the old fellow in it, I bet ye!"

I could not keep back the tears. I felt somehow guilty that I had not gone down there in the night and warned the old clergyman of his danger. As we stood there, I heard the whistle of a railroad engine. It reminded me that I had intended taking the first train from the local station.

"Oh, that's only a freight," said the hostler in reply to my question. "The accommodation stops on signal at 8:15."

He left me and I started back to the tavern to arouse Rose and prepare for our early start. The sun was rising now and glared rèdly across the snow-covered pastures.

What with the abuse I had given my eyes during the night, the tears which still filled them, and the glare of the sunlight, I could scarcely see when I reached the tavern door. It was there, while I waited to wipe away the tears and compose myself before seeing Rose, that I made a discovery which fairly frightened me.

But after a minute or two I controlled the riot of emotion which possessed me, and went indoors. The noise of the freshet and the bustle of the tavern had aroused Rose, and she came from her room as fresh and blushing as divinely as her namesake on a dewy morning.

The landlady, who evidently tried to be kind in her way, served us breakfast and bade us an enthusiastic good-by when we started on our walk to the railroad station. I had been fortunate in keeping from my wife the knowledge of the dreadful fate which had overtaken old Mr. Sanderson, but despite my efforts to be cheerful she rallied me on my perturbed countenance.

In the train, and hurrying by a roundabout way to our home town (I had wired Mr. Olyphant from the station), Rose and I had some very serious converse. I lay back in the seat with my eyes closed most of the time while we talked.

We agreed that, if nothing came of our little adventure — if none of our friends heard of our being obliged to remain at the roadside hotel—we would keep our marriage a secret. Mr. Olyphant would rave did he learn that we had been married in any such way, and Rose would find the trip to Scotland unpleasant enough without his nagging her all the time about it. I knew I could fix it with Bob Angle about the horses.

Rose's father was disturbed enough over our remaining away all night, as it was. My telegram had plainly just saved his wiring Enid—and then the cat *would* have been out of the bag.

The remainder of that Sunday was a

very busy time for us all. Aunt Matilda swallowed her dislike of James Olyphant and went to the railroad station with me in the evening to see the travelers off.

Olyphant looked dour enough as I held Rose in my arms the moment before the train started and whispered my last word into her ear. It was "wife!"

Then Aunt Matilda and I rode home.

I kept my eyes closed most of the way, and aunt scolded me about abusing them.

"Dr. Pettibridge came yesterday just after you started on your sleigh-ride," she said. "He—he wanted to see you very much."

"Who was it with him?" I asked.

She started, glancing suddenly at me from the corners of her eyes, and her face flushed.

I continued:

"The other doctor, I mean. I saw them. Was it another specialist?"

"Oh, Herbert!" she whispered, clutching my arm.

"For my eyes again?" I demanded sternly.

"Ye-es. You have *got* to stop working—for a while, Herbie." Aunt Matilda felt very tender indeed when she called me *that*. "Dr. Pettibridge will bring Dr. Hanley to-morrow."

I nodded. I knew that Hanley was the name of the most famous oculist then in the metropolis. Pettibridge had desired me to see him, instead of the other man, the year before.

"So I am not bilious, after all?" I said wearily. "Well, I'm glad Rose got away without finding out what is the matter with me."

For I knew now that it was eyes. The discovery I had made early that morning at the entrance of the tavern was that my left eye was totally blind!

What I had been warned against twelve months before had come upon me!

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DARKNESS DEEPENS.

And, it seemed, what I had learned now—what had stricken me so suddenly—some of my friends had expected for some time.

The oculist who treated me the year before had warned Pettibridge that blindness might result from the trouble which then but slightly affected my sight.

Whether I used my eyes or no, the result was quite sure to be the same—only by not working at my trade I might have postponed my present condition a few months or weeks. Pettibridge did not suspect what was coming upon me at first when I went to him about the black speck, but soon he had been obliged to tell the truth to my aunt.

And then, it seemed (for I drew all this very unwillingly from Aunt Matilda that Sunday evening after we returned from the railway station), James Olyphant had learned of my coming affliction.

His taking Rose away to Scotland so suddenly was at once explained. Naturally he wished to separate his daughter from a man likely to be blind. Knowing his daughter's affection for me, and her impetuous disposition, he had feared she would insist upon marrying me at once.

"But I just told him you should marry Rose any way!" declared Aunt Matilda. "As though I couldn't do as well by you, Herbert, as James Olyphant can by Rose! What is mine shall be yours when I die, and if *that* doesn't satisfy him, I'll settle an annuity upon you for life at once."

And what could I say to the dear old creature?

Aunt Matilda was not beloved by the family in general; she was endured for her money's sake. But in these four years I had lived with her (she ungraciously asked me to come, first, because she was afraid of being robbed if there wasn't a man in the house) I had found her softer side, and learned that, to use one of her own phrases, "her bark was a sight worse than her bite!"

But I could not properly respond to her kindness.

Think of my position! Blind—or nearly so—perhaps for life; unable to help myself or to earn a penny; and I had tied to me by the bonds of wedlock the sprightly little Rose Olyphant. Oh,

how bitterly did I repent that hasty marriage in the old clergyman's hut!

Her father, I knew, had been perfectly right in seeking to save his daughter from a union with such a helpless lump of clay as I was like to be. How could a butterfly creature like Rose exist tied for life to a blind mole of a man—a helpless and dependent creature? She loved society and amusements, and all the life and gaiety to be found in social intercourse. I would be a drag upon her—a millstone about her neck.

For this evening I looked only upon the darker side of the cloud. I believed that if my left eye was affected, my right would be sure to go, too. And, any way, I must be dependent upon the charity of my friends. I could not support the wife I had married. That certificate Rose had entrusted to my care seemed fairly to burn my breast, against which it lay. Instead of its being a blessed instrument, as we had believed, it was a curse to that innocent child.

She had been kept entirely in ignorance of the state of my eyesight. I had made light of any such trouble before her, and everybody who had known what was threatening me had done their best to hide it from Rose.

Now she had started for Scotland without an iota of suspicion. During this day, while I was stumbling about as blind as a bat in one eye, she had been unconscious of my trouble. Her father hoped to wean her from me while away from home. Of that I had been assured before, but had laughed at the possibility.

Now all the circumstances had changed. If I grew totally blind, would not I be a villain to wish her to be faithful?

The thought of me as a helpless, groping creature—not a man, but a thing—might horrify her; she might shrink from ever seeing me again.

It would be better so, perhaps. And then I remembered the paper in my pocket again, and knew that fate had interfered in this matter, balking James Olyphant.

Rose was my wife; blind or seeing, I was bound to her and she to me. You may believe that I slept but little that night, despite the fact that I had dozed but a short hour in the hotel parlor the night before.

But through the long hours I formed a plan to which I determined to conform.

I would not let word be sent to Rose of my threatened peril. If James Olyphant wished to tell her, he could do so, but I would not influence her one way or the other.

He possibly believed that if Rose knew I was going blind she might shrink from me. *I* believed that if she learned of it her pity and love would bring her quickly to my side. Which of us twain were right it did not matter; I wished to be sure of my fate first before Rose was informed.

Therefore I begged Aunt Matilda to write nothing to Rose about it. I spoke cheerfully at breakfast, indeed, about my affliction. I used my right eye well enough and made light of the blindness of the other.

Aunt Matilda, however, was afflicted with "the sniffles" and I could not raise her spirits.

Pettibridge had sent up word that I was not to go out or to use my eyes until Dr. Hanley came up. They did not arrive until nearly noon.

There had been a bad wreck on the railroad, I heard the New York specialist say as they entered our hall. His examination of my eyes was very thorough and occupied more than two hours. Before it was over I must admit that my nerves became pretty raw.

I heard Mrs. Maxwell from across the street come into aunt's sitting-room, and I was glad she was there, for a few minutes later I heard aunt scream and I pretty nearly jumped out of my chair.

"What's the matter?" I demanded. "What's happened to her?"

For Aunt Matilda was usually a most calm and collected person; now she was screaming and moaning and playing the part of an hysterical patient to perfection.

"For God's sake, go out and stop that woman!" snapped Hanley to Pettibridge, and our family physician obeyed.

In a few moments they removed aunt

to her room above. Evidently the strain of waiting to hear the report on my eyes had been too much for her. I was glad Mrs. Maxwell happened to be with her.

When Pettibridge came back he seemed a good bit rattled himself. His hands shook, and he answered Hanley only in a hoarse whisper, as though there was a death in the house.

Indeed, the house *did* seem to shelter some awful tragedy. After aunt was taken up-stairs and there was some running about of servants the whole place grew wonderfully quiet.

I was assured, however, that Miss Bolis was not seriously ill.

"Just overwrought, that's all, my poor Herb," Pettibridge said in a shaking voice.

I heard the specialist address a good round oath to him at that.

They had my eyes bandaged by this time, so I was perfectly helpless. Hanley declared the only way possible to save my right eye was to keep the light from it for a time.

He was cheerful about it, however, and I did not lose my grip on myself.

But almost everybody else, including that fool Pettibridge, went about on tiptoes and asked me "how I felt now?" and whispered and otherwise acted as if the possible loss of my eyesight was a national calamity and as though everybody should go into mourning because of it.

Joe Lemmon came over before dinner and added his mite to making me feel as though I was on the brink of perdition. And Joe is unusually funny.

After he had talked to me as solemnly as a new minister for half an hour I broke out:

"For God's sake, Joe," I cried, "do something besides snivel! What's the matter with all these folks, any way? Do you think it is going to make me feel any pleasanter to act and talk all the time in a way to remind me of these blessed eyes of mine? Tell me something new. Haven't you a joke that I haven't heard? Then tell me an old one. I'm aching for a laugh! Here, get the paper. I feel lost without hearing the news. What's happened to-day? I heard that specialist say there was a big railroad wreck. Read me about it——"

And here I was cut off in my tirade by Joe unaccountably jumping up and running out of the house. And the confounded big booby was crying! He always *was* a soft-hearted chap, but I didn't know he thought so much of me as all that!

Quite a bunch of folks came in during the evening, and I made the maid bring them all in to see me, till I had a roomful.

"It's not half so lonely here in the dark when I hear you all about me," I said, and at once one foolish woman began to cry!

Oh, I was getting good and sick of it!

They sat around in groups and whispered together while one after another took up the duty of talking to me—real loud and distinctly, too, you know, as though I were deaf as well as blind.

I never realized before that I was acquainted with such a bunch of consummate asses!

Tears! Why, it seemed as though everybody was on their verge. Even Anna, the maid, cried all the time she cut up my meat at dinner and helped me find my coffee cup and knife and fork.

That meal had been an experience, however. I never knew before how really dependent we are upon sight. We are inclined to believe that our hands do many offices for us almost involuntarily—at least, with little help from the organs of vision.

But I fumbled my knife and fork; I laid down a spoon beside my plate and then could not find it again, and I tipped over my cup, when I am sure I placed it exactly where I was in the habit of putting it upon the board.

I could see, in my fancy, the lay-out of the dinner-table—knew just where the salt-cellar and pepper-shaker and the cruet-stand and other articles were always placed.

Anna swore that the table was set the same as usual and I had my usual chair in its usual place. Yet I couldn't find a thing properly.

I was finally glad when it came bedtime. Aunt Matilda had kept her room

since her bad turn, but she sent down word to have Jerome, the coachman, come in to help me to bed. I balked at that, however.

"No," I said, "I'm not going to begin that way. I have lived four years in this house.

"I must begin by helping myself, otherwise I will be a nuisance." (A burst of tears from Anna and the cook, Jerome, sniveling in the middle-distance.) "I am going to find my way up-stairs to bed, and I am going to undress myself and retire as usual. In the morning one of you can come in and lay out my clean linen and put my studs in for me, but I will not be babied! Come! Out of my way. I'm going up-stairs!"

I groped my way out of the room, colliding twice with chairs which seemed to have been out of their place. I learned later why it is a man travels in a circle when he is lost in the woods. I was lost in this darkness that had fallen upon me and I could not walk a straight line to save me.

But I reached the foot of the stairs, walked up briskly, and by trailing one hand along the wall, thus counting the doors, found my own room without difficulty. There I entered and closed the door upon the servants who begged me to allow them to assist.

I could have wept with vexation, however, despite my boldness. My helplessness made me angry as well as distraught. I was by no means in a gentle mood.

I heard the group of servants cackling outside. They expected, I suppose, to hear me fall over something or hurt myself in some other way. It was terrible to be so helpless!

And then old Jerome broke the strain of the moment, and set me in a roar of laughter, by crying shrilly through the keyhole:

"I say, Mr. Pancoast, *do* lemme in to light the gas for ye. Anna's forgot to do it."

"What the dickens do you suppose I want the gas lit for?" I returned.

The tight bandage over both my eyes made it impossible for me to distinguish between daylight and dark.

They went away after that, and I set my mind to the task which confronted me. I was determined not to give in to this handicap. I would not call for assistance, never mind what happened.

First I conjured up a picture in my mind of the bedchamber. Aunt Matilda was a very precise housekeeper, and I was a person of method myself. I could see with my inner vision just how every article of furniture looked in that room.

On a certain chair I always draped most of my clothing. A certain hook and hanger in the cupboard received this coat and vest I wore. My trousers were folded on their creases and laid in the bottom drawer of my chiffonier.

I went to work quite calmly to disrobe and without mishap arrived at the point where I desired my night-suit. The hook was empty.

I knew the drawer in which my pajamas were kept, and after a little fumbling and counting of handles found the receptacle and drew it out. But with my hands upon the piles of neatly folded jackets and trousers I was stricken with a sudden thought.

I am no dandy, but must confess to some fastidious—"finicky," Aunt Matilda calls them—tastes. I hadn't two suits of pajamas of the same color, and now if I chanced to mix them—to take half a suit of one color and half of another—the chambermaid would notice it in the morning and would discover one further mark of helplessness to relate against me.

I really had a foolish though strong objection to my misfortune being remarked upon.

"I'll tell her to-morrow to always put out my night-clothes now," I decided, and would have got into bed with my underclothing on, when, upon reaching the bed itself, I found the coverings turned back and the missing suit of pajamas lying across the pillow. And then her thoughtfulness angered me!

This whole business had got upon my nerves so that I was most unreasonable.

Even to this day, however, after a long experience as one of "those that walk in darkness," I am frequently vexed when I find that somebody has

done something for me which I have learned or should have learned to do for myself.

I am tender on that point.

Fortunately, I had no pain now in my left eye, and I slept. But some time during the night (I knew it could not be daybreak, for everything was dead quiet both in and out of the house) I awoke suddenly and from such a sound slumber that I did not realize where I was nor what had happened to me.

I had dreamed my experience in the roadside tavern over again, and sat up suddenly in bed, fearing that something had happened to my child-wife in her inner chamber. I could not understand the flat darkness that depressed me, and leaped out of bed, groping for the door (as I thought) of Rose's room. I had left the doorway of my clothes closet open, and, getting into the angle behind this, tried to fight my way to light and a knowledge of my surroundings. My feelings for the moment I was penned into the unfamiliar corner were not those which I should care to have repeated.

But soon my brain cleared, I remembered my condition and my situation, and crept back to bed much broken in spirit and lay trembling until day—the day which I feared more than I did the night, because I could not see it!

## CHAPTER V.

### WHAT ABOUT ROSE?

I WILL not weary the reader with the details of my first experiences. Those related of my going to bed that first night are sufficient to show my state of mind and the extent of my physical helplessness.

I saw, too, that if I displayed my vexation or my depression of spirits, everybody about me would be sad, too, and I had had enough of melancholy the night before. I put off the black dog when I rose and, whistling, commenced the slow task of dressing.

Anna had been in and laid out the linen as I had asked her. I got along famously with my toilet, and when I ran up the window shade at the head of my bed I felt the warm sunlight on my face and hands, and it heartened me up.

Yet there was an undercurrent of feeling that was almost uncanny. All the time it seemed as though I was being watched.

Out of the unfathomable darkness which surrounded me it seemed to my excited brain as though thousands of eyes were fixed upon me—baleful, threatening eyes; eyes that bore ill-will and hatred in their glance.

Pshaw! Don't I know it was foolish and only the fancy of my over-exerted mind? I knew it then, too. Nevertheless, I could not shake off the impression and I actually "whistled to keep up my courage."

I was like a country boy traveling the ghost-haunted cow-lane after dark.

But I felt better when I had completed my toilet, even to the tying of a four-in-hand and getting a pin stuck in it at a proper angle. How my hair looked I could not say, and I had not dared to tackle the shaving problem, although I usually performed that office of the toilet every morning.

It was not until I reached the library that I learned I was early. Anna had not finished dusting. She said something cheery about my being dressed more quickly than she had expected, and I thanked her for it.

"Your job is to smile, young woman," I told her. "Don't let's have any more tears and 'goings-on.' I'll do all the weeping that's necessary myself."

"Sure, sir; that do be a true word you're sp'akin'," she declared. "Ye've cause enough to wape."

And just then Aunt Matilda entered, caught her last words, and sent the poor girl from the room in a hurry with a sharp command. I rather thought that aunt need not have called the girl down—especially as she had gone to pieces herself the day before.

For the first time since I could remember, the old spinster came to me and kissed me warmly on the forehead.

"A fine morning, Herbert," she said, and there was a note of tenderness in her voice which, also, I had seldom discovered before. "How did you sleep?"

I told her the usual polite lie, and I

went rummaging and whistling about the room, playing a little game with myself for the nonce. It was "I spy!" with my hands—thinking of an object that I knew to be here in the library and then seeking it out by the sense of touch.

When Aunt Matilda asked me what I was doing I told her I expected to spend a deal of my time in this room for a while, and I wished to become familiar with it.

"I—I'll go and see about breakfast," she declared gruffly, and hurried out of the library—crying, I suppose. There certainly were enough tears shed around that house those first few days to wash me completely away!

That first morning I did something which the doctor had forbidden me expressly, but there was, in my mind, a good reason for breaking the law he had laid down. My private papers and letters were in an old-fashioned desk in the library—an escritoire given up by my aunt entirely to my use. Naturally there were papers which I did not wish other eyes than my own to see—especially Rose's letters.

I made an excuse to get everybody out of the room by saying that I wished to nap, and then went to the desk, bundled all the dear letters together and hid them in a drawer which I locked, hanging the key on the ring with the other keys I always carried.

With the letters I locked up the marriage certificate, and that I had to raise my bandage to make sure was the right paper when I laid it away with the letters.

It made me very unhappy for a little while. It seemed almost like putting away the keepsakes of one who had gone from me never to return. Rose was now at sea and many hundreds of miles away from me, it was true, but there was no reason, aside from my general low spirits, for me to think that harm would come to her.

Yet every time I mentioned the absent one that day Aunt Matilda had a fit of the weeps, so I learned it was best to ignore the subject. Yet I desired mightily to talk about Rose with somebody.

For, in spite of the fact that I would never have married her had I known this affliction of total blindness threatened me, the knowledge that she *was* my wife was the one bright spot in my darkened existence.

Pettibridge came fussing around and wormed out of me the admission that I had not slept but a part of the night. He gave me some powders to take and was altogether quite cheerful—in a professional way.

I had become hungry for news. I missed the daily papers, and I made him take up the latest journal and read me a column account of a social affair which I should have attended had not my confounded eyes gone back on me.

"Going to the Handel Club to-morrow night?" I asked him casually, that musical society of amateurs being one in which both he and I—and Rose, as well—were deeply interested.

He hesitated a moment and then blurted out:

"There—there isn't going to be any meeting to-morrow night."

"Why not?" I demanded in surprise.

The Handel Club gathering was something seldom postponed.

"Why — why — er — it's postponed. Did—didn't you know *that?*"

"No, I didn't," I returned, puzzled enough by his manner.

And then Aunt Matilda broke in, plainly to give the doctor a chance to recover his equilibrium. I couldn't for the life of me see the reason for so much mystery, but I said nothing more at the time.

However, I began to believe I was living in a land of problems. One occurrence after another came up which I could not understand. There never seemed to be any secrets from me about my aunt's house before, but now the very air smelled of mystery. The very next day Aunt Matilda went out about noon, and although she went in a carriage it was not her own, I knew, for Jerome was in the house at the time. I had never known her to go out in a hired hack, nor could I imagine any of her friends who would take her to drive.

Besides, she left me alone in the house with nobody but the servants, and at

other times she seemed almost afraid to let me out of her sight. When she came back (I heard the carriage wheels scrape against the curbing just before she alighted) I heard her sobbing in the hall, and she went directly to her room and did not appear again that day until dinner-time.

But I did not feel free to ask any questions.

I had a surprise that afternoon, however. I had been up-stairs (I was determined to find my way about by myself, and had warned the servants not to leave things in the way or to move pieces of furniture from their accustomed places), and on coming down somebody rang the front door bell. I had the door open before I thought about my bandaged eyes.

There was a feminine cry—a startled scream, it was. Then a sympathetic voice said, "Oh, you poor fellow!"

I didn't recognize the caller.

"I beg your pardon; come in," I said. "I really forgot I wasn't presentable. The maid will be up in a moment, I fancy. Did you come to see aunt?"

In groping for the doorknob again, to open the portal wider, my hand touched the caller's. She gave it a warm, friendly squeeze, and I returned it, holding her little hand in mine as I led her into the hall.

"Who is it?" I demanded. And as she hesitated, I laughed, determined to put a good face upon a bad matter.

"Wait!" I exclaimed. "Let me guess."

The door was closed now and nobody could see us from the street. Unaccountably the maid had not heard the summons of the doorbell.

I allowed my fingers to travel over the hand which she had given me. I lacked, of course, all of that delicate touch which my fingers have now learned, yet I knew that I must practise this sixth sense to get along at all without sight.

I found that she was below the medium height by putting my hand upon her shoulder. That shoulder was plump, and her head came just under my arm-pit. Her hair was soft of texture and its fluffiness almost startled me. A little hand, too!

"It—it can't be Enid?" I gasped. "However did you come over here today?"

It *was* Enid Olyphant, Rose's cousin.

"How did you guess?" she cried, and I thought her laugh rather hysterical.

But *that* I kept to myself. I wondered at her presence here in mid-week, and repeated my own question.

"Oh, business," she said. "I have a holiday from school. And I ran in to see your aunt for a moment——"

"And not to see me? Then I shall punish you," I declared, and bore her off to the library, where I made her talk to me for half an hour. Though, come to think of it, it was *I* who did most of the talking, after all. And the burden of my conversation was Rose—dear Rose! Enid was a good listener.

Dr. Hanley came up from New York again in about a week and looked his job over. He did not encourage me much, for I had begged him to tell me the straight facts and not falsely bolster up my hopes.

He would not allow me to have any sunlight in the room while he made his examination, and he admitted that it was possible that my right eye was already somewhat affected. I knew that myself, for I saw it before, the few moments the bandage was off—the same black speck that had floated before the other so long.

But something I was looking forward to kept my heart up, despite the physician's ill report. Soon I should hear from Rose!

They must have already reached the other side, but of course I could not expect her to think of cabling back. I figured the earliest possible moment on which I could look for a letter from my dear little girl, and when the time came tried not to seem disappointed when the postman did not bring that for which I longed.

I began making inquiries long before that, however, such as "Has the Netherlands been reported from the other side yet?"

I made Aunt Matilda look over the marine intelligence every morning until the arrival of the steamship was reported from her European port. When

no letter came after two days (following my minimum limit, I mean), I began to worry.

Had old Olyphant forbidden the girl to write me? Or had he learned of our marriage and was he so furious that Rose did not dare write? Europe is a long way, however, and many happenings might retard a first letter. But I was not in physical shape to stand much worriment of mind now, and my trouble began to be plain to my friends. I talked of little else to Aunt Matilda, I fear, but Rose's delayed letter.

The postman's whistle brought me to my feet in expectation, and every disappointment bore upon me harder. Perhaps she was ill, perhaps her father was ill—something might have happened to Rose despite the fact that the Netherlands arrived safely on the other side.

"Are you sure they made no change in their plans, aunt?" I demanded. "They were to sail on the Netherlands, weren't they?"

"Their plans were not changed in the least, Herbert," she said steadily.

"Then I cannot understand it. Mr. Olyphant would surely have cabled somebody—or written. I wonder if Enid has heard from them? Do you suppose my letter could have been lost?"

"I'll go to Enid and inquire. I'll go to-morrow," declared my aunt, made desperate at last, I fancy, by my importunity.

And the very next morning she took train to Fourscore. But she came back at night with no news.

Enid had not yet heard from her uncle or cousin. She was not worrying over it, my aunt declared, and I tried to possess my own soul with patience.

But it was hard—desperately hard. The days were so long; the nights seemed so unending. No reader who has been blessed with his eyesight all his life can imagine how darkness miserably increases the dragging of the hours—the idle hours.

For I could do nothing as yet. I tried to write, but until Aunt Matilda purchased for me a frame made expressly for the use of the blind I could not put down on paper a straight and sensible line. And at that early date I had not thought of dictating this story of my experiences—these wanderings of my soul in the Land of the Long Night!

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RIFT IN THE CLOUD.

I GREW so familiar with the library that I could move about it as quickly as any person with perfect eyesight. I had little trouble in getting around the house, too, and even tackled the shaving problem with some enthusiasm. I never could stand for another man shaving me, and after having a barber come in several days I declared I would either shave myself or raise a beard. And I persevered in spite of several gashes with which I at first decorated my cheek.

I had seen an old farmer, when I was a boy, stand in the corner of his kitchen on Sunday morning, before the spot where his morror had once hung, and shave himself as cleanly as though the glass had not been broken. What that old hayseed could do I determined was not impossible for me.

But there were few things I took an interest in. It is hard for an old dog to learn new tricks, any way. Aside from practising on the letter-writing machine, there was little to occupy brain or hands all day long.

Friends dropped in to see me, and after the first week or so they grew less melancholy. Sometimes they read to me, and I kept abreast of the day's news. Aunt Matilda would have worn herself out waiting upon me had I allowed her to do all she desired for my comfort.

The waiting for that first letter from Rose was a terrible strain upon my mind. Three days after Aunt Matilda's visit to Enid, however, it came. The postman's whistle brought me out of my chair.

I felt somehow that I was not to be disappointed this time, and when Aunt Matilda came slowly into the room again I knew that she was silently holding the letter out to me.

"It's come!" I cried, and, groping my way to her, seized the precious missive.

Having become so wrought up over this waiting, I know I cried over the letter and kissed it passionately, forgetting that aunt observed me. But by and by, when I spoke to her again, I found that she had withdrawn, and it was half an hour before she appeared in the library again.

That half-hour was spent by me in contemplating a problem which, until the letter came, had not disturbed my mind before.

I had what I wanted—a letter from Rose. But how was I to learn its contents?

I could not raise the bandage from my right eye and run the risk of undoing all the specialist was trying to do for me. Somebody would have to read Rose's letter to me.

Much as one might shrink from having a letter of this kind read by a third party, I should not long have hesitated had the relations between Rose and myself been merely those of lovers. But she was my wife!

Nobody knew this but ourselves. I did not want it known at present—even by Aunt Matilda. But there was surely no person other than her whom I could so completely trust.

I shrank from the discussion of the circumstances that I knew would follow. I was bitterly sorry now, under these distressing conditions, that Rose and I had been married. It seemed to me that I had taken an unfair advantage of the child.

But my yearning heart bore down every objection my good sense might raise. I must learn the contents of that letter. Aunt Matilda must read it to me, and when she came back I placed it in her hands with much fear and trembling.

"You will have to be eyes for me, aunt," I said. "I know that you love Rose, and so I do not so much mind your seeing her letter. Hurry! I'm hungry for it."

I thought she fumbled at the letter a good deal in opening it, but finally she got her eye-glasses adjusted and the letter spread open in her hand. I touched the sheets reverently myself—Rose's dear hands had held them!

I noticed that the letter was not written upon her usual stationery, but upon that thin paper which travelers usually secure, and it was a long letter. I waited for the first word in a fever of impatience. If Rose had addressed me as "husband," Aunt Matilda would go up in the air instantly, I knew. But this did not occur.

Rose began very demurely with "Dear Herbert," and continued in quite a conservative way. The letter was dated Edinburgh, where they had arrived before she had time, as she explained, to write to me.

It was not an eminently satisfactory letter, I must admit. Yet, how could it be, when it was being translated to me by a third party? Love letters lose their flavor under such conditions.

Yet it was an affectionate letter, couched in the warmest terms of love. There was a great deal about the voyage and what they were seeing in the Scotch capital, and very little about her own dear self.

Before Aunt Matilda was half through reading it I was impressed by the belief that Rose had been trammeled in the writing of this missive.

It seemed as though she must have expected a third person to read it. It was not right from her heart to mine, and I believed I understood the reason for this.

Her father—the old curmudgeon!—insisted upon seeing her correspondence. That was the difficulty.

And although the idea angered me, still there was a good side to it, too. As long as I must depend upon Aunt Matilda to read Rose's letters, it was just as well that the dear child felt under some restraint. Otherwise she doubtless would have said something about our midnight marriage.

As it was, Rose made no mention of our new relations. Aunt Matilda read the letter through to the last word without having her suspicions aroused for one solitary instant.

However, so inconsistent is the human mind, the fact that no mention was made in the letter of our marriage hurt me. That ceremony, brief as it had

been, was none the less solemn and binding. We had both seemed to feel that fact at the time.

So the receipt of this letter did not cheer me up so much, after all. I began to worry about my answer to it. Rose would be disappointed and hurt if she did not hear from me soon, yet I did not get along very rapidly at writing.

I knew, too, that the awkward lines I traced looked nothing at all like my usual chirography. Finally I hit upon an idea.

I had a typewriter brought into the house, and dictated an answer to Rose's letter to Joe Lemmon. It was not a very intimate epistle, for I found it worse to write a love letter by the aid of a third party than it was to have one read to me.

Rose would think it strange that I used the typewriter instead of my pen, but my handwriting was never of the best, and I wrote her a long letter. It was not the first time I had sent her typewritten letters, for I could use a machine quite handily myself. I was successful in signing the letter with my pen in quite my usual way—or so Joe assured me. And I kept the writing machine by me, for it suddenly came into my mind that blind people had learned to use the typewriter with some facility.

I already had the advantage of knowing the keyboard thoroughly, and being able (with my eyesight) to manipulate the keys at a good pace. Now I had a new incentive, and rapped away at the typewriter hour after hour, making poor Aunt Matilda read my practise work and point out the errors I made.

My ability to busy my mind and hands with something was a blessing, I believe. The last ray of hope I had had regarding my eyesight flickered out about this time.

Dr. Hanley came up again and made another examination of my eyes and took off the bandage entirely. It was no use.

I could see only dimly with my right eye, while the left was completely darkened. The disease must take its course. If there was any hope at all of my ever seeing again, it was far in the future. The specialist declared he could do nothing more.

I welcomed the change from total darkness to what seemed like a continuous dusk or evenfall. Without the bandage I could tell the difference between light and darkness, and realized the bulk of any large object before bumping into it.

I received another letter from Rose, and one that pleased me better than the first. It was a sprightly, interesting letter, too, but poor aunt wept all the way through it.

She took my condition and Rose's unfortunate affection for me sadly to heart. Much as she loved me, she saw, too, that my affliction could not now long be hidden from Rose, and she pitied the dear child!

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE WAY GROWS DARKER.

I HAD an abnormal horror during these first weeks of my affliction of being pitied for it. My friends quickly learned this and avoided the subject of my blindness as much as possible.

But to go out-of-doors and know that I was being observed by strangers, and probably exciting pitying glances and sympathetic whispers, so troubled me that I stuck close to the house until Pettibridge fairly drove me out.

Naturally, this inactivity, as well as my great worriment of mind, told sadly upon my general health. I became but the ghost of my former self, was nervous, low spirited, and altogether a sick man without having any organic difficulty of any kind.

Pettibridge finally declared that I must ride out every day, and made me walk in the open air, too. The smallest incident or excitement disturbed me in the state of weakness into which I had slid, and I know my friends kept many small matters from me for fear I should be disturbed.

For instance, I had not ridden a mile the first time with Aunt Matilda, when I was assured that Jerome was not driving the old pair. I knew the gait

of Joe and Joney perfectly, and although I thought I recognized Joney's peculiar "clipity-clip," the step of the other horse was not like Joe's. I called my aunt's attention to this, and after at first trying to make light of my acute hearing she finally admitted that Joe had been hurt and they had to shoot him. This was a new mate for Joney.

"It's wonderful how you notice little things, Herbert," she said. "I didn't tell you because I thought it would be an unpleasant subject. Poor Joe was such a good horse."

The acuteness of my hearing surprised me as well. I found that even while we may have perfect eyesight, we accept a good many things from the sense of hearing, just the same. It is particularly so with the footsteps of those with whom we are familiar. Indoors I can be sure of the identity of every member of the household who passes through the hall. It is not necessary for them to enter the library for me to know who my visitors are.

In trying to walk by myself outside of the house, however, I made a sad mess of it at first. I took a cane and paced up and down the gravel walk between the porch and the gateway, but my mind would wander off, and I would forget to count my strides, and bump into one or the other goal in the most awkward fashion.

But leaning on Joe Lemmon's arm, or with Aunt Matilda leading me, I got along much better. In quiet places I did not so much mind.

Some weeks had passed now since I had been stricken, and it was approaching Memorial Day. Aunt Matilda, being a set person, always went to the cemetery about this time of the year to see that our family lot was put in order against the day when my grandfather's comrades should come to decorate his grave.

We drove out one afternoon and left the carriage at the keeper's lodge, for our lot was up a side path and not far from the gateway. I remembered it very well, for I had often visited the spot. My own mother and father were buried here, too.

James Olyphant had purchased the lot next to ours and erected a tall granite shaft upon it—an ostentatious monument which fitted the man's character. I knew every stone upon both these lots, and the path to them was familiar to my feet, too.

With my cane tapping the gravel before me, I walked on ahead of aunt, who had stopped to transact some business with the man in charge. The place was dead quiet; I heard no human voice, and only the faint rattling of the lawn mowers where the workmen were cutting the grass in some other part of the cemetery.

And yet, as I went slowly forward, I was impressed with the feeling that somebody was quite near me. It was not aunt, for I did not hear her step on the gravel.

It is strange—I cannot explain myself very clearly on this point—but the blind feel things which the man with sight never notices. The presence of a stranger in the room where I sit affects me altogether differently from the presence of a friend or one with whom I am familiar.

I felt now that some person was near me, and it was a person whom I knew. But it was not one with whom I had been familiar of late; I was sure of that.

I halted once in the path, gently feeling around with my cane, and found the corner of the granite coping which bounded our lot. I knew exactly where I was then. Twenty-five feet ahead was the adjoining lot of Mr. Olyphant.

Along the front of our lot were four stones—my father's, my mother's, my Aunt Celia's and Josie Bannon's, Aunt Celia's boy who had died in youth. On the front of the Olyphant lot there was but one headstone—that of Rose's mother.

I walked on again slowly, letting my cane strike against the stones as I passed, and all the time knew myself to be approaching the person whose presence I had felt.

Suddenly I stopped short. The individual, strangely silent, stood just before me.

"Who—who is it?" I asked, my voice shaking, for somehow the incident deeply impressed me.

There was no reply, yet I knew that the person had started and turned to look at me.

I had come so close that my outstretched hand touched the sleeve of his coat, for it was a man.

But he sprang away, although he uttered no sound, and the next instant I heard the dull thud of his feet upon the sod. He had stepped off the gravel walk so as to avoid me.

He must have been standing before the Olyphants' lot, contemplating the monument or the headstone of Mr. Olyprant's wife. The touch of my hand had assured me of his position when I so startled him.

Who could it be? I knew all about the Olyphant family—rather, about the lack of such a family. The old gentleman, Rose and Enid were all there were. Who could this man have been? I stepped a little farther on and found Mrs. Olyphant's stone; then, as I swung about to turn my face toward the direction from which I had come, the ferrule of my cane touched a second headstone.

It was not directly next to Mrs. Olyphant's; there was a space between Rose's mother and this new stone—a space which old Olyphant had often said should be occupied by his own grave.

I stepped forward, dropped my cane, and felt of this new stone. And it *was* new, so new that the marble cutters were still at work upon its face. I found the scroll work and spelled out "In Memoriam." Below that the face of the stone was still blank. And at that moment Aunt Matilda came panting up to me. She had evidently seen my attitude and knew what I was doing.

"That—that isn't on our lot, Herbert," she cried. "Come away."

"But it's on Mr. Olyphant's," I said in wonder. "What does it mean? Who has been buried here? Who was that man who just ran away from me? He was standing before this stone."

She broke out into wild sobbing, and sought to drag me away. I could not understand her emotion. I knew that it was neither James Olyphant nor his daughter buried there. And then the explanation of the puzzle flashed athwart my mind.

"It is Enid! Poor, poor Enid!" I cried. "Oh, aunt, and you never told me—I never saw her after she came that day——"

"Enid!" gasped my aunt.

"And that must have been Brentwood Pratt who stood here—the man who ran away from me. Didn't you see him?"

"Yes," she whispered, still clinging to my arm; but she had stopped sobbing, and her muscles and nerves both seemed tense.

"It *was* Pratt?" I asked again.

"Yes, it was Mr. Pratt. He—he comes here often. It is a sad blow to him," aunt said in a perfectly colorless voice.

"Poor, poor fellow!" I exclaimed. "And she seemed such a fine girl, too—though I never knew her very well. Why, Rose can't know it yet!" I added suddenly.

"She hadn't heard when she wrote the last time to you, that is true," Aunt Matilda declared.

"Then Mr. Olyphant didn't have this stone erected?"

"Mr. Pratt did that. He has taken full charge of the matter. Oh, Herbert, come away! You—you will break my heart!"

I could not understand her hysterical manner and her words, but I knew that she was in no mood to be questioned further. So we went home at once.

I had no idea that Aunt Matilda thought so highly of Enid Olyphant. Indeed, I did not know that she was any better acquainted with Rose's cousin than myself.

I was deeply sorry for Brentwood Pratt. He had impressed me as being rather a good fellow, and although Enid seemed to treat him rather cavalierly, he evidently worshiped her.

I sat down at my typewriter, which I manipulated rather well now, and wrote him a note of condolence. Such words as one can say at such a time mean so little, yet I wished him to know that I bore his trouble in mind.

And how Rose would grieve over her cousin's death! Rose had loved Enid devotedly. With this thought, too, came one that made my heart beat faster.

This death in the family would surely bring the European trip to a close. Mr. Olyphant would not keep his daughter traveling about in the Highlands any longer. He would bring her home, and I should have my Rose again.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MARAH.

THE next day Aunt Matilda related to me in full the particulars of Enid Olyphant's death.

Enid had few social ties in our neighborhood and among our clique, so it was not at all strange that nobody had mentioned her death to me. Besides, I presume that aunt had warned everybody who came in to see me what subjects to avoid.

I know that, aside from Joe and the doctor, no visitor ever got as far as the library door without being catechized by my aunt. Let the door-bell ring, and there she was promptly in the hall to head off bores or to instruct well-meaning friends whom she feared would open some topic of conversation that might disturb my tranquillity. It was laughable to see her exertions in this line, but I could not hurt her feelings by asking her to drop her oversight of my personal affairs.

I could not go out of the house for a walk up and down the path without her coming to see how I got on—so she said. I knew she was there to watch who might hail me from the street and to hear what was said to me. I must admit that such surveillance was hard to bear, and I would have stood it from no other person alive. Aunt was completely wrapped up in my welfare—she would have suffered anything to shield me from trouble and lavished every attention and luxury upon me. So how could I object to her attentions?

It was this day following our visit to the cemetery, too, that something happened to puzzle me. Possibly blindness had made me more suspicious than I should be. It is hard not to believe that those about me, who see everything, are not taking advantage of my inability to distinguish objects.

It was time to expect another letter from Rose; I had the European mails figured down to a hair by this time, you may believe. So when I heard the postman's whistle I started for the door.

The maid took the letters to bring in, and I called to her:

"Anna, is there one for me?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" she replied, and I knew that she started toward me. But aunt was before her. She came suddenly from the parlor, where she had been dusting bric-à-brac which she trusted to the hands of no servant, and I heard her snatch the letter from Anna's hand.

The girl cried out in alarm.

"It's only an advertising circular," aunt declared sharply.

Anna scuttled away to the back of the house and I withdrew to the library, but I was puzzled and suspicious. Surely Aunt Matilda would not try to keep me from receiving Rose's letter. She loved Rose almost as well as she did me, and she was desirous of seeing us happily married.

It was not until two days later that Rose's letter came, and I could not figure that out. It must have been held up at the New York office for some reason, and I remarked about it to my aunt. But she went on reading it aloud in a hard voice and made no comment. Somehow that letter did not seem like Rose at all. I suppose the poor girl was so disturbed over Enid's death that she could think of little else. For she had heard of that unfortunate matter and spoke of it at length in the letter.

Indeed, the epistle was cold and formal all the way through. The expressions of affection seemed forced. Actually, the sentences seemed turned unlike Rose's manner of writing. She used phrases which I had never known her to use before. Indeed, had I not known better, I would have thought some other person had written that letter.

But I placed it away with the others I had received from Scotland, and put the strangeness of it down to my own inordinately suspicious nature. One thing, however, hurt me sadly. Rose said nothing about returning, nor had she even hinted in any letter about our

secret marriage. Her father must still be reading every line of her correspondence to me.

Naturally, I had said nothing in my own letters to give the old gentleman an iota of suspicion. Nor did I broach the subject of her home-coming. I longed for her with all my heart, yet I shrank from having her discover my terrible affliction.

Ah! During those weeks I drank bitter waters indeed!

Outdoor exercise did not seem to do my body the offices which Pettibridge required. I could not see how badly I looked, but I realized that I was pretty nearly all skin and bones, and the lassitude and irritability I suffered assured me that beside my blindness I was a very sick man.

The month in which Rose and I were to be married was at hand. Surely her father could say or do nothing to keep her away from me longer. And yet I knew it was actually wicked to desire her to come.

What right had I—a helpless, groping creature—to declare my legal bond to Rose Olyphant? I swore to myself that, were I half a man, I would take that marriage certificate and destroy it.

The clergyman who had married us and was himself the only witness to the ceremony was dead—swept away in the breaking up of the Foxcroft River. If I destroyed the paper and denied the marriage, Rose would be free. At least, in my then state of mind this misshapen idea took deep root.

It was little wonder, therefore, that my health steadily declined. With my soul crying out for the woman I loved—for her who was more than all else in the world to me—yet knowing that it was a dastard's part to desire her return or to claim any right to her, I wonder that I did not go mad!

The warm and beautiful days that had now come brought me no joy. I hated to exert myself sufficiently to go out-of-doors at all, but lay a good deal on my couch under the library windows and dozed away most of the day.

One afternoon I lay here when Pettibridge came. My aunt happened to be in the garden, and I heard them pacing the walk together for some minutes before the doctor came in to see me.

I was too languid to exert myself to listen; I had no such desire, indeed. But Rose's name used by Pettibridge in a question gained my attention. I heard Aunt Matilda say:

"She will not write another."

I started, pricking up my ears.

It was almost time for another letter from Rose; did my aunt refer to her? A murmur of voices followed, and then as they passed my window again, Pettibridge exclaimed:

"She must come home, I tell you! I will not be responsible for his life if this keeps on. I mean that exactly, Miss Bolis."

They walked out of earshot then; when they returned I heard aunt sobbing. Pettibridge was still talking, but in a very low voice.

I shrank from telling the doctor that I had been playing eavesdropper, but that night before aunt kissed me goodnight (which she always did now), I said to her:

"One thing you must promise me, Aunt Matilda. Rose has said nothing about coming home yet. You, nor nobody else, must write to her about my eyes. She must not be hurried home. I—I cannot marry her, any way, in my present condition. I am helpless."

"Oh, Herbert!" she gasped.

"I want your promise. You will not have her told—you will forbid it?" I cried.

"I promise," she whispered. "Nobody shall write Rose that you are blind"—and then she burst into tears again.

But my making such a brave stand against my secret longing and desire did not end them. I was wearing my heart away for Rose.

I could think of nothing else but her possible return. I dreamed of her at night, and thoughts of her colored my day visions as I lay upon my couch by the windows.

Sometimes I believed she must be near me and that either untoward circumstances or the attitude of her father was keeping her from my side.

Once indeed I could have sworn that I

neard James Olyphant's harsh voice at our garden gate.

And to add to all this bitterness the days slipped by, one after the other, and no more letters arrived from Scotland. The words I had heard my aunt speak to Pettibridge came to my mind again and again:

"She will not write another."

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHAT DREAMS MAY COME.

I RECKON that poor Pettibridge was at his wits' end with me about this time. He declared my system "wouldn't respond" to his remedies. But when a man has reached that point where he is pretty sure he doesn't desire to live, doctors' messes are not going to help him much. Score one for *that* argument of Christian Science.

I grew very weak, and I know that I was light-headed at times. Visions, both in my bed and by day, all inspired by my thoughts of Rose, haunted me.

I remember one, which occurred about this time, most clearly. I was, as usual, lying on the library couch. It seemed as though Aunt Matilda came into the room very softly, and she led by the hand a heavily veiled figure. I knew who it was, yet my heart did not leap; it seemed dead to the joy of her coming —for the veiled figure was Rose. They stood and looked down upon me for a long time in silence, and by and by I thought the veiled figure began to sob, shaking all over from the vehemence of her emotion.

Then aunt whispered:

"Will you not do this, child? Think what it means to me—to us all! Will you not do it to save his life?"

And then Rose's wraith, or spirit, or whatever the vision was, turned and threw her arms about aunt's neck, and I heard her sob:

"God pity him — and me! *I will do it!*"

The room was quite empty when I started up, broadly awake.

It was not long after this, however, that I began to notice a marked increase in Aunt Matilda's cheerfulness. Her step grew brisker; she talked with me more happily, and once I actually heard her humming a hymn, which showed the height of good spirits on her part.

There was a bustle about the house—an undercurrent of expectation or something like that—which impressed me, too.

A man who is blind feels every heart-throb of humanity more deeply than he who depends upon sight for sensation. "There was something in the air"—something was about to happen, and, I believed, something of a pleasant nature.

However, aunt's nervousness was plain through it all, too. She was in and out of the library a dozen times in half an hour. She couldn't sit still, and she was on the verge forty times a day of telling me something, but seemed afraid to broach it.

But I realized all this without a particle of added interest. My mind seemed benumbed.

People came in to see me—not so many nor so frequently as they had at first, as my blindness was getting to be an old story now—and talked upon one subject or another without arousing an iota of animation on my part. I did not go out at all, despite the doctor's pleadings. It seemed to me that everybody I passed on the street stared at me—pityingly or otherwise. Their glances burned.

One afternoon I roused suddenly from a long, unhealthful nap, and lay a moment feeling the cool breeze (which heralded the ending of a rather hot day for June) blowing upon my forehead. I could hear the vines shake and rustle outside the window and the distant creak of Aunt Matilda's rocker at the other end of the veranda.

Propped against the leather-covered cushions as I was, I finally reached out a hand for my pipe and tobacco pouch—the one comfort left me. The stand was beside the head of the couch as usual, but the smoking materials seemed to have been removed.

I grew irritable if anything was touched or misplaced in the library. I fumbled about the stand for the pipe and pouch, growing more and more im-

patient as time passed and the exasperating things would not be found.

Finally, when I knocked a book from the table's edge and almost tipped the table itself over, I swore—and yet the oath was half a sob, too, for I was as weak as water.

I am ashamed now of my unmanliness, but both mind and body were strained to their utmost tension. Suddenly I stopped in this vain search and half-rose from the couch, gasping. There had been an echo to that sob of mine!

There was somebody in the room—somebody whose presence had not become familiar to me by that subtle sense which I had acquired since entering this vale of darkness. And yet I was firmly impressed that my visitor was no stranger.

Who had been sitting here watching me while I slept? Whose sympathy was moved so deeply by my blundering helplessness?

I stretched out my hands, groping for the presence I longed for and yet almost feared to find. The half-stifled sobs continued.

"Who is there? Who is it? Speak, for God's sake!" rasped from my throat.

There was the rustle of a woman's gown, a faint perfume was wafted to me, and I knew that she stood before me within the circle of my widespread arms.

"Rose!" I cried. "Rose—my Rose!"—and I crushed her to my heart.

It was real — tangible! Not the astral shape which I had almost expected, but the breathing, palpitating, warm body of my love, who had been so long from me—of the girl I had petted and chided and laughed with and laughed at while she budded into womanhood. *I clasped in my arms the woman who was my wife!*

For fully a minute I stood waveringly upon my feet, and so held her—her face pressed close against my bosom, her sobs shaking her form. But the shock was too much for my little strength, and in spite of the great wave of joy that surged up within me I sank back almost helpless upon the couch.

Rose uttered a stifled scream. Aunt's chair stopped creaking, but I knew that, although she had heard, she did not rise to come to us.

Doubtless Rose had demanded this—that we meet alone and unobserved by any soul. And I thanked her for it in my heart. But now I said reassuringly:

"Don't be afraid, dear; I'll be all right in a minute. This—this came so suddenly upon me. But joy cannot kill!"

I stretched out my arms to her again. She seemed to hesitate.

"Rose, darling," I whispered, "do you realize how helpless I am—what a poor, miserable thing I have become? I am not a man——"

Her little hand fell across my lips and stopped my speech.

"No, no, Herbert! You must not say that!"

"It is true, dear. Blind! Think of it! I cannot earn my living nor your support. I am a pauper, depending upon my aunt's charity for the very food I eat!"

What would she say? I felt that I must know her feeling toward me here and now. Had my loss of sight made any difference to her?

And Rose said never a word. But slowly, tremblingly, almost shrinkingly, I thought, she bent her face down to mine until her sweet lips fell where the soft palm had rested the moment before. Then she writhed out of my arms—those arms which would have held her forever. But I laughed. In that caress I read my answer!

Did we talk? I believe so; but what was said during that first hour I could not have told.

She sat beside the couch and held my claw-like hand in both of hers, and I know that her converse soothed me, and that for the first time since I had known blindness was inevitable that great dead-weight of doubt was lifted from my heart.

*Rose loved me still!*

Yet I knew her tender little heart was wrung for my affliction. Her voice trembled, and the tears came now and then. But I could only laugh—excepting when we spoke of Enid.

I saw that *that* moved her much; she

had loved her cousin devotedly, for they had spent a deal of their girlhood together.

We talked of little of importance to anybody but ourselves.

"You will grow well and strong now, won't you, Herbert?" she said several times. My illness seemed to trouble her greatly.

"I will promise to become an athlete, a giant—if a blind one!" I cried. "Now that I know you love me—that it makes no difference to you—I can do anything."

She hid her face against my shoulder again and I felt her body trembling. And then I heard Aunt Matilda coming, and Rose sprang away from me with that foolish modesty which some girls have.

I suppose, had I not lacked sight, she could not have brought herself to the point of showing me the tenderness she had!

My face must have told aunt how Rose's coming had affected me.

"Thank God, my dear, dear boy!" she murmured. "And thank *you*, too, dear child!"

I heard her kiss Rose, and I smiled contentedly. I knew I did not deserve this blessing and that I had been wofully selfish to desire it, but I was still weak enough to be glad.

"Now you must leave him to rest," Aunt Matilda said cheerfully. "A whole hour! Why, he's feverish now."

"Nonsense!" I declared. But they both overruled me, and aunt carried Rose away with her.

She touched my hand only in parting, when I would have been glad of her lips again. But she seemed afraid to display her affection before aunt. They went out slowly, my good old relative telling me to lie down and nap again, "like a good boy."

But I was afraid to do that—the sleeping part, I mean. I was foolishly thinking that perhaps Rose's coming was only another dream, after all! And as I lay there and thought of it, and felt again in memory her lips upon mine and her warm little palms holding my hand, I was of a sudden smitten with a startling thought.

Rose had been with me for an hour, and she had said nothing about our marriage—nothing about our experience the night we were held up at the roadside tavern beyond the Foxcroft!

## CHAPTER X.

### DRIFTING.

Rose came every day to see me, remaining for longer periods as I grew stronger. For really, foolish as it may sound, all that had been the matter with me was worriment of mind.

Now that my doubts were set at rest, Pettibridge declared I might throw his medicines away.

We were not often alone, of course, for aunt had some old-fashioned notions, and I wondered that she had given us that first hour to ourselves. Had she known that she was playing chaperon to a married couple—wedded now more than three months—imagine her surprise!

But neither that first day nor for a long time did Rose or I speak of our real relationship to each other. I did not wish to broach the subject for two very good reasons.

In the first place, I knew that, afflicted as I was, I should not be married to any woman. I was a dependent upon charity; I was helpless; I would be a burden to any woman. And the blind are a burden that strain forbearance and sympathy almost as much as the deaf. There is that innate in every man to defend and support the woman he loves. I could do neither.

Then, how could I demand the right over Rose which I had gained by a trick—an involuntary trick, perhaps, but, nevertheless, trickery it was! If she did not mention our wedded state, I could not. And she seemed to avoid all reference to the subject and to the trip we made together to Fourscore. It had been the last time she saw her cousin alive, and any mention of Enid I saw hurt her terribly still. I did not like to speak of the death of old Mr. Sanderson, the clergyman who married us, either. That would have added to her sadness, I felt certain.

And, in spite of my blindness, I realized very soon that Rose was not happy. Something besides my affliction troubled her—something I could not fathom and which she evidently did not wish to discuss with me.

In fact, there were several matters we both learned to avoid. Rose seldom hinted at my blindness—she never wept over me after that first day, but became a far more cheerful comrade than even Joe Lemmon, who had recently gone to Canada on a business trip and whom I promptly forgot to miss now that Rose had come.

I found she did not care much to talk about her experiences abroad. I had heard about all she could tell me, so she said; she had written her impressions in her letters to me.

Which was quite true; her letters had been more "newsy" than loving.

I found that her father was another good subject to dodge. As he had not been to call on me, I saw that the old man did not approve of our continued intimacy. I reckoned that he had given her a hard time of it while in Scotland, and nothing but Enid's death had brought him home at all.

Aunt told me, when I inquired, that Mr. Olyphant was much broken over his niece's taking away. He had loved Enid in his stiff fashion almost as much as he did his own daughter. He would have done much more for her had Enid not been so independent a girl.

We did not say much to each other about Enid—Rose and I, but one day I mentioned Brentwood Pratt. What had become of him? He had never responded to the note I had written to him when I first learned of Enid's death. And I told Rose of my experience that day in the cemetery.

I suddenly found that Pratt was another subject of conversation that Rose did not encourage.

"I do not know what has become of Mr. Pratt," she said very bruskly and in a tone that warned me that the young lawyer was not on her good books.

Aside from these matters, of which we mutually though silently agreed to say nothing, our intercourse was most delightful during those first few weeks following Rose's return. I went out again; I felt as though I could stand the observation of the public if Rose was by my side.

Health came back to me. I learned daily to care better for myself and depend less upon others for the small things of life, and my cheeriness grew. I know this last was a fact, for I heard a visiting friend say as much to Aunt Matilda.

"How *can* he be so happy and bright, Miss Bolis?" she observed.

"Because he's the best and most patient boy who ever lived," declared my aunt, whose opinion of me these days had become strangely perverted.

Aunt had Jerome harness old Joney to the runabout almost every afternoon, and Rose drove me about the countryside. We would find some pretty spot, get out of the carriage, and "picnic."

I thoroughly enjoyed going where there were no people, for I could not wholly forget that I was something in the nature of a "freak."

Once I suggested our driving out Fourscore way. This sprang from the same desire, I suppose, that sets a child to playing with fire. There was danger in it.

But Rose made no comment, and chatted on with me as brightly as ever. We played a game those days which now seems childish, but the reader must remember that a person in my situation is a good deal of a child. We who travel in the Land of the Long Night have so few interests!

If we drove or walked a familiar way—a path or road that had been known to me when I was of the other world, the seeing world—I would try to picture in my mind the landmarks by the way and guess from time to time how far we had come.

Rose would halt me at a corner and say, "Now, whose house is this?" And I would try to see that particular house in my mind's eye as I once had seen it with my eye of flesh.

This day, when we passed through Engleton and arrived at the Foxcroft River, I made her stop and tell me all about the new bridge which had been built in the place of the one carried away

by the freshet at daybreak on that wild March morning.

The river flowed peacefully now, and the banks, which had been excavated by the ice and floating débris, Rose said were green again. It must have been a pretty scene that day, looking up the valley from the point where she had halted Joney.

"Do—do you see the little cottage on the other bank, Rose?" I almost whispered.

I knew that I was treading on dangerous ground, but something forced me to ask the question.

I surely did not wish to sadden her by relating how old Mr. Sanderson had met his death.

"Why, there isn't any cottage there, Herbert," she said—and she said it without the first sign of emotion. It rather shocked me.

She had never intimated by word or action that she remembered the experiences of that March night. Had she forgotten? Was it possible?

"And the tavern?" I asked.

"Oh, the old house has been burned down. Didn't you know that? A good thing, too, I guess. It never was a very nice place.

And so she dismissed the subject quite coolly.

But as we returned through Engleton, Rose suddenly stopped in some laughing remark she was making, and I heard her utter an exclamation of fear. I started, turning my sightless eyes toward her, and demanded:

"What is it? What is the matter, dear?"

Her only reply was to touch Joney with the whip and start him off at his best pace. I thought I heard somebody shout behind us and was frightened—for her.

It is terrible to feel yourself utterly unable to shield the woman you love from threatened danger.

"What is it?" I repeated, realizing that Rose was panting and sobbing now.

"Somebody I did not wish to see, Herbert," she moaned. "Oh, I wish we had not driven over here—I do, indeed."

I knew she kept looking back toward the village, and poor old Joney, used to jaunting along as he pleased with us, snorted as he felt the sting of the whip again. Rose was not recovered from her excitement when we reached home.

I must admit that I was hurt. I did not wish to ask who the person was of whom she had displayed so much fear, but I thought she would have made some explanation.

She did not, however, and she ran away from me that day without kissing me good-by, and I did not see her again for two days. I worried over the incident a good deal, but I did not feel like asking about it when she returned to me again, as she ignored it herself.

Suspicion is an awful bugbear to fight. When once my mind had been tainted with it, its influence spread with marvelous rapidity. From the day of our adventure at Engleton I began to feel that all was not right between Rose and myself.

Her systematic ignoring of our marriage appeared to me in an entirely different light. No longer did I set it down to maidenly modesty or to any other minor reason.

I would not have mentioned it myself. I felt that I had no right to claim her as my bride, and until her father agreed to our fulfilling the contract we had made with each other I did not blame her for shrinking from making the truth public.

Now, however, I gave an entirely different coloring to her silence. Who was it we had seen in Engleton—the person who had frightened her and from whom she had run away? Was it some other man—some other whom she did not wish me to meet?

And was her feigned ignorance of our marriage a deliberate intention on her part to deny it?

It was an awful suspicion to enter my heart, but it found lodgment and rankled there.

The clergyman who had married us was dead. Did she know that? And the tavern was burned down, and the woman who had run it—and to whom I had shown the marriage certificate—was probably gone from the neighborhood.

Had Rose denied our marriage, and

did I desire to prove we *were* married, what evidence could I bring to refute her denial? The certificate itself? Ah! But did I *have* that paper now?

Yes, it is an awful admission to make, but suspicion breeds suspicion. If Rose wished to deny our marriage, would she not go a step further and gain access to my desk, where I had kept the precious document since I had become an invalid?

God forgive me! I could not get that poison out of my thought. It hammered insistently at the doors of my mind by day, and at night kept me awake. I began to slide back on the slippery climb to health.

Rose treated me just as she had before our fateful drive; she seemed as anxious for my welfare, as kind, as sympathetic without being pitying. But I could not get rid of the terrible suspicion.

Joe Lemmon wrote me from Canada and Rose read the letter to me the afternoon it arrived, just before she herself left for home. It was growing late and she was forced to hurry her departure. James Olyphant was growing more exacting and irritable from day to day, I understood.

"There! That is all Joe's letter!" she exclaimed, folding the sheets and thrusting them into the envelope. "Here it is, Herbert—I must run."

We were alone in the library at the moment. Rose, I must say, seemed rather afraid of Aunt Matilda, for when that good soul was near she seldom displayed affection for me other than a sister might have shown.

Now, when she had put on her hat, she bent over me as I lay on my couch and her arms went softly about my neck.

"Dear boy," she said," you don't look so well these past few days. What is the matter? Are you unhappy?"

How could I doubt her when she used *that* caressing tone? I was a fool, and told myself so angrily.

"I must certainly have a mean disposition!" I exclaimed, laughing. "I should have no valid reason for unhappiness when you are like—this!"

I kissed her—full on the lips, and I made her return it, too, before letting her go. I could feel the blood glowing in her cheek and neck, and never was woman so consummate an actress as she if her caresses were not from the heart.

How could I doubt her love? I clung to her slender hands and kissed the finger-tips.

And just then, while her little hands lay confidingly in mine, I made a discovery. Rose was not given to the wearing of much jewelry, and her hands did not need the flash of gems to hide their lack of symmetry.

She had always worn a ring or two—ordinary gewgaws such as schoolgirls pick up. We had been old-fashioned enough when we became engaged to dispense with the ring which usually accompanies that ceremony, and naturally she wore no wedding ring.

But her cousin Enid had worn several jewels on her fingers—one ring being of a peculiar setting which I remembered very clearly. I remembered it particularly from that day poor Enid had come to call upon me just after Rose went to Scotland, for in shaking hands with her I had felt the ring.

Now I found it on Rose's hand. I could not be mistaken; my touch was too sure for that.

"Enid's ring—I remember it!" I exclaimed unthinkingly, holding up the finger which bore the peculiarly set jewel.

Rose started with a little cry and tried to draw her hand away.

"Did I hurt you?" I asked.

"No!"

"Then what is the matter? Isn't that Enid's ring?"

"Yes!" she whispered in a breathless way, and finally extracted her hand from my clasp. "I—I wear it now," she added, and in a moment, and without a further word of good-by, she ran out of the room.

I was puzzled. Perhaps I should not have mentioned the ring, as it recalled her dead cousin. Yet if Rose did not wish to be reminded of Enid, why did she wear this keepsake?

Finally I rose slowly with the letter from Joe, and went to the escritoire to put it away. Blind though I was, I still made some effort to be methodical. I made a separate bundle of the letters of

each of my few correspondents. When I opened my letter drawer the first packet under my hand contained the letters Rose had written me from Scotland. I picked them up, held them a moment thoughtfully, and then pressed them to my lips.

"They must not remain here with my ordinary letters," I thought, with a lover's foolish fancy. "I—I'll put them in that other drawer — in the drawer with the certificate."

And then, as I picked up Joe's letter again, running the tips of my fingers over the face of it, I bethought me that his was the only other foreign letter I had received since my affliction. The envelope and paper was of the same quality as that Rose had used. I touched the stamp in the corner. It was the small English stamp used in England's colonies as well as in the mother country. It was narrower and shorter than the United States stamp.

Suddenly I dropped Joe's letter and seized the packet containing Rose's. My trembling fingers sought the upper right hand corner of the first envelope. Then I tore off the rubber band which held them together and felt of the faces of letters one after another. Had I made a mistake? Was this the wrong packet of letters? Weren't they Rose's, after all?

I counted the few packets in the drawer and then counted the number of letters in this lot. I could not be wrong.

These were surely Rose's letters to me from Scotland, the letters Aunt Matilda had read to me—the letters which had been my only comfort while my dear little girl was away.

And yet I had made a startling discovery — a discovery which shook me heartily. I could not understand it, and went all over the letters again with eager fingers to convince myself. It was true; I could not doubt it. The stamps upon Rose's letters were not English stamps at all!

They were not like that upon Joe Lemmon's letter. Indeed, they were just the size and shape of our ordinary United States two-cent stamp! Letters from Scotland could not be sent with domestic stamps. If those letters had been mailed across the sea, English stamps must have been used.

What did it mean? The mystery appalled me.

All through these months that I was receiving the letters, something had been kept from me.

I had been deceived in some way, and I believed I had at last touched the clue to the mystery.

## CHAPTER XI.

### "POOR PRATT!"

I MUST have sat before the desk for an hour, the packet of letters in my hand, going over the memory-record of their contents and all the incidents connected with their receipt. Suspicious as my blindness had made me, and clear as my mind was as to the details, I could not understand *how* I had been deluded.

Indeed, I did not know—I could not imagine — in what manner I was deceived.

But that there was something vitally wrong with the whole affair I was sure. Letters cannot be sent from the possessions of his majesty with American stamps upon them. And if Rose did not send them from Scotland, where were they mailed?

Did she mail them to somebody on this side and that person remail them to me?

If so, why? Did her father so greatly object to her correspondence with me?

And, remembering the fact that only in one instance was her letter delayed (I was positive that my information regarding the mails from Scotland was right because I had personally gained it before I was stricken with blindness), I could not understand any possible scheme of remailing.

Hold! Was it possible that Rose had not been in Scotland at all? Could she have written such circumstantial and chatty letters of travel without having been personally to the places? I had heard that a smart "penny-a-liner" can do a good deal with his imagination and a Bædeker in writing tales of travel, but

Rose had never impressed me as possessing such a wealth of fancy as her letters must have displayed if she had not really been to Scotland. And if she did not go, why was I not told? Was it probable that James Olyphant had refused to countenance our intimacy until my health became such that they feared (according to what I heard Pettibridge say to my aunt) for my very life?

And then, seeing no other way out of it, he had allowed Rose to "come home" merely to save me? Had she been at home all the time? Had their starting for Scotland been merely a "bluff"?

Oh, it was a foolish supposition, I know. And yet, what could I think?

What explanation seemed reasonable at all?

I was all at sea. I was utterly befuddled. The wildest ideas rioted in my brain, one more improbable than another.

"Ha!" I muttered at last, taking my head out of my hands. "It is utterly inconceivable that Rose could have written those letters without having been in Scotland. I know the dear girl's limitations. She never was either particularly studious or particularly literary. She was not like poor Enid.

"Then, how were the letters mailed? Could they have been sent across each time by some passenger or officer on the mail steamship and only entrusted to Uncle Sam's mails *here?*"

Actually that seemed the most sensible thing I had so far thought of—and you can see yourself how utterly absurd *that* was.

It was certainly a problem beyond my poor abilities to solve.

I snapped the band around the packet again, unlocked the drawer I had in mind, and placed the letters in it. Then I groped doubtfully for the certificate.

I was troubled again by the thought that somebody might have tampered with that precious paper.

To think that Rose would stoop to such an act shows merely the state of mind into which my worriment and anxiety had brought me. That she had deliberately set out to deny her secret marriage to me, and to that end had stolen the certificate she herself gave into my care—why, it was the thought of a madman!

And the paper was there, of course.

I could not be mistaken in that. Its touch was too familiar for my fingers to deceive my memory.

I locked the drawer again, went back to my couch, and lay there until Anna called me to dinner. My thoughts had become less riotous by that time, and I presented myself at the table calmly.

My mind was made up to one course of action: I would wait and be silent.

To accuse Rose of deceit, to doubt the honesty of her caresses was most terrible. I would not let my mind dwell longer on that.

And this mysterious matter of the letters I must patiently wait to have explained.

I suspected that all the trouble arose from James Olyphant's dislike for me. He had never cared especially for me, and now of course he was determined that his daughter should not be burdened by a husband who was blind.

I could scarcely blame him for that. I felt keenly enough my position. But there was another side to the matter, too.

If Rose loved me—as she seemed to do—why break her heart as well as wear out my own because I had become an object of my aunt's charity? Besides, the fact was ever rising before me that Rose and I were already bound by ties which could not be easily severed. Our impetuosity and the circumstances of that March night, which now seemed so long ago, had brought about our sudden marriage.

Despite the fact that Rose never spoke of the ceremony now, it was, nevertheless, binding. For us to separate would necessitate the scandal and notoriety of the divorce court.

No, no! Let matters take their course. James Olyphant would come around in time, I believed. Perhaps Rose had promised him not to discuss the subject of marriage with me, and of course I had not broached the matter to her since her return from—where?

You see, my thought traveled in a

circle, and came right back to those letters again. If not Scotland, where had Rose and her father been, and what was the meaning of the letters mailed to me, stamped by the United States token?

After that evening and the night which followed, and which I spent in lying wide awake in my bed, I determined upon one test. I knew Rose's truth and purity of mind. Why, great heavens, had I not known her almost all her life?

So that very day, when we happened to have a few moments together alone, I seized her hand as she passed me and drew her down upon the low stool beside my couch, where she often sat to read to me.

She never put herself in this attitude unless I begged her, and when I pressed her close to me, fondling her soft hair and pressing my lips to it now, she yielded herself tremblingly—a thing which I could not understand.

"What is it, Rose?" I whispered. "There is something—well, something *different* about you nowadays."

I felt her start in my arms. But she said nothing and lay still, with her head against my breast.

No woman would give herself up so utterly to the affection of the moment unless she loved the man. But my curiosity was not appeased.

"You are not afraid of me, are you, dear?" I whispered.

"Afraid!" She writhed about suddenly and put her full, warm lips to mine. "No, no!" she breathed when I let her go again.

"And you love me?"

"Better—better than my life, Herbert!" she cried with such earnestness that it would have been a profanation of all that is good or holy in humanity to doubt!

I held her close, and for the first time in weeks and weeks my heart was perfectly at rest. Yet that gnawing, evil thing, doubt, would not let me long remain in this state of mental peace.

"This is not altogether as we thought it would be this summer, dear?" I suggested. "Do you realize that it is July already, Rose?"

She winced—I could feel it. But when she spoke her voice was calm.

"Herbert, it is for you to make the change, dear. I—I cannot."

"What do you mean?" I asked quickly. "Have you been waiting all this time for *me* to speak——?"

And then my aunt entered, and the conversation must of necessity be abruptly terminated.

But a great glow of love suddenly drowned everything else in my heart and mind. I believed that Rose meant that she had waited for me to assume the right which our secret wedding in March gave me. If I wanted her, I must claim her boldly!

Yet, when I later had time to think more about this, it did not seem exactly like my Rose to set me such a task. We had so fully understood each other heretofore that many things which had occurred during these weeks since her return had puzzled me.

Rose, with her lovely, doll-like face, her gentleness, her sunny disposition, had never before seemed just as *this* Rose was now. Something had happened to evolve her from rather a clinging, irresolute little person into one of much more sturdy character.

I was turning all these troublesome and puzzling matters over in my mind that very afternoon while walking in our garden. There was a certain path along the hedge that bounded the side yard which had become so familiar to me now that I knew every inch of it perfectly.

Just so many strides and I was at one end; so many strides back, and involuntarily I wheeled before placing my foot upon the sod which bordered the gravel. Here nothing startled me; no object loomed its uncertain shape before my path, for my ability to distinguish between light and dark slowly increased. The shadow of a bulky object flung across my path sometimes made me hesitate unless I knew what the object was.

The apprehension of a shadow falling upon one who cannot see seems beyond the bounds of possibility, yet it is true. When I pass the yew tree by our front gate late in the afternoon when the

shadows are long, I can "feel" the image of its huge bole as it lies across my path.

The trees which border our side-garden path are on the other side, however, and cannot fling their shadows across it at this hour in the afternoon. Therefore, when I suddenly felt a shadow of something like a tree trunk, I turned at once toward the low hedge which divided the path from the street.

What could it be? Something stood close beside the hedge on its farther side. My eyes would have told me this now, if my sixth sense did not. I reached out my hands suddenly.

"Who is it?" I cried.

There was no reply, but my groping hands found the shoulder of a man, to which I clung instantly—clung, indeed, although he strove silently to break away.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" I demanded with some heat. "Am I a spectacle for every idler to stop and gaze upon?"

"Take your hand off me, Herbert Pancoast!" he hissed, and with such venom in his voice that I obeyed and stepped a pace backward to avoid the blow which seemed to threaten me.

"Who are you?" I repeated.

"The man you have injured—the man who should kill you for it! God! If you only had your sight, you blind devil, I'd make you fight for her—I would, as I'm a man!"

This poured forth from the man's lips so rapidly, and with such deadly hatred in the tone of the voice, that I was not only amazed, but afraid. It was the vaporings of a madman.

"What do you mean?" I cried aloud. "I do not know you. I never injured you. You are mistaken."

Never had I felt so helpless before. My weakness almost brought the tears to my eyes.

"You know me well enough," he returned, still in that low, tense voice. "I am Pratt—curse your soul! Now, do you know what I mean?"

"Pratt — Brentwood Pratt?" I gasped. "Enid——"

"Yes, Enid — the woman you have stolen from me, the woman I would have made my wife! What she can see in you—you blind devil!—I can't imagine. I—I—God! I could tear you to pieces where you stand."

The shock almost overpowered me. I saw now what it meant. Poor Pratt had gone mad!

Aunt had told me that he had taken Enid Olyphant's death sadly to heart; the misery must have gained control of his mind until he had come to this state. And, with the unreasonableness of the insane, he had suddenly fancied that I had taken Enid from him. It was an awful case, and his tone and words assured me that I was in no little bodily danger. My helplessness would not appeal to a madman. I must temporize with him.

"You are mistaken, Pratt," I said. "I have not tried to injure you. I would not take Enid from you——"

"Don't lie, you dog!" he cried. "You have already done so."

As he spoke, I heard a shriek behind me, from the direction of the house. I knew it to be Rose's voice. She had seen who my companion was. I heard her flying feet spurning the gravel.

"Go away! How dare you come here, sir?" cried Rose, and her voice was clear and commanding. Her natural timidity was forgotten when she saw me in danger.

I heard a noise in the hedge, and believed that the madman was trying to burst through. I seized Rose with my left arm and swung my body, as I thought, between her and Pratt. I prayed quickly that my fist might be guided aright if I had to strike.

"I see you—in each other's arms!" he gasped, his voice more subdued. "Cruel! Cruel!" Then his tones rose higher again: "God's curse upon him! May he know the misery I suffer——"

"May *you* never know the misery he *does* suffer and may suffer still!" Rose interrupted in a voice which thrilled me mysteriously. "Go! Go, Brentwood Pratt, before the curses you evoke upon this helpless man return upon yourself."

With a cry like nothing human—more like that of a dumb beast in distress—Pratt turned. I heard his de-

parting footsteps. Rose clung to me now, panting and sobbing.

"Poor, poor Pratt!" I said, recovering my own breath and with calmness. "How long has this been? He is quite mad, is he not?"

"Quite—quite mad, dear Herbert," she said brokenly, and led me into the house again.

## CHAPTER XII.

### I AM SURPRISED.

I SAW that Rose was greatly disturbed by this incident, so did not continue its discussion to any length with her, but I did ask if it had been Pratt who frightened her the day we drove to Engleton, and she admitted it was so.

"I thought it very strange of him to act as he did that day I met him in the cemetery," I observed. "How long has he been this way, dear? Ever since Enid's death?"

"Oh, no!" she cried. "It has not been so long as that."

"Since you came home, then?"

"Ye-es," she admitted slowly.

I could understand the unfortunate fellow's mania, then. Brooding over the loss of the woman he loved had addled his brain, and when Rose appeared poor Pratt suddenly became charged with the idea that *she* was Enid.

But my mind lingered longest on my dear girl's courage in coming to my rescue. It is wonderful how brave the female of every kind will be when her loved ones are threatened. Why, Rose had been like a tigress in my defense!

It was a few days later that Aunt Matilda urged me out of my rut, and I went with her by train over into the next county to visit an institution for the blind which had a considerable reputation for its methods of teaching and helping sightless unfortunates. Besides, the physician at the head of the institution was an oculist of note, and aunt still had it in her head that my eyes might be helped by something.

Rose did not go with us. I believe half the time she came to see me she had fairly to run away from old James Olyphant.

The doctor was kind enough to examine my eyes, and he seemed to take a good deal of interest in my case, but he gave no opinion then.

I was much more interested in the departmental work of his institution, which was both a school and a home.

The children were taught verbally all that children are taught in ordinary schools, and some of the specimens of raffia work done by the pupils were as perfect (I could feel them) as any done by children with good eyesight.

Finally the doctor wished to introduce us to a lady in the infirmary who had been some years in the institution and was greatly skilled in needlework.

"Mrs. Culver is really a wonderful woman," he declared. "She might easily go about the streets or keep house for her father if she wished. She did so until she became totally blind, and with her that was a long process—it did not come suddenly upon her, as yours did upon you," he said to me.

"But she prefers to remain here, where she can spend her time working with her needle. She has many customers for her work, and her father comes in daily to see her. He is a superannuated preacher—a fine old man—and they are devoted to each other."

Aunt Matilda was delighted with the embroidery and needlework. She sat down and gave Mrs. Culver an order at once, and, the doctor being called away, I was left to my own devices.

It was a pretty, sunny room; this devoted to the use of the blind woman. There was an old-fashioned rag carpet on the floor (she had sewed the rags for it herself the first year she had come here, and the doctor had had it woven in Jersey), two or three comfortable chairs, a brass bedstead in the corner, its mattress covered by a nice Marseilles spread of pretty pattern, and two canaries in square cages, singing themselves to bits in the windows.

What's that? How did I know so much about it? Oh, we travelers in the Land of the Long Night learn quicker observation even than that said to be cultivated by Robert Houdon. A glance of the eye went far with him; *we* must learn to observe without even that single glance!

My aunt and Mrs. Culver each had rockers; I heard the creak of them. My own chair was a Morris, and as I put my hat on the floor my fingers touched the woven rag carpet, so I asked about *that*. So much for carpet and chairs.

I found that the bed was a metal one when I passed it to reach my seat, guided by the doctor's hand. And brass is perfectly smooth, while the enamel of the ordinary steel or iron bed is more or less "lumpy." And any woman, blind or no, can tell a Marseilles spread by sense of touch; why may not a man as well?

Square cages for the songsters? Of course I touched them as I stood in the sunny window.

It was at this moment, too, that Mrs. Culver stopped working (the creak of her needle in the canvas was audible to me), raised her head to listen, and said:

"Here comes father."

The door opened and somebody entered.

The blind woman said quickly:

"Put the bundle on the bed, father." She had heard the rustle of the paper coverings of whatever he carried, I suppose. "I want to introduce you to Miss Bolis. She is a new customer of mine. And this is her nephew—did I understand aright? Yes! Mr. Pancoast, my father."

I turned from the window and took a step forward, putting out my hand as I heard the old gentleman approach me.

"I am glad to meet you, Miss Bolis," he said, and he shook my aunt's hand.

His voice quite startled me—so serious, yet pleasant and firmly kind! I associated with it the noble figure of a man with sweeping gray beard and the face of a saint, whom I had seen upon his knees in the little hut on the river bank that night in March.

"Mr. Sanderson!" I exclaimed.

"Why! It is the young man—can it be——? Why, you are *blind*, sir!" he cried, seizing my hands—both of them.

"You are acquainted with Mr. Pancoast, father?" asked his daughter in mild surprise.

"I am. Why, my dear, this is the young man——"

"Sh!" I whispered. "Not a word, sir!"

He halted in his speech, and evidently my aunt did not notice our by-play. She began to talk with the blind woman again.

"How did this happen, sir?" the old clergyman asked gravely. "And where is——?"

"I cannot tell you much about it here," I said. "Will you come and see me? Remember that your appearance *alive* is a shock to me. I understood that you were drowned in the flood that next morning."

"I took the freight from the near-by station at six o'clock," he explained. "I have never been back to the cottage nor to Engleton since."

"The cottage is gone," I told him quietly. "Do come and see me. I can tell you all then. I went blind immediately after that—that time. I had no idea then that such a fate was threatening."

He was silent a moment, then he murmured: "God moves in mysterious ways! And you were so kind to me—you were an angel of mercy to me, sir! And to be blind——"

"I am not unmanly enough to lay the blame for my condition upon the Almighty," I returned. "I refused to take the advice of my friends and of my physicians, therefore blindness came upon me by my own act. I cannot complain."

He wrung my hand again. I felt that he desired to ask about Rose, but I heard aunt rise to depart.

I told him swiftly how to come to see me, and obtained his promise that the visit would be soon. Aunt Matilda heard me, and seeing that I was friendly with the old gentleman, she seconded the invitation.

Then we went away, and I ruminated all the way home upon the strange chance that had saved this old man's life — seemingly for my particular benefit.

For, whatever happened now, the witness of my marriage to Rose Olyphant was at hand to give his testimony. Yet, did I either need or wish for such testimony as Mr. Sanderson could give? I

had been thinking much over Rose's words a few days before, and wondered if she really was waiting for me, blind though I was, to demand her from James Olyphant.

What was the "change" she had referred to? Was that it? Yet, since then, she had given me little chance to sound her upon that or any other question. She had avoided me excepting when Aunt Matilda was by.

The afternoon we came back from the blind asylum, however, Rose was waiting for us, and while aunt went up to change her dress I had my little girl all to myself.

My experiences during the day had encouraged me. Even if I remained blind for the remainder of my natural life, I need not be so terribly helpless. What those inmates of the institution had accomplished *I* could do.

"I don't know whether I shall take up needlework, like that Mrs. Culver, or raffia, like the children; but I needn't be lazy as I am," I declared cheerfully. "Why, Rose, I could learn to weave baskets."

She laughed at my enthusiasm.

"Ha! Laugh away, madam!" I cried. "But I am in earnest. I remember that I learned to weave baskets — the common kind—years ago, from some Indians who used to camp down on a branch of the Foxcroft.

"There! We'll have a lodge in some vast wilderness, dear, and I'll weave the baskets, and you shall go with them to the nearest town and sell them. How would you like to play Indian squaw?

"Only, who ever heard of a golden-haired squaw? I'm dark enough to pass for the noble red man; but you! Your pretty pink cheeks and golden hair and blue eyes——"

She snatched her hand away from me with sudden pettishness—and much to my amazement.

"What's the matter, Rose?" I demanded. "Don't you like me to tell you how pretty you are?"

"That's—that's all there is to it!" she exclaimed, and my amazement increased, for she was in tears.

"All there is to *what?*"

"You only love me for—for—for what I look like. You think I am pretty and doll-like — a fairy, as you often say. It is not *me* you love, Herbert."

I sat up, trying to be very serious. Really, ***this*** was more like the Rose of old. She was quite as inconsistent as ever.

"You are mistaken, Rose," I said. "I love every bit of you—I love *you;* your mind, temperament, soul, whatever you care to call it. Why, child, I can no longer *see* your prettiness, can I? So it must be yourself I love."

"No!" — and she stood before me now with her whole body palpitating with feeling—"No, Herbert! You do not know whom you love or what you love. It is a memory you have of your Rose, that is all!"

"Why, my dear girl!" I sought to draw her into my arms, but she held both my hands away from her and went on passionately:

"Listen! Suppose I lost my—my beauty, as you call it? Suppose my golden hair should turn dark and ugly? Suppose I was no longer a little flaxen-haired fairy"—and there was bitterness in her tone there!—"but that my hair was dark, and my eyes nothing like the eyes of the Rose you remember, and my complexion muddy——"

"Oh, what a waste of 'suppos-ings'!" I cried, trying to laugh her out of this strange mood.

"No!" She held me off again. "Let me finish, Herbert. You remember me as the Rose you played with and courted and loved for years. But—but time changes all of us." There was a choke in her voice.

"Suppose we go on like this? Suppose we continue together for—for years. You will always picture to yourself the Rose you knew when you lost your sight."

"And what matter if I do?" said I contentedly. "Would that be a sin or crime?"

"And you will always love that memory!"

She said these words with so agonized a tone that they shook me. What could she mean? What was underlying all this? The deepest passions of the

girl's heart were moved, and for what reason?

"Rose!" I began, but she stopped me with her little hand upon my lips.

"No! Wait! Let me finish. Years pass, we will say. Perhaps the good God will give you back your sight. And then——"

"What then?" I asked, trying to be calm.

"And then, suppose I do not look like the Rose you remember at all!" She said it so tragically that I dared not laugh. "You will be loving a myth, a memory, all those years, and I shall be——"

"Grown older — that is all," I said calmly. "And probably grown more beautiful in my eyes than you are to-day, dear."

"No, no!" she moaned. "I—I shall not be the Rose you have dreamed of and loved. You will continue to love the Rose whom you remember, while I —Oh, Herbert! Cannot you love me for what I *am?*"

And so crying, she left me, and in a state of amazement and alarm quite inexplicable even to myself.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE BOMB.

You can never tell much about a woman, or what she means, after all! I had known Rose since she was in pinafores, but I had never seen her in a mood like this.

Women incline naturally to morbid thoughts, and I had seen Rose create before quite such a furore for no better reason than this. But never had I believed there was in her the depths of passion and feeling which she had just displayed.

And it elated me, for no woman would talk as she did if she did not love the man. It seemed to me that my little Rose, the doll-like creature that I had petted and played with, had never loved me like this.

My affliction, or her own troubles at home—perhaps both — had suddenly brought out characteristics that I had never dreamed were in the dear child. And I admit I approved the change. In my present circumstances I needed somebody to lean upon, and Rose's suddenly acquired sturdiness and independence filled that need. She was changed, it was true, but I loved her better than ever. And I was willing to let the mystery of her silence regarding our marriage go for the nonce; I was assured that, whatever was her reason for not speaking on that point, she loved me more deeply than before.

And I believed that I saw a way of bringing the matter of our marriage to a head now, without humbling either my own pride or hers. Mr. Sanderson was alive; he was coming to call upon me; Rose would meet him, and of course——

I did not probe the future beyond that place. I felt more assured and contented that night when I retired than I had for several days before. The old clergyman came the very next day. His curiosity and interest had both been awakened, it was evident, and I was as glad to have him come as he was *to* come.

Aunt naturally met him first, but I could trust to his wisdom, and knew that he would speak to nobody regarding my marriage until he had first seen me. My aunt did not long detain him on the veranda, and after a few moments of general conversation she left us together.

Mr. Sanderson had already expressed his astonishment at my condition, and his sympathy for my misfortune as well, so the instant aunt had gone he entered upon the subject which I knew was uppermost in his mind.

"My dear Mr. Pancoast," he observed, taking my hand again, "what does this mean? Your aunt does not know that you are married? Is not your wife returned from Scotland—that is where she was bound, was it not?"

I assured him that she was returned, and then went on to explain the entire matter to him—my side of it, I mean. He was much puzzled and disturbed by my story.

"I remember her very clearly, Mr. Pancoast," he remarked when I was

done, "and I thought her a most lovable little woman—and she surely loved *you*."

"And she loves me now!" I cried. "Ah, my dear sir, she loves me with more strength and passion than I believed then was in her nature; I am sure of that."

"But there seems to be something wrong in all this, my dear sir," the old clergyman declared. "I cannot understand, even if your wife's father objects to you, why she should hold silence all these weeks about the marriage. And I think you do wrong yourself to encourage this state of affairs."

"Why, Mr. Sanderson," I admitted, "up till now I have been doubting my dear girl in my own mind. I feared she was merely being kind to me out of pity; I feared my blindness must secretly disgust her. But now—well, I am assured she truly loves me for myself. I believe that she is suffering as much under present conditions as I am."

"Foolish, foolish humanity!" he said, sighing. "How we conjure troubles for ourselves—and all so unreasonably."

I suddenly held up my hand in warning.

"Hark!" I whispered. "Here she comes now, sir." I half rose from my chair in my eagerness. "Here is my Rose!"

I heard her light step upon the veranda, and then the door opened. The clergyman's chair creaked as he turned to look at her.

"Come in, Rose, dear," I said; "it is Mr. Sanderson."

I thought the old gentleman uttered some ejaculation, and he rose to greet her, too. Rose crossed the room swiftly and I believe gave the clergyman her hand.

"I am glad to meet Mr. Sanderson," she said calmly and in a tone intimating that this was her first introduction to him.

I was amazed. The old gentleman said not a word. There was an uncomfortable silence for perhaps half a minute, when I found my voice again:

"Why, surely, Rose, you remember him?" I cried.

She had come to me now, and had given me her hand. She was trembling, and her little hand was like ice. At my words she started, withdrew a step, and evidently turned to look at my visitor again.

Aunt Matilda entered at this juncture to relieve the strain. Something about Rose or her appearance seemed to startle her.

"What is it, dear?" she exclaimed.

"I will tell you later," the girl said gravely.

I felt uncomfortable myself, and Mr. Sanderson must have seen that his presence was a drag upon family confidences. He arose to go.

But then Aunt Matilda awoke to her duty as hostess. Mr. Sanderson had other friends in the town on whom he wished to call, but she made him promise to return for dinner.

I accompanied the old gentleman to the door. I desired to know what had startled him (and it seemed later to have startled aunt) when Rose first entered the room. And she had not seemed to recognize the clergyman, either. But he would not talk with me longer. Wringing my hand heartily, he said: "I will tell you when I return, Mr. Pancoast. Your affliction moves me greatly, sir!"

And then he seemed to choke and walked hastily away. It amazed me further, for he was certainly used to blindness, and mine should not have seemed such a terrible thing to him.

As I stepped back into the house I heard somebody crying and the murmur of voices. But the library was deserted; Rose and my aunt had gone into another room.

I was vastly disturbed, and as the sound of weeping and low voices continued I was tempted to follow them and demand an explanation. And I would have done this had it not been that the doorbell suddenly announced a visitor.

Anna went to the door, but my aunt was evidently so taken up with Rose that she did not go into the hall to head off the caller. I heard the serving-maid scream.

"I tell you I'm coming into this house!" exclaimed a harsh voice.

"Don't you stand in my way, young woman! You can tell that old maid mistress of yours that I propose to know what she means by enticing my girl here."

It was Mr. James Olyphant—and Mr. James Olyphant in a rage was no pleasant person for any woman to meet.

I opened the library door and said sternly:

"Come in here, sir, if you have anything to say, and say it to me!"

"So there you are, Herbert Pancoast!" he snorted.

He pushed by me into the room, and then, I knew, wheeled to stare hard at me.

"You were always a thorn in my flesh, sir, and you do your best to thwart me now. But I tell you I'll stop this business! I'll stop it, I say! That girl shall come home with me and she shall stay away from you."

I heard a sudden cry behind me, and knew that Rose and my aunt had entered.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Olyphant?" demanded Aunt Matilda in an agitated voice. "I pray you——"

"You can save yer prayers and yer breath ter cool yer porritch, Miss Bolis, ma'am!" interrupted the old gentleman, dropping into the vernacular as he grew angrier. "You're an old witch! And I'll tak' this lassie oot of th' reach of yer sorceries——"

"Be still, man!" I commanded. "I will not listen to such talk to my aunt."

"Hush, Herbert! Don't speak to him," whispered Rose, clinging to my arm.

"I see ye whispering to him, ye hussy!" exclaimed Mr. Olyphant. "I think shame of ye! Runnin' here every day to wait upon a man——"

"Who loves her, sir, and whom she loves," I interrupted sternly. "You have no right to speak so. Miss Olyphant is her own mistress in point of age, and she knows her own mind."

"By gad!" shouted he, stung to greater rage at this. "I'll have the coorts on ye! Ye can't support yersel', even; ye're a pauper. The lassie is mine —I'm her guardian."

I had stepped quickly across the room while he was speaking, Rose hanging to my arm and sobbing. Reaching my desk, I pulled out my keys and unlocked the drawer. Aunt began pleading again, in a low tone, with the irate Scotchman.

"Come out of the room, James Olyphant," she whispered; "I warn you not to talk so before Herbert. For God's sake——"

I stopped her by wheeling with the marriage certificate in my hand and commanding the attention of all three of them.

"Stop!" I said. "There is no use in all this loud talk and blather, Mr. Olyphant."

"Blather, is it?" he exclaimed.

"Be still," I said again. "You have claimed control over this little girl"—I reached forth one hand and found Rose's—"but you are mistaken. You are not her guardian. She is no longer under your control, and I tell you now, sir, she shall not go back with you if I can prevent."

"Hoity, toity! What's this?" he snarled.

I turned to Rose with a reassuring smile.

"She shall never go back with you if she doesn't wish, Mr. Olyphant," I continued. "And, however the matter ends, you may as well know now that we are already married and that your objections are a deal too late."

I expected an outcry from both my aunt and her visitor, but I was not looking for quite what followed the throwing of my bomb.

"Mercy on us! The man's daft!" declared Mr. Olyphant.

"Married! *Married!*" my aunt reiterated, in so strange a voice that I scarcely recognized it.

"We are indeed, and here is the paper which proves it," I said, triumphantly waving the certificate.

"I don't believe it," roared the old gentleman suddenly.

But aunt's shrill tone drowned him. "The poor child! Catch her!"

I had felt Rose wavering on her feet, however. With a choking cry, she fell forward. I caught her in my arms, while the marriage certificate fluttered

from my grasp and fell waveringly to the floor.

My wife had fainted.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MY EYES ARE OPENED.

I CARRIED my dear burden to the couch and placed her upon it, setting to work to chafe her hands and turning my back completely upon the others in the room. For a minute following my aunt's cry there was a dead silence.

Then I heard a paper rustle, and the heavy breathing of old Olyphant preceded another outbreak. I knew he had seized upon the certificate.

"What's this?" he shouted. "My Rose — married — to Herbert Pancoast——"

"Exactly!" I snapped, without turning around. "Your Rose—*my* Rose, sir! We were married by the Reverend Sanderson, as you can see by that paper. And he is alive and was in this room not ten minutes ago."

"Mercy on us!" ejaculated the old gentleman, his tone betraying the utmost wonder. "Woman!" he cried suddenly to my aunt. "What does this mean? Is he mad, or——?"

To my own amazement, Aunt Matilda broke down utterly. She came and cast herself upon her knees by the couch and placed her arms about the unconscious girl.

"Oh, I never dreamed of this—I never dreamed of this!" she moaned. "Let me take her to my room. She has borne so much!"

"How does she look?" I gasped. "It is only a faint—that's it, isn't it, aunt? There is nothing serious the matter with my Rose?"

My aunt could not reply for weeping.

I felt Olyphant seize my arm.

"What's that ye say, man?" he cried in my ear. "*Who d'ye think lies there before ye?*"

"Come, come, Mr. Olyphant!" I said, trying to speak calmly. "Pull yourself together. I know it is bound to be a great shock to you, but it's done and you can't help it. Rose is my wife, and I defy any man to take her from me!"

Aunt was sobbing wildly; the old gentleman did not take his hand from my arm, but it was some moments before he spoke again.

I could feel him shaking, and his voice was now broken and his utterance choked by tears.

"Man! Man!" he said. "Ye are mad! Rose is not your wife. Rose is dead!"

"What's that you say?" I was still holding the hands of my dear girl, and my chafing had brought the warmth back into them. Besides, I heard her moan faintly.

"If anybody is mad, 'tis yourself," I cried. "Tell me Rose is dead, when she is here before me now—this instant? Do you think me an imbecile?"

"I know not what they have told ye, Pancoast," declared he solemnly. "But this mummery must end. My daughter is dead—God help me! She has been dead these months, man, and is buried beside her mother. Why, Pancoast, you have been to her grave yourself. I saw you there——"

Being blind, I could see none of the objects in the room, yet I felt that everything was whirling about me. I staggered back from the couch, dropping the hands of the girl I had declared to be my wife.

"Who—who is that?" I whispered, pointing at the couch.

"It is my niece, Enid Olyphant," he said gravely. "'Tis a woman's plot, and that's plain. They've palmed the one off on ye for the other, Pancoast. Rose was killed when the train we took to New York ran off the track at Broken Bend. My poor little girl, I tell ye, is dead—dead!"

He began to sob—such heartbroken sobs as I hope I shall never hear again. My aunt's weeping had ceased, and I knew she was watching me.

I cannot explain now what my feelings were. My mind was numbed. I only know that I was wonder-struck because the news that Rose Olyphant was dead did not smite me to the earth, too! Yet the truth seemed scarcely to sear the surface of my mind. Instantly there followed the thought of Enid, who lay there unconscious.

Something must be done for her. Was it more than a faint—was she seriously ill? I wrung my hands as I stooped over her.

"Do something for her, aunt?" I moaned. "Send for Pettibridge. For heaven's sake, will she not know me again?"

"Ah! He is still daft!" I heard Olyphant say. "He thinks she is Rose."

"No, no! I understand!" I cried, sinking on my knees and putting my arms about her dear form. "I know it is Enid. What matters the name? *This is the woman I love!*"

I felt her stir in my arms, which tightened about her. My lips sought hers and I kissed her passionately. Then her lips parted and she murmured my name.

Aye, it may have been a woman's plot! Enid and my aunt may have done this to win me back to health, but it had resulted differently from what they supposed, I could have sworn! Enid loved me herself! She was no longer playing the part of the understudy. I might have seen through it all when Brentwood Pratt had attacked me that day. My aunt recovered her composure and was on her feet now. She took me by the shoulders firmly.

"Get up, Herbert!" she commanded. "You must leave her to me, I say. I am going to take her up to my room, and you and Mr. Olyphant shall remain here till I return. Not a word! Do not speak to each other till I come back. I will explain all."

This with her usual vigor. Her weakness had been but momentary; she had recovered her commanding manner once more, and Olyphant and I obeyed.

She called Anna, and between them (aunt would not let either of us men assist) they got Enid up from the couch and took her from the room in her still half-conscious state.

When aunt returned, the story she told was much broken by her own emotion as well as by my questions, but it was substantially this:

The news of the railroad accident in which poor Rose had been instantly killed, and in which her father had received some painful injuries, was brought to my aunt by a neighbor while Pettibridge and Dr. Hanley, the specialist, were examining my eyes the Monday forenoon following the starting of the Olyphants for New York.

I remembered now how I heard aunt burst out crying, and how she kept away from me entirely until the next day. I remembered keenly, too, the day she went to Rose's funeral. That was the day Enid had come to call for a moment.

It was after that that the idea of having Enid take the place of Rose in minor particulars was suggested to my aunt. She saw my state of health—how I was wasting away, and how the lack of letters from Rose was weighing upon my mind.

She went to Enid and persuaded her to write and send the letters. It was to save my life. Enid did this under the agreement that she should see the letters that I was slowly pounding out on the typewriter to her dead cousin—that she might the better write her replies naturally.

My aunt and Pettibridge had hoped by these means to get me back to a state of health where it would be safe to tell me the truth about Rose. But they did not know the secret doubt and trouble that was gnawing at my mind; they did not for a moment suspect that I thought myself writing to my *wife*, and that her evasion of the subjects of our marriage and of her return was a greater anxiety to me than her utter silence had been.

Then came my discovery of the newly erected stone in the cemetery, and having involved herself in a tissue of falsehoods for my sake, my poor aunt had been obliged to add another on the spur of the moment, without foreseeing the consequences of her words. She had told me Enid was dead.

But when she informed Enid of what she had done, she told us now that the girl had been unaccountably angry. (I could imagine why, and I smiled, but I did not explain. Enid had begun to love me then.)

She refused to write a letter purporting to come from Rose and containing mention of her own death. So Aunt Matilda did this herself. That was the last letter of the series—the one the

receipt and reading of which had so puzzled me.

I was not getting well, however. It was Pettibridge who went to Enid and persuaded her literally to take my dead wife's place. (Would she have done it had she not loved me? No, no, I told myself.)

And so they had drifted into this web of deceit, and seeing how much I leaned upon Enid, how necessary she seemed to my peace of mind and good health, they did not know how to break the mesh.

I could understand without any further explanation upon aunt's part that James Olyphant, turning at his daughter's death to his niece for comfort, should oppose Enid's attentions to me. He loved me no better than before Rose's death.

"But you can't stop it now, James Olyphant," she declared with defiance. "It has gone too far. My boy loves her as he did your daughter, and she shall marry him. He will have all my money when I die, and that's more than *you* have."

"She hasn't married him yet," he snarled. "And I'll see that there's no such foolishness as there evidently was before. Ha! Secretly wed to a blind puppy! My poor Rose!"

I slipped out of the room, leaving them wrangling hotly. I went up-stairs softly and tapped at my aunt's door. Anna opened it.

"Is she awake?" I whispered.

She told me yes, and I gently put her out of the room and then went in and closed the door. But after I got in, not knowing whether she lay on the bed, on the couch, or was in a chair, I did not know how to go to her.

"Enid!" I said.

There was no answer. I could hear her quick breathing, but my confusion and excitement made it impossible for me to distinguish the direction. I began to grope my way toward the couch which usually stood between the two windows.

Suddenly I stumbled against some misplaced article of furniture. Enid cried out in pain, as though it had been her instead of myself who was hurt.

"Dear, dear," I said, stretching out my hands in supplication. "You see how helpless I am without you. I *must* have your help. Come to me!"

"No, no!" she whispered. "You—you cannot love *me*. Oh, Herbert! What you must think of me! Uncle is right; I am covered with shame——"

"I want you, dear!" I interposed quietly. "See! I do not know where to place my foot next."

"It cannot be *me* you love!" she murmured again.

"Enid! Enid! Have you no pity? See! I travel alone in this Land of the Long Night. Who is there to guide me if you refuse?"

Suddenly I felt her to be within the circle of my outstretched arms. Slowly I gathered her to my breast.

"Your uncle is still obstinate, and he and aunt are fighting it out downstairs," I told her, after a little. "But old Mr. Sanderson is coming back this evening. We will take the matter entirely out of the hands of our friends——"

But she would not hear to that. Indeed, I must confess that Enid has somewhat of an obstinate character. She is by no means as pliable as her cousin was.

However, in six months our dear old clerical friend performed the office which I desired, although Mr. Olyphant (who in some mysterious way Mr. Sanderson "brought around") insisted upon a church wedding.

We are man and wife, and I am happy. It is not for *me* to analyze the human heart and set down here how it could be that I fell in love with one woman while memory clothed her with the identity of another.

Nevertheless, such was the case.

It was what I supposed to be the expanding nature of Rose Olyphant which drew me so strongly to Enid. I believe I did not know what real love was until I blindly set my affections upon Enid, for I had not realized before the better part of love — companionship. Poor little Rose had been more like a child to me—a plaything, a pet. Enid is a helpmeet in the truest sense, and—well, our first work together is my dictation of this narrative.

I am still blind, but I do not worry over that. They tell me sight may return in time; perhaps in a year—two years—ten years. Who knows? I contemplate this uncertainty with a calmness that astonishes my friends.

That is because they do not know Enid. Life has its compensations, and Enid——

Would I have been blessed with her love and companionship had I retained my sight?

THE END.

# The Guide to Book-Agenting.

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER.

How a harking back to the past provided a boomerang for the present.

THE other day a young lady came into my office. She smiled sweetly, but seemed to be trying to remember something at the same time.

I recognized her for an amateur book-agent the moment I saw the smile.

As she seated herself she said cheerfully:

"Mr. Orpheus Smith, I believe?"

"I said "Yes," although my name is not Orpheus nor Smith.

What did it matter? A man can be book-agented by one name as well as another.

"Mr. Smith," she went on in the same be-cheerful-or-die tone, "I was recommended to call on you by Mr. Phidias Brown, knowing you to be intensely religious.

I turned pale. I felt that I had at last been discovered and that my true character had become known. In vain I had absented myself from church for ten long years; in vain had I tried to forget the golden texts I had learned in childhood; in vain had I tried to pose as a bold, bad person. I was known for what I was—an intensely religious man!

Suddenly I remembered that I was, for the moment, not myself, but Orpheus Smith, and I sighed with relief. My bad character was still safe. I could continue to career as a stock broker.

At this point the young lady nervously laid an emaciated imitation book on the desk before me. It was one of those prospectus affairs, with the front lid in cloth and the back lid in half morocco and a few pages of text and index and pictures bound between—just enough to show what the real book might be like if it was like what it was supposed to be.

The young lady pointed proudly to the beautiful cover design, with the medallion portraits, and opened the book at the title page.

"This is a book," she said, "which everybody wants to read—which you will surely want in your library. Nature study is most fascinating——"

"Hold on!" I interposed politely. "Aren't you reciting the wrong one? Not that it makes any difference to me, for in the end I will have to buy a book to get rid of—I mean, I'll buy the book any way—but this seems to be the 'Lives of Christian Martyrs' and not 'How to Love the Hop-toads.' Remember that you began by saying I was intensely religious, not by remarking that I was intensely fond of outdoor life."

The young lady blushed, but she went right on.

"This is not a sensational book," she chirped, "a book to be read to-day and thrown aside to-morrow. It will grow in value as the years roll on."

"Stop!" I cried disgustedly, and she looked at me in confusion. "Stop! You have skipped one whole paragraph. You haven't said a word about the allegorical frontispiece."

She gasped.

"I forgot it!" she exclaimed in dismay.

"Yes," I said as sternly as I could. "I am very sadly disappointed in you.

You looked so bright—so intelligent—and yet you forget the allegorical frontispiece. Do you know," I asked, fixing her with my eye, "that you neglected to read the title page to me?"

"I—I forgot—to read—the title page to you!" she exclaimed aghast.

She was nearly in tears.

"You did!" I said. "What excuse have you to offer?"

She shook her head, but could not speak.

"Furthermore," I continued, "my name is not Orpheus Smith."

"Oh!" she moaned, and as she began to dab at her eyes with her handkerchief I saw I had gone far enough.

"Don't cry," I said. "Many people would not have noticed that you forgot the title page and the allegorical frontispiece; many people would have been glad you forgot them. I myself will forgive you. You are young. You will learn."

"I tried so hard!" she said. "I thought I knew it all by heart."

"Perhaps we might go over it together," I suggested.

She looked at me in surprise. I glanced around to see that no one was within hearing distance, and beckoned her to lean nearer.

"I was once a book-agent myself!" I whispered. "I once sold the 'Lives of the Christian Martyrs.' I sold two thousand copies in one year."

Her eyes stared at me with admiration.

"You must be Eliph Hewlitt!" she said with awe.

"I am," I admitted. "I am him."

"Then," she said, "you are the greatest of all we book-agents. Us girls have often heard of you."

The sound of the misused pronouns sent a thrill through me. It took me back to my old days on the road. I felt that with training she would be a credit to the profession. She was from Iowa. To make sure, I asked a leading question.

"I suppose," I said, "you take time to skim through the book now and then?"

"Oh, yes," she said more brightly, "I have skum through it several times."

"I am from Iowa, too," I said proudly, "and I will help you."

I turned to a pigeon-hole in my desk and took from among the papers that lay in it one that was creased and black from much handling. It was headed, "How to Sell the Lives of the Christian Martyrs."

How well I remembered the day I received the sample copy of the book from the publishers and wondered how I could ever compose a proper speech to make to those I must canvass, and then my joy when I found, tucked in between the allegorical frontispiece and the title page, this little gem of rhetoric! My doubts vanished like a pie before a hungry newsboy.

"Come," I said to the young woman, "we will read this together"—and she drew her chair up beside mine. From her purse she took an exact duplicate of the little folder I held in my hand. I read in a firm, engaging tone, as follows:

"The book on which you are about to engage is one that every canvasser should be proud to handle—a book appealing to all the noblest emotions of the human heart. It should be in every home, in every office, in every school. It is printed on excellent paper, in the best style, and is durably and handsomely bound, and yet its price is so miraculously low that we lose money on every copy. Only by selling such immense quantities can we make both ends meet.

"One of the most important requisites to an agent's success is an enthusiastic and fluent description of the prospectus in a perfectly natural tone of voice. Learn the carefully prepared description here given and recite it many times before a mirror before you attempt to speak it to a prospective customer. Do not try to recite it with your mouth full of gum. Assume a joyful demeanor, as if you liked the work.

"Wear shoes with extra thick soles, so that when a door is opened you can put your foot across the sill and prevent the door being shut in your face. Many of our best canvassers have been crippled for life by wearing thin soles and having their feet crushed.

"How to Proceed.—Always select as favorable a place and opportunity as possible for showing the book to people when alone at their residence or place of business. Do not try to get subscribers in a crowd of half a dozen or more persons, such as at funerals or marriages.

"Before calling on a person you should, if possible, learn his name, so as to address him by it. A man will pay more attention when you address him by name and with self-possession. Be dignified, but kind; firm, but gentle.

"Begin your canvass with the most influential man in your territory. Ministers are usually the most influential and also the easiest. After you have secured the subscription of a prominent man you should get him to give you the names of such persons as he thinks might subscribe, and when you call on them you can say you were recommended by Mr. ———, giving the gentleman's name. Thus you are more apt to secure attention.

"If the prominent man refuses to give you any names, you must say, assuming a light and merry tone, 'Ha! ha! I suppose you think if I know my business I should call on everybody in town.' He will then say 'Yes.' After that you can truthfully tell every one that you were recommended by Mr. So-and-So to call on them.

"Produce your prospectus, call attention to the beautiful cover design with the three medallion portraits, and open it at the title page. Read title page.

"'The allegorical frontispiece (point to illustration facing title) represents the angel Gabriel mourning over a coffin. How touching is the sentiment! Above are wreaths surrounding the immortal names of Stephen, John and Sebastian. Below are inscribed the words uttered by Garfield when addressing a multitude in Wall Street, New York, right after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln—words as true to-day as they were then: "God reigns and the government at Washington, D. C., still lives."' (Pause a while, giving your customer time to study the beautiful picture.)

"Continue by saying: 'This is not a sensational book—a book to be read to-day and thrown aside to-morrow. It will grow in value as the years roll on. The martyrs are dead now, but they will be deader in ten years from now, or at least as dead. The appendix, bringing the book down to date, tells of all the martyrs to fall by the assassins' bullets, and so on, in our own and alien lands. This is by Samuel Toxis, the famous biographer and journalist. Here is a portrait (turn pages until you come to page 19) of a martyr after being stoned to death. See how natural it is. He looks as if he was alive.'

"Now turn to the picture of Nero and show all the pictures as they come, reading the lines under each. Then say: 'These are only a small portion of the illustrations. The book is full of them. You thrill with horror to see these executions of the martyrs. Some of the other pictures are much more horrible. A noted artist has said that these are the most horrible pictures he ever saw. This prospectus was hastily prepared, but the book itself will be gotten up, as all the books of our house are, with the greatest care.'

"Turn back to the table of contents. 'Here is a part of the table of contents (turn leaves slowly); you can see even from this how complete the book is. Not a martyr has escaped. This has not been hastily compiled, like so many cheap books now on the market. It is not at all like the sensational catch-penny books, most of which are written to deceive the public. All the martyrs in this book are really dead. Our house would not think of including any others. This book is entirely new from cover to cover.'

"Now turn to back cover, and say: 'This, Mr. So-and-So, shows the thickness of the book. It contains over five hundred large pages like those I have shown you and a profusion of illustrations. This sample shows the cloth binding. The library style (turn to illustration) is shown here. The price is only $2.25—just about one-half what a book of this kind usually costs. Less than one cent per martyr. Notice the fine quality of the paper. (Now turn to price page.) The cloth binding costs

only $1.50. It is very handsome and durable. You get as many martyrs in the $1.50 style as in the $2.25. Never before did you have such a chance to place a book in your home that will so appeal to the sympathetic interest of every member of your family. I know you want this book. It is certainly worth the small price asked every religious American to have such a book in his library. No library is complete without martyrs. Think what a good tone it would give your parlor to have visitors see such a religious and worthy book on your center table.'

"If you are just starting your list, you now hand your customer the pencil, look him squarely in the eyes, and say: 'Here, Mr. So-and-So (pointing to the place), is where I would like your name.' If you have already secured some names, say: 'I have some names of your neighbors (read them and give the title or business of each), and I know you are as fond of martyrs as they are.'

"If he hesitates, go back to the title page and repeat the canvass. Do this again and again until you get the order. When you get the order, thank your customer and leave. Do not waste time talking or give the subscriber time to think it over and say he believes he had better wait until you call again.

"When first meeting people, win their good-will and respect. If they are gruff, a talk about their children, their farm, their property or other possessions, or their friends, will draw their better nature to the surface. If they still remain gruff, try some little pleasantry. Make a joke, saying 'It will be a nice day to-morrow if it don't rain.' This will usually provoke a smile. If any one meets you after subscribing and wishes to cancel his order, tell him that after receiving your orders you send them by telegraph to the publishers and cannot recall them, and then canvass him again, from the title page on, and make him feel that he needs the book more than the money it will cost him.

"If you follow these suggestions, you will meet with triumphant success.—*The Publishers.*"

When I had finished reading the foregoing, the young lady sighed.

"I wonder if I can ever repeat it as beautifully as you do!" she said longingly. "It was just like a machine. Not a bit of expression. It just rattled along like a boy reciting his multiplication tables."

"Yes," I admitted, "but it required years to acquire it. When I was younger I could recite the entire canvass without pausing to take breath. I could go from allegorical frontispiece to the cloth cover, price $1.50, without raising or lowering my voice in the slightest. I could shut my eyes and turn to the proper pages without making a mistake. Oh, yes, I was indeed a great success as a book-agent, but it has upset the whole world for me. Everything is topsy turvy."

She looked her sympathy. "How?" she asked gently.

"Because," I explained, "the first rule of book-agenting is to sit facing your customer. You put the book in his hands, and it is right side up to him. You turn the pages, and they are upside down to you. You see the pictures, but you see them wrong side up. You read passages to the customer, but you must read them inverted. I kept at it a little too long.

"In a little while I could read better with the book upside down than right side up, and the pictures only looked right to me when I saw them inverted. I forgot how to read the right way. I had to hold my newspaper wrong side up to see it. When I wanted to admire a landscape I had to bend down and look at it under my arm. And to-day, when I have money to satisfy all my wants, my house is hung with pictures bottom side up. It is the only way I can see them."

For a moment I was lost in thought and then I shook myself. The young woman was looking me squarely in the eyes. I saw she was about to speak. She put her hand in her purse and drew out a pencil.

She held it toward me with one hand, while with the other she pointed to the list that lay on my desk.

"Here, Mr. Hewlitt," she said, "is where I would like your name."

I protested.

"My dear young lady," I explained, "I have ten copies of that 'Life of the Christian Martyrs' at home now."

A glassy stare came into her eyes.

"Mr. Hewlitt," she said, "I was recommended to call on you by Mr. Phidias Brown, knowing you to be intensely religious. This is a book which everybody wants to read now——"

"Oh, stop!" I cried. "Don't you know that I——?"

"Wants to read now," she continued, "and which you will surely want in your library. The allegorical frontispiece represents——"

"Stop it!" I cried again.

"Represents the angel Gabriel mourning over a coffin. Above are——"

"Stop!" I shouted. "I'll sign! I want the book!"

"Thank you," she said sweetly. "You have helped me so much by your assistance."

"Glad to know it," I said heartily, extending my hand. "Always glad to help a beginner. Won't you stop and have lunch with me as a fellow book-agent?"

"Oh, no!" she said, "I really couldn't."

"As a fellow Iowan," I pleaded, with earnestness.

"No, indeed," she replied. "Couldn't think of it."

"I don't see why not," I urged.

"'When you get the order,' she quoted, 'thank your customer and leave. Do not waste time talking or give the subscriber time to think it over and say he believes he had better wait until you call again.'"

"You know that part well enough," I said with some asperity.

She smiled indulgently.

"Oh, yes," she admitted, "and I should. I have been selling this book for five years now."

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# BLOCK TOWER SEVEN.

BY JARED L. FULLER.

A railroad story of a signalman's thrilling experiences in ferreting out the mystery of his predecessor's murder.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE MAN IN THE UNIFORM.

THE Fly-by-Night, the one crack vestibuled train going east over the A. & C. branch, had left Arkane at half after five and was now well amid the rugged country which divides the flatlands about Arkane from the Coldspring valley.

In length the branch is about three hundred miles, as the crow flies. It was built by the Tri-State Railway to save time and distance in the straight east and west running, and the engineers had been lavish of tunnels, cuts, and trestles.

So the Fly-by-Night was scheduled to sight the lights of Coldspring at midnight, and her speed seldom dropped below fifty miles an hour in the worst places. She flashed along through the late summer dusk, her whistle shrieking now and then a weird "whoo, whoo!" and the heavy parlor cars rocking not unpleasantly on their springs.

In the second of these coaches Dr. Lester had been playing pinocle with old Captain Howard, while Belle looked on wearily, with her head upon the cushion, against the maroon of which her dark hair was advantageously displayed. To the doctor, who faced her, she seemed very pretty indeed, and the tired droop to her eyelids was not unattractive.

Usually, Belle had seemed to him more energetic and assertive than he cared for a woman to be. But that was when he had observed her from his office window in Coldspring, working about her garden beds, or pacing the graveled paths with the captain leaning on her arm.

"She's a deuced sight more feminine than I thought," he was telling himself, and, his eyes attracted to her profile, he led the wrong card, bringing forth a snarl from the old captain.

"Jeffers pelters, what's the matter o' you, doc, any way? Don't you know how to play th' game yit? You wanter go ter baby school ag'in an' l'arn. Leadin' trump that cr-way! Oughter be shot for that! I swanny, never seen sich a bump in all my life! Talk erbout *you* bein' a doctor—wouldn't have ye to a sick ca'f!"

Belle flushed and laid a restraining hand on the old man's arm. The flush became her, rising slowly in a wave of color from her firm white throat to the blue-veined temples.

Lester laughed, rather glad of the outbreak as an exciting incident in the monotony of the game. The old fellow played cards with a vindictive energy that got on the younger man's nerves.

Payne Howard had done everything in his life with this same forcefulness. It was said that as a young man he went after his bride-to-be with a rifle and held her father and brothers at bay while the local justice of the peace pronounced him and the girl man and wife. And Belle's mother was none the less happy, for Payne Howard worshiped her. She and Belle were the only human beings who had manged to tame him.

He had fought the "Yanks" (he always put a past participle before the expression) with the same intensity of purpose, and clung to his title won under the stars and bars against all the objections of his Union neighbors.

Even now, as a veteran of seventy, he was fighting the Tri-State road tooth and nail because of what he looked upon as the desecration of generations of dead and gone Howards. The Arkane & Coldspring branch was laid directly through the family burial lot, and nothing would appease the old man's wrath.

His lawsuit against the company had been on at Arkane, and if it wasn't for his daughter, as he loudly asserverated, he wouldn't even ride to and from the court "on the gosh-blamed railroad!"

He spit out now at Dr. Lester with some of the vindictiveness born of the tedious and thus far fruitless court proceedings.

"Don't yer try to pacify *me!*" he snarled, shaking Belle's restraining hand from the Confederate gray sleeve of his coat.

"Cap'n Payne" usually wore his uniform and a broad-brimmed hat with a cord upon it, and traveled five hundred miles to the nearest Confederate veterans' reunion every year. He was one of the irreconcilables .

"You look warm and tired, Miss Belle," said the doctor, brushing aside the old man's irritability. "It is close in the car."

"It *is* close," admitted the girl, languidly opening her eyes wider and glancing at him by way of acknowledgment.

"Well, well," snapped Captain Payne, "open the winder for her an' have done with it. Never see sich a feller for delayin' th' game."

Lester laid down his hand, and, leaning forward, seized the window clutches. But the sash stuck tightly, and he glanced impatiently around the car for the porter.

Neither that black functionary nor the brakeman was in the car. Lester tried the obstinate catch again, while the old man snarled from behind his cards.

Suddenly a pair of blue-sleeved arms, beneath which the biceps swelled visibly, reached over Lester's shoulders, and lean, brown fingers seized the window clasps, raising the sash with so little apparent effort that the doctor's previous attempts seemed childish. Somehow, this made Lester warm.

"Why aren't you here quicker?" he demanded, glancing up to see that the window raiser really wore the uniform of the Tri-State road. "You brakemen are never near when a passenger needs you."

The owner of the biceps owned likewise a pair of very broad shoulders on a stocky body, and although he was not tall, his frame denoted the possession of much muscular energy.

In popular parlance, he could have

"broken Lester in two" had he wished; but public servants, such as policemen and railroad men, usually possess a deal of self-control, and suffer with meekness much impudence from the ill-mannered.

This individual smiled down upon Dr. Adrian Lester with rather hard eyes.

"You've made a mistake, sir," he said. "I am not a brakeman."

"Well, you should have attended to the window quicker, whatever you are!"

Belle shot the doctor a withering glance, then looked gratefully at the other young man.

"Thank you very much," she said. Then to Lester, warningly: "The gentleman is a passenger, like yourself."

"A passenger!" snorted the young physician.

"I had noticed you sitting over there before," the girl said graciously, turning squarely away from Lester and her father.

The old man urged the doctor to go on with the game, and his snarl was not to be unnoticed.

"If you will let me switch your chair about a bit," said the man in the uniform of the railroad company, "you will get the air from that window and not the dust. That's it. Isn't that better?"

Belle smiled as she shook out her skirts and sat down again, for the young man had brought her chair nearer the seat in which he had himself been sitting. She knew that Lester's glance was on them and she rather enjoyed his discomfiture.

The stranger's eyes shone as he looked down into her own, and there was a humorous twinkle in them which she found it hard to resist. A slight motion of her hand and he sat down opposite her, while his smile widened.

"You find it a tedious ride to Coldspring?" he remarked.

"Rather. And you?"

"Not at all. I have expectation to keep me company," he returned briskly.

"You are in the employ of the company?"

"Yes; but not as a brakeman. I am going to assist the signalman at Tower Seven—Raddigan is his name, I believe. I go on duty at midnight, if we get there in time."

Her surprised look seemed to suggest the query: "And you ride in the parlor car?" He smiled again.

"I believe in being comfortable. The road gives me ordinary transportation, but one of these chairs is worth the two dollars."

She noted, too, that his blue suit was spotless and well pressed; indeed, that the conductor himself was no more careful of his appearance than this signalman.

"You are not much like Mr. Raddigan," she said, smiling likewise. "I know him. I live near the tower. It is just this side of the town."

The stranger nodded.

"I know. They have sent me down from headquarters because the traffic is becoming so great. It isn't much of a job, but it's better than a desk in the accountant's office."

"I shouldn't think so," she interposed, appreciating his boyish frankness, and likewise being assured from the grumbling of Captain Payne behind her that Dr. Lester was paying more attention to their conversation than he was to his cards.

Belle wickedly enjoyed the situation.

"I'm determined to be a railroad man," the other went on. "They turned me down when I applied for a fireman's berth. I'd like to have worked into the engineer's seat in the cab. The inspector said there was something the matter with my eyesight—weak, or something.

"But I have been six months helping as a substitute around Arkane and other points on the division. I'll have the shift at Block Tower Seven from midnight to noon—be my own boss for those hours."

There was much that attracted Belle in this boyish frankness, yet the young man was by no means boyish looking. His face was rather deeply lined, and he probably looked older than he was because of this fact. Belle put him down as still on the sunny side of thirty.

From this opening they fell into such desultory conversation as usually fol-

lows when two young people are thrown together. The man in uniform was gentle of speech, and by no means forward in manner, and, aside from enjoying Dr. Lester's discomfiture, Belle found her new acquaintance agreeable.

Occasionally her father's snarl would assure her that Lester was still perturbed by her familiarity with the uniformed employee of the road.

"What in tarnation's got inter ye?" the old man cried. "I allus said you was good for nothin' but lallygaggin' after the gals an' curin' chicken rash. *Can't* ye keep run of the game?"

The young physician had begun playing cards with the best intentions in the world. The captain was giving his daughter little peace, and Lester had moved over and suggested pinocle, knowing that the old man was inordinately fond of that form of amusement.

But he had done this with the expectation that Belle would remain seated where he could watch the ever-changing expression of her face, and that he could occasionally address a remark to her and receive a response.

Now, a view of her back hair and the low murmur of her voice in conversation with this uniformed usurper was not at all to his taste.

The young woman found the time passing very much more pleasantly and quickly than when she was watching the stupid card game. The Fly-by-Night swept on through the cuts and over the spiderweb trestles, and finally left the high ground behind, following the rails down an easy descent into Coldspring Valley.

The doctor knew that they were approaching their destination. He had made up his mind to become well acquainted with Miss Belle during this trip. Such an out-and-out beauty was worth cultivating, even if she *was* old Payne Howard's daughter.

He finally threw down his hand and abjectly begged off from further dalliance with the pasteboards.

"Oh, dumb it!" ejaculated Captain Payne. "Go ahead and talk ter the gal if ye want to. I reckoned 'twould end this er-way," and he spread a loudly figured silk handkerchief over his bald red brow and sunk into somnolence, although the train was now not far from the suburbs of Coldspring.

Dr. Lester moved over to Belle's vicinity, but the conversation did not seem to run in channels which interested him. And when he strove to ignore the man in uniform, Belle plainly showed her displeasure, while the individual in question merely smiled grimly upon the other's labored attempts to snub him.

The doctor sat in a state of simmering rage while Belle and the stranger put their heads close together to catch glimpses of the landmarks as they neared Coldspring.

"There's Shrewsberry's cattle corral —see the white posts? He ships a great many head of steers to the East," Belle was saying.

"And there's Imbro's tannery. Around this next curve is the signal tower where you will be stationed——"

There was a sudden grinding shriek of brake-shoes on the wheel tires beneath the hurrying car. A great shock closed conversation abruptly and drove everybody forward into the next seat or into his neighbor's lap.

The wheels leaped the ribbons of steel, and the splintering of timbers and beams drowned the terrified shrieks of the passengers.

The car careened and went over upon its side amid a crash of broken glass; then the lights went out.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE SWEEP OF THE FLAMES.

THE buffers of the parlor car had withstood the first awful shock of the collision when the Fly-by-Night, just before rounding the curve west of Block Signal Tower Seven, had run into the tail of a freight wandering upon a track which should have been clear for the passing of the fast train.

But after the huge passenger engine had plowed from rear to front of the freight hack, chopping it to kindling wood and mangling the sleeping crew in their bunks, she bumped into a flat of steel rails and could go no farther.

Then it was that the passenger cars were crumpled up and toppled over beside the track.

The stranger in the railroad uniform seemed to know instinctively what to do when the first jar of the air-brakes shook the passengers. He had seized Belle in the curve of his right arm, held her tight, and with his left gripped the back of the chair across the aisle.

When the parlor car went over with a crash which extinguished the lights, the railroad man was still on his feet and managed to keep his grip on the girl.

Her father, however, having been asleep, plunged over the back of the chair in front, and his still shrouded head came with solid impact against the waistline of a rather corpulent citizen who had likewise been quietly dozing.

The two old gentlemen immediately clinched, but whether from a choleric disposition or merely as a means of mutual protection in the overturn will never be known.

Meantime Dr. Lester had been slung like a sack of meal into the farther end of the car, and when he finally fought his way back over the snarl of human beings to Belle's side, having her danger only in mind, he found that the railroad man had climbed upon a seat and burst out the glass and sash of one of the broad windows.

"Quick!" commanded his sharp voice. "Boost the ladies up here. I'll pass 'em through. There'll be fire in a minute!"

Already a glare from the burning cars ahead penetrated the interior of the overturned parlor coach, and Dr. Lester could observe their surroundings. He began to get his balance, too, and professional coolness came to his aid.

Here was wreck, and fire, and wounds. After passing Belle up to the railroad man, he searched swiftly about and found his case under the seat in the corner. It was not until he himself was outside that the physician found his left arm to be useless.

Although shaken about and much bruised, none of the passengers of that second parlor car were seriously injured. Lester's broken arm was the worst of the hurts.

But already—and this less than five minutes after the first crash—the flames were feeding upon the woodwork of the passenger engine, the freight hack, and the forward cars of the Fly-by-Night. There was a high wind, and the fire burned as though demon-blown.

The shrieks of the excited women passengers had subsided. The train hands who were not seriously injured, and the male passengers who had kept any measure of wit about them, were at work dragging the helpless ones out of the wreck.

The fire swept forward. The passengers were in no danger of incineration, but the poor men held down by the broken timbers of the freight caboose, and by the dismembered locomotive, were in the path of a monstrous death.

Lester had done his best, with his one good hand, to relieve the suffering of the people who came to him; but the pain of his broken arm excited him, and he scarcely knew what he was doing. The hour was so late that, although the Fly-by-Night had almost reached the Coldspring station when the wreck occurred, assistance was slow in coming.

The stranger in uniform, through whose efforts the passengers in the second parlor coach so quickly escaped, had immediately disappeared. But now a red-eyed, sooty-faced creature, his mustache scorched to a mere stubble, his clothing in tatters, rushed back to the doctor's side.

"You're a physician?" demanded this apparition which had made even Belle Howard cry out. "Haven't you something that will ease those poor devils? There's three of 'em?"

"I—I'll do what I can," returned Lester, much shaken by the pain of his arm and the horror of the whole affair. "What is the matter with them?"

He started to follow the stranger, but halted at the latter's reply.

"The fire's the matter. My God, man, can't you see? Come on and do something for them. They are roasting to death."

"Great heavens!" shrieked Lester. "What can I do? Can't you get 'em out?"

"Ain't we been trying to? Look at these!" He held out torn and bleeding palms to the shrinking physician. "I tell you they've got to die, but they're suffering the pains of the damned."

"What can I do? What can I do?" murmured the doctor over and over.

The tortured shrieks of the three of the freight train's crew held down by timbers which could not be lifted without the aid of a derrick smote upon the ears of the excited group.

"I tell you that something must be done!" declared the stranger. "You've got morphine, or the like?"

"Yes, yes," murmured Lester, snatching at the suggestion and opening his case.

"And a needle? Then bring 'em along. Dull their misery—do something, in God's name!"

He fairly dragged the physician with him over the rough ground. Captain Payne was sitting on a boulder, fuming and swearing as though the wreck had been a crime particularly aimed at his life and peace of mind by the railroad company.

Belle followed the young men toward the burning cars.

The flames lighted a large circle. In this radiance flitted the desperately working figures of the railroad employees and such passengers as had joined them. The wrecking train might not reach the spot for half an hour yet, and the brave fellows were almost helpless from the poverty of appliances chance afforded them in the emergency.

The charging engine of the Fly-by-Night had split the freight caboose in half, and the three members of the crew who were in their bunks were pinned down by the heavy side beams of the car. The flames, swept from the wrecked engine by the wind, had already reached the victims.

But Lester balked when he saw the onrushing tongues of fire.

"I can't do it! I can't do it!" the physician wailed. "My arm's broken. And the fire's right in our faces."

The railroad man seized the instrument from Lester's nerveless hand.

"My God, man, can you see those poor wretches suffer such pain without relieving them? How does the thing work—that way? Then let me do it!"

Belle had reached their side, and she, too, was staggered by the on-sweep of the flames. But the shrieks and hysterical pleadings of the pinioned men seemed to inspire the stranger to a frenzy.

The workers had been driven back from the caboose ruin. They were unable to remove the heavy timbers and tangle of iron framework which held the lower limbs of the victims as in a frightful vise.

The signalman pulled his cap over his eyes and approached the furnace. The heart of the heap of wreckage at this point was already in a red glow. The heat was blistering.

He was forced to crawl to the side of the first man. Moments were precious, and as he knelt there a burning stick snapped off above him and fell across his back.

He shook this off, paying no attention to the smoldering sparks still clinging to his coat. The poor creature before him was muttering incoherently— praying for death—begging to be shot and put out of the frightful misery which threatened.

The signalman bared the victim's arm, and punctured the skin with the point of the instrument with a steadiness of hand that was marvelous. In a few seconds the work was done and he passed to the next man.

The roar of the flames above his head, and the stifling heat, were sufficient to rattle the coolest; but the signalman did his work here, and again with the third victim, apparently unmindful of his own peril.

Then he staggered out of the sweep of the flames and saw the headlight of the wrecking train flash into view down the track. The cries of the victims had ceased and the workers were being driven back. The signalman saw at one side a man on the ground with a girl bending over him.

The man was Dr. Lester, who had

fainted because of the strain and the agony of his broken arm; the girl was Belle Howard. The railroad man threw away the instrument he had used and crept off himself to a brookside beyond the fence, there to bathe his scorched face and hands.

Indeed, he knelt down and plunged his head completely into the stream, and rose finally, all dripping, but with his brain clearer and the smart of his burns somewhat allayed. As he came back to the fence he saw that the wrecking crew had arrived and were already at work.

An attempt was being made to put out the flames and so save the men held down by the timbers. The signalman felt that he could do nothing more himself to aid in this work, and for some reason he did not care to go back to the young girl with whom he had talked so long, or to her father and the doctor.

He followed the fence, looking for a low place over which to step, and suddenly saw through the brush the bulk of the signal tower looming up beside the track. He had walked beyond the curve, and the wreck and the lights were behind him.

The member of the freight crew who had sent the news of the catastrophe to Coldspring station had not tried to send it from the tower, although there was an instrument there. He had run on to a drug store a few blocks away and telephoned.

The signalman found a little group before the tower door when he came down upon the tracks, and one man was trying the knob. The door was locked.

"An' Raddigan ain't made a move nor spoke since it happened," one was saying. "There is something wrong about it."

"Mebbe he ain't here," suggested one.

"He's more like hurt or asleep. The light was set white. There is something wrong with him, sure."

"He knows about the wreck, and he's afraid to come down," declared one man sternly.

The newcomer pushed into the group.

"I'm the man the company sent over here to relieve him at midnight," he said. "My name's Crompton. I'm a signalman, and somebody ought to be up in that tower now."

"You look like you'd been in the smash-up," said somebody.

"I was. How do you suppose it happened, any way?"

One of the freight train's crew, one who had escaped uninjured, eagerly explained.

"The driver of the Fly-by-Night got the white light all right—I seen it. We'd just crossed over, an' I seen Raddigan flash out the red signal down yonder on the post behind the curve. He could see it himself from the tower—or he'd ought. He could see the Fly-by-Night coming, too.

"We was going dead slow. I didn't know we was on the time of the express. Then I woke up to hear the Fly-by-Night hooting, and looking back I saw her headlight in the distance and then the red signal change in a flash to white.

"It was just like *that*"—he snapped his fingers. "It all happened that quick. What Raddigan meant by shifting the signal when he had it set all proper sticks me."

"I must get up into this tower," Crompton said decisively. "They are probably trying to call him from Coldspring now. I hear the rattle of the instrument."

Two of the men brought a tie from a pile near-by and in a minute the door was batted in. Crompton entered first and, finding an open stairway before him in the gloom, mounted upward.

The lower room of the tower was windowless and dark. But when his eyes came above the level of the second story flooring he could see. There was no lamp burning, but the light from without—even the flickering glow of the burning wreck around the curve—shone into the place.

The back wall was lined with a multitude of long-armed levers. On a little table in the corner a telegraph instrument ticked incessantly.

On the floor in the middle of the room, but near the levers, lay something

that Crompton went to quickly, and above which he quickly stooped with a low cry.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MYSTERY OF THE TOWER.

"THAT'S Raddigan all right," said somebody, looking over the signalman's shoulder. "What's the matter? Fit? Hurt? What is it?"

The man had fallen face downward upon the boards. He was in a huddled heap with his knees half drawn up, and when Crompton turned the body over the knees relaxed with a horrible jerk which caused every member of the body to quiver and set Crompton to shaking likewise.

His hand had fallen in something wet and sticky, too. It was a puddle of blood on the floor. The man had been shot through the head, and the wound was so large and the head so shattered that the generally whispered comment was "gun shot."

"He's dead—poor Rad! Dead's the piper that played before Pharoah, by gum!" exclaimed the man looking over Crompton's shoulders. "Who'd ha' thought it?"

Their startled exclamations as they crowded up the stairway finally roused the signalman to speech.

"He's been murdered!" he gasped.

"What d'ye think of that now?" was the responsive ejaculation.

"Think 'twas somebody outside done it?" queried one, with shaking voice.

Crompton quickly rose and lit a match. There was a bracket lamp over the table. When he lifted the chimney he found it still warm. That lamp had been extinguished not long before.

When the lamplight revealed the place, there was no sign of a struggle nor was there any weapon in sight. None of the panes of glass in the window were broken, but the sashes were raised, for the night was warm.

"We better not tetch him till the coroner has viewed the body," suggested one of the natives. "He's sure dead, I s'pose?"

Crompton nodded. He had felt the man's heart and discovered not the slightest flutter. He laid him back in the position in which he was found, excepting that the legs were straightened out.

Now he stepped to the telegraph instrument and answered the call. It was from the Coldspring station, where the master had been vainly endeavoring for fifteen minutes to awaken a dead man for news of the wreck.

Crompton reported himself, who he was and how he came in the tower, and detailed what he had found. Meanwhile the other men awaited the outcome of the wiring with the usual bucolic patience and curiosity.

The station master did not feel himself able to give the signalman instructions. He would telegraph the facts to the division superintendent. Meanwhile Crompton was told to continue in charge of the tower.

Fortunately, the young man was already acquainted with the schedule of the branch, having had several days in which to study it closely before leaving for Coldspring. Proper signals were soon set by his hand, both east and west of the tower.

Then he had opportunity to examine his surroundings and listen to the low-voiced comments of the group who awaited the coming of the city officer to view the murdered man.

And murder it seemed, without doubt. Crompton observed that the wound in the dead signalman's head was in the left temple.

As the body lay, the right hand, with the fingers half-tightened as though their clutch had just loosened upon it, was outstretched toward the lever which, upon experiment, Crompton found was the one shifting the signal beyond the curve and which had caused all the trouble.

The signal could be seen from the window the dead man was facing when shot. He may have seen, the moment before death, that he had set the light for a clear track instead of for danger ahead. Perhaps his hand had been outstretched to change the light back to red when the murder was done.

*Why had it been done?*

Who could have had an object in wrecking the Fly-by-Night? Or who had a spite against the old signalman great enough to generate murder?

Crompton listened sharply to the comments of the bystanders.

"Poor Rad never did a soul harm," one man was saying. "Grumpy he might ha' been. I agree with ye, he warn't sociable."

"And his sister and them children of hern depending on him, too," said another.

"Wot'll they do now, d'ye expect? Silly Billy can't airn enough to support 'em."

"Rad had some money comin' to him. He was in the Benefit, ye know; an' he kerried a bit of insurance in some Chicago company, too."

"I bet ye tramps done it," said one vigorously. "Some of 'em air powerful vicious fellers. An' the railroad's always a-chasin' of 'em."

"What's that to do with Rad?"

"Mebbe he got their ill-will. Any way, his bein' shot wrecked the express. It's cost the railroad a heap."

"And poor Rad his life."

"Sh!" hissed a man at the top of the stairs. "Here comes Billy now."

One of the men whispered swiftly in Crompton's ears: "This is poor Rad's nevvy. He ain't 'all here'"—and he tapped his forehead. "He thought a sight of Raddigan, too."

A shambling, sallow-faced boy, perhaps eighteen years old, appeared at the head of the stairway. He was grinning faintly and in that uncertain way which is the unmistakable mark of the feeble-minded.

"What you doin' here, Billy, at this time o' night?" asked one.

"I—I jest run over to see why don't Uncle Jim come home. An' there's a big wreck up the road."

His eyes seemed round with the horror of the wreck. Crompton saw that his face was tear-streaked.

"Why, what's Uncle Jim sleeping there for?" cried the boy, pushing through the group of men who had gathered instinctively about the body to hide it from his gaze. "Why don't he come home? He's an hour late. He said he'd have a man on to-night to take his place."

"I'm the man, Billy," Crompton said, drawing the boy away by the sleeve and motioning the others to cover the body with a blanket which lay folded in a corner of the room.

"You must ha' been in the fire, too," the boy said, smiling again his pitiful smile and staring at Crompton's singed mustache and hair and his torn clothing.

The latter saw that the youth, although plainly weak of intellect, showed the evidence of a mother's care. His clothing was neat and his linen clean, excepting the wristbands, which showed below his jacket sleeves.

They were soiled, as were also his hands; his finger-nails were broken and his hands scratched and bleeding.

"Can I come up here and see you, jest th' same's I do Uncle Jim?" queried Billy anxiously.

"I guess so, Billy," Crompton said hoarsely.

The situation choked him; he felt ready to burst into tears.

One of the other men came to them and said to Crompton: "Billy's a pretty good boy, sir. He hangs about here more'n half his time, day and night.

"But he's going along home with me now, ain't you, Billy?"—taking the lad by the arm.

This man had been selected to break the news to Raddigan's widowed sister. He was a grave-faced man with a grizzled beard and solemn eyes.

"Ain't Uncle Jim coming?" queried the youth, half-turning back from the stairway and looking somewhat vaguely at the group around the shrouded body.

"He'll come by and by, Billy—by and by," muttered the man, and led the boy down the stairs.

"It'll jest erbout kill that poor woman," somebody grunted. "I wouldn't want to be in John Kenney's shoes an' hafter tell her."

Then they went back to speculating on the murder, while Crompton found his attention entirely taken up until the arrival of the coroner with the sending and answering of messages.

The wreck was being rapidly cleared; the fire was out, and only one of the injured members of the freight train's crew had not been released in season. The division superintendent was on his way to the scene of the accident and a new train had been made up at Coldspring and backed down to take on the delayed passengers of the Fly-by-Night.

The coroner was a man of ideas and one who evidently saw and appreciated such little romance as might fall across the path of his duty. He began to examine the "scene of the murder," as he called it, with the air of a Sherlock Holmes.

The policeman who came with him went to sleep at the head of the stairs, after turning everybody but Crompton out of the tower.

"Well, it's plain to see what happened," the Coldspring official said with confidence and addressing the young signalman. "He was shot from ambush—a cowardly attempt to injure the railway company, costing this man's life. There was revenge and hatred in this thing; yes, sir!"

Crompton grunted something and set a signal of "clear ahead" for the substitute passenger train.

"He was shot through that window. It was open?"

"When *I* came it was," said the signalman.

"Of course. The light in the room gave the murderer a good chance to pot poor Raddigan as he came across here from the table to set the red light for the express."

"There was no light in the room when we broke open the door and came up."

"How's that?"

Crompton repeated his statement and likewise told him what one of the brakemen of the freight train had said about the signal first being set red and then changed to white at the last moment, thus tolling the Fly-by-Night on to the awful collision.

"Hum—hum!" said the coroner, clearing his throat. "I don't see how—the light must have gone out after the shot was fired. The door was locked on the inside?"

"Yes."

"The murderer couldn't have been in here, then. No, sir! The shot came from without. Raddigan's left side was toward the window. The explosion might have put out the lamp, eh?"

Crompton grunted. His opinion of this far-fetched explanation he kept strictly to himself.

The coroner woke up the policeman and sent him for an undertaker. A little later the body was taken away and the policeman returned to watch the premises until the headquarters police should be heard from.

About dawn the special bringing the superintendent's private car arrived. The wrecking crew had done wonders by that time and most of the salvage from the colliding trains was piled beside the tracks.

Reports from about everybody concerned excepting the dead signalman as to how the accident had occurred were already in the official's hands. He left the master mechanic to look over the ground, while he came immediately to Block Tower Seven.

Superintendent Alonzo Pebble was a tall, lank, red-whiskered and hatchet-faced Scot, with a solemn way of speaking, but shrewd, gray eyes each twinkling under its clump of stiff, sandy brow, looked sharply on the world.

He spoke little himself, but listened attentively to every word that Crompton said.

"You did good work in the wreck, I hear," was his comment, which seemed entirely foreign to the matter in hand. "Do you want to be relieved here?"

"What for?" asked Crompton bluntly.

"This man was shot by an enemy of the road, it's probable. I tell you frankly the murder doesn't surprise me. Do you want to risk stopping another bullet?"

The signalman squared his shoulders unconsciously.

"I don't care to be chased out by a bogey," he grunted.

Pebble's eyes smiled.

"You came down here as assistant, I believe?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"You can stay in Raddigan's place. I'll send another man in by noontime to relieve you. To-morrow you'll have to take the regular shift of the head signalman—from noon till midnight. You look as though you needed a little rest, however"

"Much obliged, sir," the young man said.

He had never met the "super" before and his bruskness rather puzzled him. This promotion on such short notice was quite astounding, too.

Superintendent Pebble rose, went to the head of the stairs and then came back.

"Do you carry a gun?" he asked quietly.

"No, sir."

"You had better. Raddigan had one here, I believe. Did you see it?"

He asked the question carelessly, but Crompton felt that there was something behind it.

"I've examined the place pretty thoroughly, Mr. Pebble," he said in a voice too low for the nodding police officer to catch the words. "There is no weapon here?"

"Humph! So you've looked about a bit on your own hook, have you?" grunted Pebble, and retired without further observation.

## CHAPTER IV.

### "BY PARTY UNKNOWN."

THE police had come and made their examination, asked a multitude of questions, and gone. Dan Crompton, newly appointed signalman of Block Tower Seven, was finally left alone after being summoned to attend the coroner's inquest in the afternoon.

The road was cleared now, and the delayed trains were being sent on in both directions as fast as possible. Communications from the despatcher's office and from the train starter at Coldspring came over his wire in rapid succession and kept the young man on the jump.

He was quick of observation, and the superintendent's brusk promotion had inspired him with a desire to do his best, if such inspiration was needed. As he had told Miss Howard in the parlor-car of the Fly-by-Night, he had fought hard enough to obtain a position on the Tri-State road; this unexpected advance would only make him the more earnest in seeking to please headquarters.

Having come from a regulation signal and switch tower on another branch of the road, within the first two hours of his sojourn he made himself quite familiar with the uses of all the levers. His prompt work did much to aid in the movement of the delayed trains which had been lined up on either track.

But now, after the night of excitement, he was exhausted, and his burns gave him much pain. There was nobody to relieve him in the tower and he did not expect his assistant until noon.

But refreshment came from a quite unexpected source. About seven a boy arrived with a basket and a note, depositing both at the door below and shouting up to him that they were delivered with Miss Belle Howard's compliments.

When he found time Crompton ran down and secured them.

The note was a brief line thanking him for his conduct at the time of the wreck. The basket contained a bountiful repast, some salve and bandages, and a bottle of cooling lotion, all of which the signalman appreciated immensely.

"Now, that girl's a hummer!" he told himself, binding up his scorched arm, with his mouth full, while his gaze swept the tracks in either direction through the tower windows for the approach of a train. The Coldspring & Arkane branch was a very busy section of the Tri-State system.

"I reckon that dapper little doctor who broke his arm is some sore on me," he added, pursuing his cogitations. "But he's got grit, just the same. Could not blame him for not jumping into that fire with the morphine; nobody but a darn fool would have done it"—and he chuckled to himself.

"But just the same, I believe that little trick put the darn fool where he is now! That's what I was promoted for. The super just as much as said so.

"Gee! This was a lucky smash for Daniel Crompton! Half again as much

pay as I expected, and my own boss here on the premises. But that poor devil——"

He glanced at the fresh stain on the floor and shook his head slowly.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good; it was sure an ill wind for Raddigan," he concluded, with a sigh.

The day operator came in at eight, and Crompton's assistant arrived, as Superintendent Pebble promised, about noon—a white-headed, smooth-faced, gawky youngster in a pepper-and-salt suit. But Dan was assured that he knew how to handle the levers before he left the tower to get his dinner.

It was now the busiest time of the entire twenty-four at Block Tower Seven. There were plenty of local passenger trains over the division during the daytime, and from noon the freight traffic grew enormously.

The tower might as well have stood in a switchyard. There were several sidings, and much of the switching was done by the signalman as well as the setting of the signals.

The telegraph operator remained, Dan found, until six or seven at night, according to how the work ran. After that, and until morning again, the signalman had to attend to the telegraph instrument as well as to his levers.

There were half-hour stretches when he was continually on the jump. The rapidity of the trains' movements was due in great degree to the celerity of the man in the tower, who, under orders from the despatcher's office, was a czar in his own domain.

Dan Crompton bought a meal at the nearest eating-house, but he had been too busy thus far to look for a bed or a regular lodging. Coldspring was rather a scattered town in its general layout. He saw that there were several small hotels in this suburb.

He wondered where the Howards resided, and if that young doctor with the broken arm lived near them. He kept a sharp lookout for Belle as he went to dinner, but saw neither her nor the old man.

"Reckon I'm not prepared to call on anybody just yet, anyhow," he muttered, glancing down at the torn and soiled suit which had been so natty when he left Arkane in the parlor-car. Then he remembered an envelope which the assistant, Markell, had handed him when he came into the tower. It bore in the corner the card of the superintendent, and when he slit the flap he found within an order on a Coldspring tailor for a new uniform.

"Jove! I didn't think that was in the old fellow! And I swear I didn't suppose he noticed my rags, but I reckon there isn't much gets past 'Lonzo Pebble."

After eating, Crompton hunted up the tailor and had his measure taken, besides buying a coat ready-made so that he could discard his ruined one at once. It was then the hour for the inquest, and he found the coroner's office after a little inquiry.

The jury had been impaneled and the testimony of several witnesses already taken. That Raddigan was without a known enemy seemed proven; yet it was intimated by one or two witnesses that of late the old signalman had been particularly careful to lock himself in Tower Seven after nightfall, and one man swore that he had once seen a revolver lying on Raddigan's desk.

Dan Crompton, sitting by and listening to this testimony, was reminded keenly of what Pebble had said to him during his short visit to the tower. But the superintendent was not at the inquest, and if he could have explained any part of the mystery which shrouded the killing of Raddigan it was evidently not his intention to do so at this time.

Dan's own testimony was brief enough, but he remained to hear the report of the medical examiner. And that report proved to be mightily interesting.

Raddigan had not been killed by a gun shot. The ball found embedded in the dead man's skull was that of a forty-four caliber pistol, and that pistol had been held close to the man's head. Hence the astonishing wound and the powder marks about it, and the scorched hair.

"Then the man was not shot through the window, in your opinion?" the

coroner asked, evidently hurt to think that his own deductions were wrong.

"Impossible. I have seen the place where the body was found. It was ten feet from the window. Besides, where could the murderer have stood to fire through the opening?"

"True; that's puzzled me," admitted the coroner. "But witnesses have told how the door was found locked. They had to burst it in. The key was found in the lock on the inside. How did the murderer escape? Could—could the man have committed suicide?"

"The wound was in the left temple. Had Raddigan shot himslf he would naturally have held the revolver in his right hand and shot himself in the right temple."

"Right, doctor—right!" exclaimed the coroner. "And then, had it been suicide, *what became of the weapon?*"

Crompton left the informal inquest and found a railroad hotel near the tower. He had no intention of remaining in that noisy place for long, however, and engaged his room by the day only. He preferred a private boarding-house, and determined to hunt up one after he had recovered from his exhaustion.

It was mid-forenoon the next day before he awoke. Markell, the young man the super sent to relieve him, had agreed to remain at the tower until noon if need be, but Dan did not intend to impose a twenty-four-hour stretch upon him.

He hurried over to Tower Seven and found the operator gone to dinner, but was welcomed by the yawning Markell like a long-lost brother.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed the white-headed youth, "I feel as though I'd been drawn through a knot-hole. This job is no cinch. I wouldn't hold down your end of it for a steady diet under any consideration. Why, for two hours at a stretch last evening, after Babbett went home, I couldn't sit down. They kept me dancing between the levers and the telegraph key. No wonder some of these jays think poor Raddigan might have shot himself."

"Huh! *That* wasn't the verdict, was it?" demanded Crompton.

"No. 'By party unknown' was evolved by the jury. Some of 'em been talking suicide, just the same. Said Raddigan was acting queer for a long time. Wouldn't let anybody but that foolish boy of his sister's into the tower after dark. And he stayed here without a light half the time."

"Humph!" grunted Crompton, remembering what the super had said to him about the murder. "If it was suicide, where's the pistol?"

"That's it," remarked Markell, getting into his coat. "The door *was* locked, I suppose?"—and he flashed a curious glance at Dan.

"I saw it burst in myself. And the key was in the lock."

"Odd," the youngster said, looking preternaturally grave, and went out shaking his head.

He called back up the stairs as he descended: "I wonder if they'd let me see the body if I went to the undertaker's?"

"Guess so. Ugh! but you're ghastly curious."

"I'd like to settle one point to my own satisfaction," Markell declared, and then the door closed behind him.

"Suicide—nothing!" muttered Dan, seating himself at the instrument to report. "The man was murdered. By whom and for what? Well, I may find that out myself in a most unpleasant manner."

Superintendent Pebble's words had been in the nature of a warning; Dan saw that plainly.

## CHAPTER V.

### CROMPTON CONFRONTS A CRISIS.

THERE was now not a sign of the awful wreck which, in the parlance of the city newspapers, "had shocked the community." Every vestige of the ruined cars and the crippled express engine had been borne away, while the plowed-up ground along the tracks was smoothed down and the splintered ties replaced.

But the community was still bubbling and steaming over the signalman's death. From the windows of his tower,

whenever he had a chance to look out, Dan Crompton saw groups of men and women either standing near the place of the wreck or gazing up at the tower itself.

The strangeness of the man's death, the fact that the coroner's jury had practically "thrown up" the case as beyond their comprehension, set public interest rife. Bobbett, the operator, who had held his job only a fortnight before Raddigan was shot, was likewise full of the mystery.

Crompton, however, had other matters of which to think. He had scarcely awakened the morning before to the magnitude of the task which had fallen to him.

Little wonder that Markell had remarked about it, and Markell, although apparently so young a fellow, had served much longer than Crompton in this department of railroad activity.

The latter knew, too, that he was in charge of Block Tower Seven merely on trial. He had been assigned to the place as assistant to this man who had so suddenly and strangely met his death. Pebble had promoted him, it seems, on the spur of the moment.

"And, by Jove, he may cut me down again quite as suddenly. I've got to make a record here," Dan Crompton told himself.

The real work of the day had already begun at this time of the morning. He glanced over the orders received from the train despatcher and filed, and found time between switching two local freights to study the time-card He had learned a deal about the signals and the levers controlling the lamps and switches during the early hours spent in the tower after the wreck, but he went over everything now as he had opportunity and shifted each switch and "drop arm" to see that all were in working order.

Despite the clump of trees at the curve beyond which the Fly-by-Night had smashed into the freight, no signal arm or lamp was hidden from the tower windows.

In either direction he had a clear view of the tracks to the end of the last wire governed by the levers. And up here in the signal tower, when Bobbett was out, he could put on his eyeglasses and rest his eyes, with nobody the wiser. He hated them, for it was their use that had debarred him from the chance he had originally coveted.

Crompton was a born mechanic, and he had strongly desired (as he intimated to Miss Howard coming over from Arkane) to be a locomotive engineer. On the Tri-State system men were advanced by a merit method, the firemen in course of time becoming drivers. But when Crompton had gone up for examination his eyes at first glance showed traces of the use of spectacles. He was neither near-sighted nor far-sighted, but at times his eyes became tired, and the glasses the oculist furnished him were restful.

Firmly convinced that, had the inspector not been over strict, he might have obtained the coveted position on the runway of the locomotive, Crompton accepted the first opening with the railroad company which was offered. To be a railroad man he was determined, and he had been some years getting there, having broken the charmed circle by way of the telegraph key. This made Bobbett his friend at once, and Crompton saw that his associates in the tower were likely to prove good fellows. Learning on this afternoon that the telegraph operator had been on duty since six o'clock, he let him go before five.

After Bobbett had departed, Crompton could wear his eye-glasses without observation, but he snatched them off and slipped them out of sight guiltily enough when he heard a step on the stair. He had not begun by locking the door, despite the warning dropped by the superintendent.

The ruddy face with its fringe of silver hair and beard which appeared above the flooring of the tower belonged to Captain Payne Howard.

"Jeffers pelters!" exclaimed the old fellow, dropping into a chair and fanning himself violently with his broad-brimmed hat of Confederate gray, "it's sizzling hot out on that cinder path. Ye got a breeze up here, mister—le's see, did Belle say yer name was Crumpet?"

Dan good-naturedly corrected the mistake and inquired after Miss Belle and the doctor.

"Oh, *she's* all right," admitted the old gentleman. "That wreck only shook her up a bit. I see ye look some like a singed cat yerself yet. As for Lester—pah! He's a baby."

"He broke his arm."

"Jeffers pelters!" cried Captain Payne. "Ye might hev thought he'd broke his neck, the way he took on. They're makin' a hero of him in town. That's allus the way. I 'member most of the heroes I ever heered of in war time airned their repertations holdin' down a cracker box in the sutler's quarters, 'steenty-steen miles in the rear of the firing line."

The old man's snapdragon fashion of talking amused Dan, but he thought Lester was being misjudged, and turned the conversation by asking a question about Raddigan.

"Yes, I knew him. He was a Yank. We fit ag'in each other in the war, and I useter come over yere and we'd fight the battles all over ag'in. Y' have a let-up 'bout five o'clock."

"I'm glad to know that," Dan said with a laugh. All the time he was talking with the old fellow he was looking out of the window or replying to the insistent sounder or monkeying with the levers.

"It keeps me on the jump," he said, coming back to the visitor. "But about Raddigan. Who do you s'pose killed him?"

"Well, lemme tell ye, I don't believe Rad killed himself," declared Captain Payne. "Let erlone there not bein' airy gun found here, an' him bein' shot in the left temple, he wouldn't ha' done it.

"He had too much at stake. If he'd committed suicide he'd ha' lost the Benefit, and he'd been payin' into that consarn for nigh a dozen years. He'd lost his insurance, too. No, no! Rad warn't that kind of a fool."

"What do you think, then?" asked the signalman.

"I think he was killed by somebody as had a grudge ag'in him."

"Not against the railway company?"

The old man started slightly and glanced quickly up at him. "What's that?"

Dan repeated his observation.

"Jeffers pelters!" exclaimed Captain Payne, "*I* can prove an alibi. Ye saw *me* in that derned train. I'm 'bout the only feller who's got a grudge agin' the road, I reckon!"

"But whoever stood in here and shot down the poor man may have changed the signal from red to white at the last moment. That's what wrecked the train."

"Yaas, thet's what they all say. It's a good way to excuse the derned railroad," grunted the old fellow. "I tell ye, it's a menace to the community.

"But there's no use in folks suggestin' poor Rad shot hisself. That harms the widder—his sister—an' the young uns. Them fellers at the head of the Benefit Fund would be glad ter git out o' payin' what's due her. I know 'em!" said the old pessimist, screwing up his face and shaking his head.

"They're goin' ter bury him tomorrow. 'Lonzo Pebble has had the decency to order the funeral expenses paid in his name. The railroad company don't settle for it, you bet! That's a derned soulless corporation. S'pose 'Lonzo was shamed into doin' something."

But to Dan Crompton's mind it seemed rather strange that the superintendent of the division should pay for the signalman's funeral out of his own pocket. He knew that in cases such as this the Tri-State road was not often "a soulless corporation," but paid the funeral expenses of the man who might be killed in the service of the road, and did the handsome thing by those dependent upon him into the bargain.

It was not Crompton's cue to stir the bile in Captain Howard's soul by stating this fact. Indeed, it soon became apparent that the old fellow had visited the signal tower only out of regard to Dan himself.

"I've a fondness for a brave man, sir!" he declared, mopping his perspiring face, for irritation always brought the perspiration out upon his ruddy visage. "I watched you the other

night. It took sand to go into that fire and puncture them poor devils with the morphine pump.

"Now, Belle and I have been talking. We know the neighborhood — I s'pose you have been to that hotel yonder?" he broke off suddenly to ask.

"I remained there last night."

"D'ye like it?"

"Not to any appreciable extent," laughed Dan.

"No. Thought not. Well, here's what my gal suggests—and she's a smart gal, if I do say it. Mrs. Corrigan is a good cook and a neat housekeeper. Belle knows. She has her in once in a while for extry work.

"It will be a godsend to Mrs. Corrigan if you go there to board. And being used to Raddigan——"

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Dan. "Mrs. Corrigan is poor Raddigan's sister?"

"That's it, sir," Captain Howard said, rising to go. "In spite of the Benefit, she won't have any too much to live upon. Silly Billy isn't of much help."

"I'll call on Mrs. Corrigan," Dan declared as the captain clumped down the stairs.

It was well his visitor went when he did, for in a very few moments the signalman was up to his neck in work again. There was a special excursion train that afternoon from the West—one of those Cook affairs—running in three sections, and having right of way over everything except the mails. Dan knew it was coming, for he had his switch open and had heard the messages back and forth between the despatcher's office at Coldspring and some of the station masters along the line. The signalman knew that he would have to sidetrack some trains to give this special a chance to pass.

The slow freights are forever "loafing around," for they do not run by the card, and are sidetracked or set back or ordered to steam ahead at the pleasure or convenience of the passengers and fast freights.

A freight crew will sometimes get about all their sleep for a week in the "hack" or caboose of their train, being laid up at switches and sidings for unconscionable hours and for all manner of reasons.

The first section of the special passed in safety, but something up the road had retarded the other sections, and a "perishable freight" broke into the procession, being sent on by the yard-master of a town about sixty miles west of Block Tower Seven.

That yard-master, although a very big toad in his own little puddle, received the tallest kind of a wigging from the despatcher's office, for Dan heard the communication over his wire. Like enough, Pebble took notice of the error, too, and that would make it even worse for the yard-master.

For the fast freight wasn't so plaguey fast, after all, and she crippled the running of the second section of the special until the third section of that important tourist train had to be brought down to "dead slow" to keep her off the "block" of No. 2.

The block and lantern signal system in vogue now on most of the railroads of the country is an ingenious and comparatively cheap way of saving human life and rolling-stock. In the Tri-State system some divisions were completely blocked off, and near the larger towns the block signal towers sentineled the tracks within less than a mile of each other.

Local trains are governed in their running almost entirely by this block system. The expresses and "long-haul" trains usually have a clear track ("right of way," it is called) for long stretches, and are not often held from the towers.

When a train comes suddenly to a stop between stations, if the passenger will look ahead he will see a sheet-iron arm extending from a post beside the track, the arm painted red or black and sometimes with the word "stop" lettered upon it.

The signalman in the nearest tower has set that arm, and until his section or "block" is clear the train must wait.

Then, with a little click, the danger arm drops, and a white strip of sheet-iron is thrust out from the post. At night there is a red lamp attached to the danger arm, which changes auto-

matically to a white light when the rails are clear.

In this case the fast freight had to be held before reaching the Coldspring station because of the starting of two local "passengers," one on the Coldspring & Arkane division and the other on the main line.

The Coldspring yard was full of freight cars and switching engines. The second section of the tourist train was coming from the west, and the situation was strained.

Suddenly the sounder on Dan Crompton's table rapped out his call: "S-n—S-n—S-n." The signalman had been watching a heavy string of lumber-laden flats trundling across the west-bound track onto a siding.

A west-bound local had only a few minutes before gone through—one of those accommodation trains that stop at every pair of bars, bearing home the cheerful commuter. Dan was sidetracking the lumber train for a through train which would follow the local in exactly twenty minutes.

Under ordinary conditions, the section governed by Block Tower Seven was like an adjunct to the Coldspring switchyard. With this serial special to look after, the signalman's responsibilities were vastly increased.

Dan jumped to the instrument and replied to the telegraph call. "Hold second section No. 108 for orders." No. 108 was the special, and its "too-too-too-oo-*oot!*" was already waking the distant echoes.

Dan crossed swiftly to the levers, after repeating the order back to the despatcher's office, and pulled down one of the long enameled arms.

This was the very lever the hand of poor Raddigan had clutched the moment before his death. Dan stood, probably, in much the same position as Raddigan had stood when his existence was cut short—his right hand on the lever, his eyes peering through the window before him over the tree-tops at the curve, to the signal post beyond.

It was growing dusk now and the lamps had been lit. An instant after he had thrown down the lever Dan saw the red light flash out on the extended arm.

Farther along the track the headlight of the locomotive drawing the second section of 108 came into view, and above the panting of the freight engine on the siding the signalman heard the shriek of the brakes of the express as her engine driver gave her the compressed air.

The thought of the dead and gone signalman whose place he had achieved was sponged off the slate of Dan's mind, however, with a single stroke. Before his trembling fingers left the lever handle the telegraph sounder began to rattle again.

In spite of the fact that the telegraph instrument is merely a bit of mechanism, to the keen ear of the trained operator there are changes and inflections in its almost ceaseless rattle which sometimes tell as much as the Morse code itself.

Already Dan had begun to learn the "touch" of the different clerks in the despatcher's office, as well as that of the other tower operators with whom he communicated, and seldom needed their signatures to tell him with whom he was talking.

And the sound that now came from the instrument and which so startled him was actually a frantic call for "S-n."

Before he could reach the table and reply, the message followed the call: "Mogul running wild on west-bound track. Sidetrack her and save rear-end collision with No. 87."

No. 87 was the local accommodation which had recently passed Tower Seven. Dan cast a frightened glance from the window.

The tourist train was coming to a halt on the east-bound rails. The only switch open was into the siding on which he had sent the lumber train. To let the runaway pass would be to send it smashing into the rear of the accommodation, as the despatcher had seen.

The lumber train had backed upon the siding. The engine running amuck and this big panting monster almost under the windows of the tower would come together with an awful crash if he allowed the former to run in upon that siding.

It looked as though, in about two minutes, the Coldspring & Arkane division of the Tri-State Railroad was due to lose something like twenty thousand dollars, the price of the two big moguls.

Dan Crompton stood in the middle of the signal tower floor with a mind perfectly blank.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WHEN AN ENGINE RUNS AMUCK.

THE discipline and government of the crews connected with the passenger service of the Tri-State Railroad was almost equal to that of the United States army. And this is the case with many other roads throughout the country.

Yet accidents arise continually, and from causes entirely unnecessary if the rules of the road were strictly followed.

For instance, every engineer, after coming off his run, makes a report to the yardmaster or head of the roundhouse. That report embraces any repairs of which he has discovered his machine stands in need.

Besides this, the wiper, or hostler, is supposed to report any break or wearing of the gear which he has noticed in grooming the huge machine. If the engine draws a passenger train — especially one of importance—prompt attention is shown these reports. But if it is a freight——

Well, as long as the freight service is not systematized like the passenger, and freights and "passengers" run over the same rails, the annals of railroading in this country will continue to contain the records of "frightful holocausts," as the newspapers call them.

In the knowledge of the writer, a certain small repair needed on a freight engine was reported twenty-eight consecutive times, and finally the expected happened—the engine and half the train was ditched, seven lives were lost, and the cost to the road was more than fifty thousand dollars.

Why?

Go into a big switching yard at any hour of the day or night. See the chances the men take, from the yardmaster himself down to the humblest wiper; notice the high pressure of excitement under which they work; observe the speed at which they have to attend to a thousand and one details—and wonder no more.

A locomotive sent to the shops for repairs may cripple a yard or a roundhouse for a week. Move freight, and move it quick! That is the one end in a railroad yard. For freight is like the ever-advancing tide—it waits for no man.

The big mogul had stood in the Coldspring yard for an hour. It was due to pull out a heavy freight when that train should be made up, but the delay of the second and third sections of the special had, in the profane statement of the yard boss, brought "blankety-blank stagnation upon the whole contraption."

Little stagnation was apparent to the uninitiated observer. The puffing of switch engines, the steady cough of the big mogul's own exhaust, the clatter of switches locking and unlocking, the bumping of drawheads and clash of patent couplings, resounded through the lamp-streaked gloom.

Strings of box-cars, both empty and full, were being kicked right and left by the nervous pony engines. Men ran along the roofs of these boxes and waved lanterns and shouted hoarse and mysterious orders.

The driver of the mogul joined the yard boss at the door of the latter's coal-begrimed little office, and cursed the company, root, branch and falling twig. A delay of an hour on the starting of a night freight sometimes meant twelve hours lost in the run to Arkane.

"And now she's got to be shifted again!" the driver roared, turning to shake his fist at the distant station, where, in his high office overlooking half a mile of criss-crossed track, the night train despatcher was supposed to be the ultimate cause of all this delay and pother.

The fireman of the mogul got a swift signal and slid the big machine out upon the west-bound track of the Coldspring & Arkane division, which here branched out of the yard.

She was to stand there only a min-

ute or two, but he threw the lever into place and jumped down to borrow a match from a neighbor standing on the step in front of the drawhead of a switcher.

And here Fate took a hand. That pin had been reported half a dozen times. The mogul had stopped dead, but the lever slipped over, and, as the fireman turned his back, the great engine shot ahead as though from a catapult.

With a roar of escaping steam and grinding drivers, the huge machine started up the track at a twenty-mile gait.

"Great God! She's off!" yelled the yard boss.

And two hundred seconds later Dan Crompton, in Tower Seven, was frozen with the message over his wire that the mogul was running amuck, *and it was up to him to stop her!*

It seemed an hour—that flight of time when Crompton felt every sense within him paralyzed. It was possibly ten ticks of the watch—five seconds. Yet so rapid is thought that, when his clogged brain broke loose and its functions were revived again, in an equal measure of seconds the whole situation flashed into his mental prospect. The road—with the runaway engine tearing up the west-bound track, the only siding within his jurisdiction crowded with the lumber freight, the second section of No. 108 just coming to a stop on the east-bound track, around the curve, and the tail of the accommodation, No. 87, perhaps five miles to the westward—was laid out before him as though he had a "working map" or a time-sheet of the division on the table.

Between Tower Seven and the probable position of No. 87 there wasn't a cut-off or a switch or a siding to the right of the west-bound rails. But at Donlan, two miles west, there was a short siding, now empty, upon which a delayed freight was occasionally backed from the east-bound track when said freight was overtaken by a train scheduled for right of way.

Within the control of the signalman in Tower Seven, just at the curve here, was a switch which would send the mogul over to the east-bound track, yet the tourist train, just stopping beyond the curve, would then receive the charge of the runaway monster. Like lightning through his brain flashed these thoughts:

"If I wire ahead, No. 87 can't be run far enough to reach a siding before this blasted freight engine crashes into her rear platform. That's hopeless. If I turn the runaway into this siding here, two engines will be demolished, lives may be lost, and perhaps the boilers will blow up and wipe twenty or thirty thousand dollars' worth of property out of existence. I can't let it run by on the west-bound track; I mustn't open the switch on to the siding and bring about this collision. There remains only the switch on to the east-bound track and the empty siding at Donlan.

"The third section of this tourist train hasn't reached Donlan yet—it *can't* have reached it. It must be flagged there and the switch to the siding opened for the runaway. Meanwhile, I must move this second section of the tourist train."

And at exactly the end of ten seconds from the time he had read the message from the despatcher's office Dan Crompton's hand was on the lever controlling the signal which he had so recently set to hold that passenger train now coming to a panting stop beyond the curve.

It was no time for hesitation. He did not think of the human lives in danger. A plan, full-fledged and bold, had flashed into his mind, and without question he, a god omnipotent for the moment, controlled all things from Block Tower Seven.

One false motion did he make. The lever was pulled over, and he saw the signal flash from red to white.

Instantly the eager chug-chug of the engine attached to the tourist train responded. Her engineer had not brought her quite to a standstill. He was glad to get the white light, for he was a long way behind his schedule. The drivers began to revolve again, released from the pressure of the brake-shoes, and the headlight flashed around the curve, approaching the tower at increasing speed.

As Dan's hand dropped from the signal lever he sprang for the telegraph instrument and called "D-n" as frantically as the sounder had called him a few moments before.

The operator must be on duty still at Donlan; somebody would be there, surely, to read his message, to flag the third section of the tourist train, and to open the siding switch for the runaway engine.

Indeed, he had no time to wait for a reply to his call. He must run the risk that his message would be heard and understood.

"Flag section three, No. 108. Open siding for runaway engine bound west on east track."

He could not repeat it then. He could not wait for the Donlan man to reply. The second section of No. 108, increasing its speed at every stride, was rushing past the tower and down the track and toward collision with the fast freight.

And loudly borne to his ears on the night air was the roar of the runaway mogul, tearing up the west-bound track.

Dan leaped back to the levers. Half seconds counted now. He was new to the tower and the layout of the levers. If he should make a mistake——

A glaring white light shot into view down the track—the headlight of the runaway.

The last car of the passing train was drawing clear of the switch he must throw open to turn the mogul upon the east-bound track.

Yet he must stop that train before he opened the switch for the runaway. Perhaps No. 108 had already run too far.

He seized a lever and dragged it to him with both hands, his eyes straining through the east window to see the white light change to red on the semaphore to the left of the east-bound rails. But the headlight of the advancing runaway seemed to blind him. He could not see the change.

*The tourist train rolled on!*

Nature mercifully deprives a man of a great deal of his usual imagination in moments of extreme peril.

Dan Crompton had a task to perform and he did it from start to finish almost mechanically.

He had seized and shifted the lever he believed controlled the only signal light which would stop the passenger train before she plunged into the fast freight held nearer the Coldspring yard. He went on with the next action which his plan called for with a coolness which afterward kept him awake nights when he thought of it.

The runaway was almost upon him. He seized and swung over the lever which opened the switch on to the east-bound track. The huge machine roared past, its driver caught the switch, and it was snapped over upon the empty track with almost force enough to derail it.

Empty track? How did he know it was empty? How did he know the operator at Donlan had received his message, had flagged the third section of the tourist special, and opened the empty siding at that point?

He ran back to the telegraph key and hammered the call again: "D-n—D-n—D-n."

There was no reply. He repeated his former message:

"Flag section three, No. 108. Open siding for runaway engine bound west on east track."

Repeated it? Aye, he shrieked it aloud, as though by so doing he might call Donlan's attention to the awful peril bearing down toward that station.

He heard the shouts of amazement and horror from the crew of the freight on the siding without. He had forgotten all about the second section of the passenger train. He did not turn his head to see if it had stopped or had run on to certain collision with the fast freight.

His own pounding of the telegraph key sounded in his ears like a knell.

In seeking to save the company he served from the chance of losing two locomotives, and perhaps half a dozen timber-laden cars, he had taken the risk of causing two awful collisions. He had imperiled the lives of hundreds of passengers on the second and third sections of the tourist train.

And now that he had done his best—or his worst; at least, his *all*—for the first time he realized what this meant.

"Murderer! Murderer!" The accusing words repeated themselves again and again in his beclouded brain.

But his fingers still mechanically pounded out the warning to the Donlan operator.

*(To be continued.)*

# BLUFFING A BANDIT.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

**What happened when Raymond fell in with El Venemo before he had quite perfected his plans for capturing him.**

## I.

IT is just possible that those about the Guardacasa region, and specifically about the Hacienda Shelby, did not take Algernon Raymond quite seriously.

One might consider it a slight misfortune to be christened Algernon, in the first place; and taken into consideration with the custom-made shooting clothes, the occasional evening togs, the monogramed Turkish cigarettes, and such other dainty accessories as come naturally to the New Yorker who can pay for them, the name itself may have helped old Burleigh, the sun-grilled overseer, to voice succinctly the general opinion of Raymond's early days—"He's too blamed nice for this part o' creation!"

Raymond, however, tall, slender and dignified as he was, looked the first elements of the effeminate; and "nice" or otherwise, they were bound to respect him.

Raymond's father and one or two other relatives owned between them the whole vast system of plantations stretching almost from the Cordilleras to the coast, which sent out tons upon tons of coffee and sugar and other things that come so freely from a rich and undeveloped tropical country.

Raymond himself had been sent to gather minute data and actual photographs of every separate establishment, and with the Hacienda Shelby for headquarters it was a pleasant enough task.

More pleasant than otherwise, perhaps, because not three hundred yards away stood the big white home of Jose Carnato, high-bred Spaniard and original owner of the plantation, and—more than all this—the father of the Señorita Manuela.

Manuela was twenty, educated in the States and lately returned, dark and beautiful with the beauty that only the pure Castilian maiden may attain; and possessed, incidentally, of an ever-dancing imp of mischief.

In that isolated region, that social relations were intimate between the families of Shelby, the manager, and of the Señor Carnato is easily understood. It was inevitable, and another thing quite as inevitable followed Raymond's appearance—he fell before the dark fires of Manuela's eyes.

Within six short weeks, be it said, he had twice offered himself, twice to be answered with Manuela's laugh of malicious amusement and her abrupt, will-o'-the-wisp disappearances from the spots in which he had trapped her.

He was thinking of the unsatisfactory state of affairs as they lounged under the stars outside the hacienda.

Manuela and Mrs. Shelby sat upon the large cane sofa; Shelby, in the light from the window, was glancing over some notes; Carnato, being elderly and inclined to repose, dozed amiably over his cigar in the shadows.

"Yes, I'm going to ride over to the other end of the place to-morrow," Raymond said, in answer to a question of the manager's wife.

"But not alone?" Manuela put in.

"I suppose so."

"Aha! Be careful!" A finger of mock warning shook at him.

"Why?"

"El Venemo is abroad once more!"

"Who?"

"Fernando, el Venemo!"

"And who under the sun is Ferando, el Venemo?"

Shelby looked up suddenly.

"Is that a fact, Manuela?"

"Indeed it is. A boy from La Costa's came over to-day—they lost seven head of cattle last night."

"Oh, Lord!" There was more than a little annoyance in Shelby's tone. "I thought that nuisance had been shot!"

"Shot—cattle?" Raymond's interest was rising. "Who, or what, is El Venemo, Shelby?"

"He's a bandit!" replied the other sourly.

"A bandit!" Raymond threw back his head and laughed. "You're joking, aren't you?"

"I'm a long way from it, Raymond. This cursed Fernando, el Venemo, as he calls himself—it means 'the pest' or 'the poison' or something of the sort—is the real thing, from the commotion he kicks up, at any rate."

"And he really hangs out up in the Cordilleras, and prances around to slow music with a knife in his teeth, and nabs people and holds them for ransom and all that?"

"Well, I don't know that he ever went quite so far—although several sudden deaths have been laid to the credit of his gang. But he picks up stray travelers once in a while, and takes everything portable. His favorite line, though, seems to be cattle stealing or walking off with packed coffee, or anything else that can be sold. How he gets rid of the stuff I don't know, but for the past five years the infernal scoundrel has been a blight on every plantation hereabouts. I thought he'd been done for."

"And they can't catch him?"

"Nobody has succeeded yet. He operates mostly at night, in the most utterly unexpected ways and places, and before morning he has disappeared into the hills. I don't suppose he ever stole more than a couple of hundred dollars' worth at one time, and it would cost more than that to send a party after him—so there you are!"

"But the authorities?"

"They're rather sleepy in this neighborhood."

Raymond nodded thoughtfully.

"And so you let this fellow walk in whenever he pleases, walk off with whatever he pleases—and do nothing about it!"

"Well, what would you do about it, Mr. Raymond?" asked the manager stiffly, for the remark seemed to contain a distinct imputation.

"Catch him."

"How?"

"Well, that I can't say," laughed the other. "I'm not sufficiently familiar with the ground. I presume that the proper thing would be to watch for him and gather him in. He can't be such an unexpected individual that persistent watching won't corner him."

"And we have tried that just seven times," replied Shelby. "Not once have we succeeded. Indeed, the second or third time, he removed all the horses from the stable while the men were sitting about the mountain paths on the lookout."

"Um." Raymond lighted another cigarette. "I suppose it is a tough proposition."

"The toughest ever."

"Reward been offered?"

"Several of them," said Shelby dryly. "I fancy that they still stand."

"Are you thinking of earning them?" inquired Manuela innocently.

"Hardly," said Raymond.

"But why not? It would seem easy."

Raymond had a suspicion that he was being chaffed, and merely nodded.

"One might sit noiselessly in the hills," pursued Señorita Carnato, "as you suggest, with a pistol in either hand, and when El Venemo appears, pot him, as you say! The rewards were for his capture, alive or dead."

"And you think I'm not capable of it, eh?"

"But no, señor! I feel that you are going to undertake the task."

"Really? If that's the case, perhaps I'd better. Has any one seen the gentleman?"

"Several."

"Then give me a description."

"He is very tall, very dark, and very thin," said Manuela precisely. "He

travels, usually, with a heavy mask before his face, that those who behold may not die before his beauty. He rides a magnificent white horse, stolen from the Gracias plantation, and his followers, seven or eight in number, mount mules. They ride from nowhere, apparently, in the dead of night, and return before the sunrise. Is that sufficient?"

"Quite," said Raymond. "And when I bring him here and lay him at your feet, what shall be the reward?"

"What you ask, señor!" responded Manuela blithely.

"By Jove, I think I'll try!"

The dialogue seemed to be taking a personal turn, and Mrs. Shelby, understanding, coughed loudly and abruptly.

It was indeed quite a forceful cough, for it brought Carnato back to life. He sat up suddenly, with the brazen front of the man who positively has not been asleep.

"Ah, yes—yes!" he remarked. "It was to-night, was it not?"

"What was scheduled for to-night?" asked Raymond.

"The photograph, was it not?"

"That's true, Raymond," interposed Shelby. "You were going to try a flashlight of us out here, you know."

"I'd forgotten it completely."

"Never too late to mend. We're all together to-night, and we may not be for a week again. Señor Carnato may have to leave for the coast any day, to meet the good señora on her return."

Raymond groaned inaudibly.

"How you love to make work for a man, Shelby—not a plate in one of the holders, and you're trying to kick me into going into that stuffy little den of yours and smothering over a dark-room lantern for fifteen minutes, not to mention——"

"And for another thing," added the manager, "you'd better get at it quickly, if the moon's going to interfere with the picture. She'll be up in another hour."

The Northerner arose.

"Well, send one of the niggers to my room for the bag of photographic stuff —everything's in there."

Shelby called, and lazy feet slapped the floor above. An interminable wait, and the feet slapped down again; and the heavy traveling-bag into which Raymond had packed everything pertaining to his photography was laid at his feet.

He picked it up with a sigh.

"Well, think kindly of me in there," he said resignedly. "I know that office of yours at night, Shelby. Temperature runs up to about seven hundred, tarantulas drop down every fifteen seconds from the roof, and scorpions scratch designs on your hands, while your tame chicken-snakes play tag around your feet. It's a very pleasant place, generally speaking. Au revoir."

Señorita Carnato waved a merry hand to him, and he lugged the bag indoors.

It was in Shelby's little office behind the hacienda that he had been accustomed to do most of his dark-room tinkering, even to the extent of finishing such plates as he desired to have perfect before leaving the spot.

The small, frail building stood across some fifty feet of darkness from the house. Raymond could hardly distinguish it among the trees as he stepped from the rear door, but he had an excellent idea of where the office should have stood, and he passed to the ground confidently enough.

He had covered less than half the short space when a whistle caught his ear. He stopped curiously. Some kind of tropic night bird, doubtless.

He wished that it would come again, for it had a new and interesting sound. He paused for several seconds and walked on.

After some feeling about, and the cautious lighting of one or two matches, his hand came to the knob, and he turned it and opened the lockless door.

His foot was raised to enter, but——

Without the faintest suspicion of a warning sound something hard was clapped over his mouth—a human hand!

A dozen others gripped different parts of his anatomy, bearing down and backward. The bag was snatched rudely from his hand.

For a moment he struggled, and as speedily realized that he was utterly powerless against the six or eight that seemed to be holding him.

He relaxed and fell flat upon his back,

the hand still tightly over his mouth, and as he landed silently upon the soft ground an angry whisper became audible beside his amazed ear:

"So, señor, it is you, then, who chooses to make the joke about Fernando, el Venemo!"

II.

ALL of thirty seconds had passed before Raymond could get the least mental grip upon the situation.

That he was being held captive within fifty feet of the hacienda and of Shelby himself was certain; that he was totally incapable of speech with that grimy paw over his mouth, equally so.

El Venemo! It flashed across his mind that this might possibly be some wild, senseless joke of Manuela Carnato's. He recalled that she had seemed to cling to the subject of the bandit.

But quite as rapidly he saw the utter absurdity of such a notion. If it were a joke she could have no connection with it, and the affair was fast losing any aspect of fun. The hand over his mouth was stifling him, strongly aided by another willing one at his throat.

Furthermore, in the darkness to which his eyes were now becoming more accustomed, he saw something very like a long, broad knife in the air. He was studying it with unpleasant interest when the voice again whispered into his ear:

"You are perhaps convinced, señor, that to struggle is useless? Nod your answer."

Raymond nodded reluctantly.

"If I release your mouth you will give your solemn oath not to cry a warning"

The captive shook his head again, but this time in violent negation.

"It were better, señor, for I would hold speech with you. See! One stroke of this and all is over with you—is it not so? I would ask a question and desire an answer. Have I your word?"

Raymond considered. By speaking, as it seemed, he had nothing to lose, and perhaps something to gain. He nodded assent, and the hand left his lips.

The knife came close—terribly close—and rested upon his throat.

"Answer truthfully and quickly, and no harm shall come to you," the whisperer pursued. "You are the Señor Raymond?"

"You bet I am!" hissed the captive angrily. "And when——"

"It is enough, my golden bird!" chuckled the other.

The hand returned to his mouth, and Raymond realized that in his well-grounded rage he had smashed with a single word all his chances of escape.

The figure above him straightened a little, and a louder whisper came from him.

"Gonzales, take his bag. Periera and Miranda, assist me here!"

Silently as ghosts they appeared in the blackness. One dark figure raised the big grip and melted away among the trees.

A cloth was bound over his mouth. Strong fingers caught his head—fingers as strong gripped either leg. He was raised bodily from the ground.

Not fifty feet from the house he had been captured by the lightly considered El Venemo—and he was being carried away.

A very few yards had been covered when a wild fury filled Raymond. Slender and elegant as he was, his college career had seen athletic feats that would have done much credit to a bigger man. He was strong and tough and wiry, and with a violent wrench he kicked off the lower two of his bearers.

His feet struck solid ground, and with a jerk he strove to break from the grasp around his head. The fingers slipped—he felt them leaving him, and a last powerful lunge dislodged them entirely.

He grabbed for the gag, dodging quickly in the darkness; the cloth, too, was coming loose; in a second he would shout at the top of his lungs and dive for the lights of the hacienda.

But there were eyes better fitted than Raymond's for seeing in the dark. At the very instant his tug was telling on the gag, a thousand hands seemed to grip him simultaneously.

His own fingers were jerked away, he was thrown violently and noiselessly to the ground, and the hot, angry

breath of El Venemo could be felt on his face.

"Señor, I am all for your peace and safety, as you may realize later; but another such move and they will find only your body here. You doubt it? Feel then the knife!"

A sudden sharp prick in the side of his neck convinced Raymond. Whatever nightmare he had encountered—whatever crazy escapade of the supposed comic opera bandit this might be, he was plainly and terribly in earnest.

Another rumpus, and Fernando's pleasant prediction seemed likely to come true.

Plainly, Raymond's part was but to submit; and much as it galled him, great as was the rage that surged through him, Raymond submitted.

He was raised again and carried onward through the velvet darkness, still without a sound. Though he could hardly see, he had an impression that they were going swiftly by the outbuildings. Briskly, then, they trotted along what he knew must be the backpath toward the hills.

His feet tilted upward; he knew they had struck the first rise of ground.

After some fifteen minutes of this uncomfortable and undignified traveling, a halt was called. They were among the trees now, for he could hear the faint wind, and the blackness was absolutely impenetrable.

Whisperings sounded here and there, and a little later the soft pattering of hoofs. A small lantern was lighted and carefully shielded by El Venemo himself, and in the little circle of brightness the heads of a dozen mules appeared uncannily.

Through them a large white horse was led, and stood champing. The bandit turned to his captive.

"You will mount first, señor, and ride before me? What? You need assistance?" he ended angrily.

Raymond was gripped again and set astride. He turned and saw the others mounting, and Fernando in the saddle behind himself.

The bandit chirped softly, and they cantered away through the forest, away from Shelby's and upward!

Where were they going? Raymond tried to form even a vague idea, and, ignorant of the country, was forced to give it up as useless.

In vain he strove to make out possible landmarks—something to guide him back should the chance for escape present itself. The country was as black as the very bottomless pit—even trees were no more than blots a little darker than their surroundings.

Two hours of rapid traveling and he was no wiser—save for the unhappy knowledge that they were two hours farther away from civilization and pushing every minute higher into the Cordilleras. El Venemo spoke not a single word; one hand clutched the bridle; the other held Raymond firmly.

Then twice two hours had passed. Even though it had been a steady, steep climb, he knew that they must have covered all of twenty miles, perhaps more. They were high up, too, for in the last hour the hills had risen rapidly, and the air was crisp and cold.

He wondered what they were doing on the plantation. Long before this Shelby must have begun a search for him.

He wondered what Manuela had said and done. He wondered whether an alarm had been sent out, and he laughed as he realized how utterly useless an alarm would be unless men could be found as well acquainted with the mountain wilderness as El Venemo himself.

And, as he was wondering, the cavalcade halted. The men spoke freely now, and joked in Spanish as they dismounted. Fernando slid from his horse and commanded the prisoner to dismount.

The gag was untied, and he stood free to speak and move—or attempt to escape, if it pleased him.

Lanterns flickered out from a dozen points, and a group of rude tents were revealed. The camp was in a little, half-hidden niche, and away into the darkness the little path by which they had arrived descended steeply.

Fernando slipped off his mask, and in the poor light Raymond found himself face to face with a long, lean, dark

countenance, smooth shaven and not wonderfully intelligent. El Venemo, indeed, appeared like nothing more or less than the real fact—a very thin, very tall Mexican mountain thief.

They eyed each other for a matter of seconds, and Raymond's wrath boiled up.

"Well, where the devil are we?" he asked.

"In my own little home, señor. Do you like it?"

"I do not. What's the object of this?"

"That we will discuss in the morning. You wish to sleep?"

The captive growled.

"For ourselves, we sleep in the air. A poor tent, however, is at your disposal." He turned back a flap. "You will enter, señor, for I am weary and have no wish for talk this night."

If Raymond hesitated, a rough push decided him. He entered rather hastily and found himself kneeling upon a rough straw bed.

Yielding to the impulse, he swore aloud and cursed the crowd in English and in Spanish. A chuckle answered him from without, and when he laid an exasperated hand upon the flap of his tent, the chuckle was supplemented by a sharp rap on the knuckles from the back of a blade.

Raymond sank down with a sigh. Whatever this gang of ruffians intended to do with him, he was alone and unarmed. He might make the best of matters or not.

He stretched himself upon the straw bed and listened for hours, but save for an occasional grunt or the bray of a donkey not a sound broke the silence of the night.

Rather irritated at himself for sleeping, he returned abruptly to consciousness, a hand shaking at his ankle.

The door was open and he crawled out. Above, a brilliant sun beat down through the cool mountain air. Before him stood El Venemo, the pest, dirty and unimpressive save by reason of the force behind him.

"You have rested well, señor?"

"Look here, my man——"

"Ah, but must we argue?"

"You'll argue all right about the time the Mexican authorities get a rope around your neck."

"And let us trust that that is many days in the future. Come, come, señor—let us not waste words. I have prepared a letter for your friends below."

"So it's the good old game, eh?"

"I am asking a price for your return," smiled El Venemo. "Twenty-five thousand dollars in Mexican money!"

"And you won't get it, blast you!" burst out Raymond. "Before I'd let any one pay you twenty-five cents I'd rot in this hole!"

"So, señor? But the others may not feel as you do? It is said that your good father is very wealthy—that he owns miles upon miles of the plantation land below. It is so?"

"If it is, you can gamble that he'll spend every cent of it to put you where you belong!"

"But not if I cannot be found, señor? Not if I point out quite clearly that unless the money is returned by the bearer of my message you will be shot."

"Shot?"

"Unquestionably." El Venemo produced a soiled sheet of paper, scribbled over with execrable writing. "Here it is—the letter to your excellent friend—the Señor Shelby. The details are few. To-day is Wednesday. By Saturday midnight I must have the money. Otherwise——"

"I see." Raymond was calmer and beginning to feel rather sober.

"And if the good señor would add a word——"

"As to what?"

"Merely urging the Señor Shelby that compliance will be best for all concerned."

"I'll see you in——" Raymond began wrathfully.

El Venemo raised his eyebrows. The captive broke off shortly, for a new thought had struck him.

Shelby wrote shorthand—he knew that well—and he himself was quite familiar with the same system.

"Give it to me," he said.

He snatched the paper and glanced through it.

"So you've even provided that I be

shot unless the bearer returns alone and uninjured!" he observed. "Well—I'll add a word."

His pencil traveled rapidly across the space below Fernando's lines.

Am somewhere in the mountains, about twenty miles away. Don't know where. Under no circumstances give bearer money, but hold him and make him lead a party back here.

RAYMOND.

El Venemo glanced doubtfully over the queer characters.

"It should be in Spanish, señor."

"It'll go as it is or you'll get no money, I assure you of that," said Raymond.

A few minutes later a mule jogged away bearing one of the half-drunken crowd on his back. The ribald song of the rider died away in the mountain passes—and a long period of suspense had begun.

Raymond was left to amuse himself as best pleased him. El Venemo and an unending series of black bottles occupied the ground by the fire, which they tended during the day and built up well at night, when the winds grew chill.

He wandered back and forth, tagged ever by one of the dirty crowd. He strolled to the path and half-meditated a wild break downward.

Indeed, he went so far as to stroll to a point where the rocky sides melted into shrubbery.

And there he came face to face with a pair of rifles, and turned back without argument.

Later in the day he examined the sides. They were utterly unscalable; a monkey could hardly have taken the straight climb of fifty feet. At the far end of the place the way seemed open, however, and he managed to reach the group of huge boulders which appeared to bar the exit.

No hindrance was offered. He climbed to the top of the pile. Below him was a sheer drop of nearly a thousand feet, into a bare, rocky, gulch-like valley between the hills!

When darkness fell on Wednesday, Raymond knew the situation rather better than in the morning, and some of his confidence in a rescue weakened.

There was but one way of exit or ingress—by the guarded path. If all went well below, and a party came to his rescue, could it enter?

Most certainly not if even three of the gang saw fit to dispute the matter, for they could easily lie behind the rocks and pick off a regiment of men entering the narrow pass.

On the whole, might it not have been as well for him to direct the payment of his ransom?

No, it might not! Raymond's independent young blood boiled up. While he lived, never one single cent would he allow to pass into the hands of this wretched animal of the hills, with his lean, dirty chops and his capacity for native liquid fire.

But Thursday passed as Wednesday had done, and no word came. Watchers had been set upon the hills, and all day they strained their eyes for a sign of the man who should long before have returned with or without the ransom money.

Barely a bush moved down the mountainside, and the path remained untrod.

Friday dawned, warmed and passed to midday, and still no news of the messenger. Darkness falling, El Venemo paced the open space angrily until long past midnight, cursing volubly under his breath and returning ever to the entrance to peer vainly through the gap and down the path.

On Saturday Raymond grew moody, and with excellent reason. The upland calm was wholly undisturbed save by themselves. The crowd was plainly anxious, too, and an air of suppressed excitement seemed everywhere.

Parties of two and three were despatched to make little trips down the path. They returned without tidings.

The sun sank, ever lower and lower, and finally dropped behind the peaks of the next range. Twilight came and then the night, and no word of any sort had arrived.

Well—it was his last evening on earth, Raymond reflected sadly, if El Venemo made good his threat.

Would he dare? The captive was long unable to decide. Fernando seemed excited, nervous, undetermined.

He still paced back and forth, back

and forth, and numberless were the Spanish curses that left his feverish lips. He seemed to be tormented by the prospect of cold-blooded murder. Perhaps——

At about nine o'clock the bandit crossed to Raymond's tent, before which he was sitting.

"Señor, your friends are fools!"

Raymond looked up with forced calm.

"See here, you, did you ever kill a man before?" he inquired.

"But——" Fernando started.

"And you're half-scared to death at the idea now, aren't you?" El Venemo stiffened.

"I could have wished another ending, señor."

"You'd better not risk doing for me, my man — it will all be paid back to you."

"When I am — found, señor," said Fernando softly, and even to himself the words sounded tremulous.

"Bah! You're as nervous as a cat!" sneered Raymond, gathering courage again at the evidence. "If you're going to kill me, have the courage of your convictions, you shaking cur!"

"Señor!" El Venemo's voice rose angrily. Then he quieted again almost immediately. "One thing I will say. I set the time for midnight. I will give your tardy friends until sunrise to return my messenger with the money. When the sun appears, señor, if he is not in sight, you die!"

III.

El Venemo stalked away, and Raymond watched him in moody silence. The outlaw squatted uncomfortably beside the fire and for long stared into it. His handful of petty criminals lounged about.

Then, one by one, they rolled up for the night. The customary guard walked away toward the entrance. The rest, in the course of an hour or so, dropped into slumber.

El Venemo was the last of all to contemplate rest. Midnight was long behind when finally he stretched himself beneath his blanket.

Raymond and the lonely guard were awake in the wilderness.

The former had little mind for sleep. For a time he sat before his tent and racked his brain for some manner of untangling the desperate knot.

Whatever the reason, it appeared all too plainly that help from Shelby was no longer to be expected. Upon his own resources Raymond must rely for any means of escape that might be possible at this eleventh hour.

He took to walking after a time.

Could he overpower the guard, get clear, and manage to work his way out of range before the light? There was a splendid certainty of being shot which caused him to discard the idea.

But what then?

He went on aimlessly, casting random glances here and there in the hope of some kindly hint from nature. The animals browsed near the entrance. Raymond patted the big white horse thoughtfully for a time and walked on.

The crude tents next caught his attention. He descried Fernando's, and threw back the flap. There, among a vast assortment of odds and ends, stood his own load of photographic supplies, the traveling-bag that had been wrenched from his hand at the time of the capture.

He dragged it out and carried it over to his own tent, the sleepy guard offering no interference.

He took out the contents, some of them sadly maltreated, and pondered over them for a time. And suddenly breath almost left him.

The flash powder! There it was, five solid pounds of it! He had stocked up well in New York on everything pertaining to pictures, and the flashlight of the group he had meditated taking on that fateful night would have seen the opening of the first of the five bottles.

Now they lay before him—five flasks, containing powder enough, it seemed, to illuminate all creation for the space of a second or so.

Raymond thought harder and harder as the minutes flitted by.

When he arose, suddenly and softly, the five uncorked bottles were in his different pockets. He crossed swiftly —the guard was dozing.

He passed to the big white horse,

picked his bridle from the bushes and tied him fast to a stout little tree.

Another quick and satisfactory glance at the guard, and Raymond bent to the ground. Carefully, rapidly, the first bottle in his hand, he laid a thick trail of powder across the clearing. The bottle emptied, he took the next and continued the work. So with the next and the next, until the heavy white line lay straight from the entrance to the fire, lacking hardly a foot of the latter.

The last half-pound he emptied in a little pile at the end of the line, produced his bottle of alcohol and emptied it over the mass.

Then Raymond filled his lungs and shrieked!

With a single impulse, every man of the nervous crowd was erect. El Venemo leaped to his feet and stood, quivering and wondering, as he stared at the motionless figure of his captive, arms folded, beside the fire.

"Señor! You have called?"

Raymond faced him.

"I would speak to you, Fernando. You will release me, here and now!"

"But——"

"For I have a feeling that terrible vengeance is about to overtake you all unless this is done. Some unknown power——"

He paused effectively. There were many ex-good Catholics among the gang, and several shuddered visibly and crossed themselves. El Venemo squared his narrow shoulders scornfully.

"Unknown powers, señor, we of the mountains do not fear. Here——"

Raymond's foot shot out, straight into the fire. A pile of glowing embers rose upon it, and were dropped at the other side—dropped squarely upon the powder with its bath of alcohol!

As if earth had opened before the fires of the infernal, the blinding white blaze shot up before El Venemo, and ran furiously, hissingly across the clearing, lighting every smallest nook and cranny with a brilliancy beyond the clearest sun.

Mad shrieks echoed from everywhere; panic-stricken feet tore hither and thither.

The trail burned to its end. With a final, awful flash, it reached the entrance and instantaneously died away.

The clearing, from end to end, was one dense, impenetrable mass of solid white smoke!

Raymond had not been inactive. At the very drop of the coals his arm had wound about El Venemo. The outlaw, screaming and writhing, had been lifted bodily and borne across the clearing.

There he found his feet for an instant and fought with a terrified strength that earned him a stunning blow upon the temple.

A momentary struggle with the frightened animal and the horse was loose, Raymond clutching the bridle. A heave, and El Venemo's long body, hardly resisting, had been tossed across the brute's neck.

Raymond leaped up behind, dug his knees hard and shook the reins.

"Go on, old boy!" he cried wildly. "You know the way better than I!"

The high-strung, nervous beast made no mistake. His first frantic bound was hardly over when they had cleared the stifling white pall.

The erstwhile captive, El Venemo himself, and a powerful horse were galloping headlong in the moonlit night, down the mountain pass and free!

After fully two miles, Raymond managed to pull in the beast. El Venemo he had already relieved of his pistol, and now he held it against the outlaw's head, forced down to the horse's side.

"You're where you belong, my bandit friend!" he said grimly. "If it's uncomfortable, it's what you deserve. Now you direct me straight for Shelby's, and if you happen to make any little errors in the road I'll shoot you and find the way myself. *Sabe?*"

It lacked but a little of nine when Raymond pulled in before the Hacienda Shelby.

El Venemo was bound tightly with tough vines from the forest and sat now silent and sullen before the man who had turned the tables.

Long before he could call out, people seemed to throng from everywhere—plantation hands by the dozen, Shelby

and his wife, Manuela and her father. The faces were haggard but joyful.

The manager wrung his hand and wrung it again, and tried to tell that they had the messenger, that he had tried escaping, and that Carnato had killed him with a bullet.

The manager's wife wept freely, and Carnato hugged him emotionally and called upon the saints. Manuela stood silently by.

When it was possible, Raymond descended, stiff and sore with the long bareback ride.

Not too gently he jerked El Venemo down and threw him upon the ground.

"There's your bandit, Shelby," he said tartly. "You can claim the reward if you want to. Have them cart him away."

They did cart him away, and finally one by one the group departed until Raymond was left alone with Manuela.

He took her hands and faced her with more resolution than usual.

"Manuela, that could as well have happened to you."

"Yes."

"However, it happened to me, and I brought back the dreadful outlaw and laid him at your feet. You know what I am going to ask? Ah, you do. I'm going back to New York in another month. Are you coming with me?"

The great relief was reacting upon Manuela. She tottered slightly, but the corners of her little mouth twitched.

"A person who cannot walk fifty feet without being kidnaped certainly needs some one to care for him."

Whereupon, according to Shelby, who observed from a distance that she was weeping violently upon Raymond's shoulder, right there in the open, it is presumed that Manuela accepted the charge.

# THE FUGITIVE.*

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.

A modern romance in the Holy Land, involving the mystery of an American who seems to be a villain, and culminating in the massacre at Damascus.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MAJOR CRAWFORD and his niece, May Farrar, are traveling through the Orient. On the way they are joined by Sir Arthur Cole, and Ralph Mohun, an American. Mohun rescues May and his own groom, Imbarak, from death in the quicksands, and thereby wins May's unconfessed love and the lifelong gratitude of Imbarak, who informs Mohun of the pending Christian massacre in Damascus, warning him to prevent Major Crawford's party from visiting that city. Mohun openly avoids Miss Farrar until they arrive at Jerusalem, where Zenas Shattuck, a Boston detective, appears and arrests Mohun, who breaks away from him and escapes.

May Farrar, unable to sleep after the evening's excitement, makes an early journey to the Garden of Gethsemane. Here she meets Mohun disguised as an Oriental beggar. He warns her not to go to Damascus, and refuses to tell her the reason for his arrest, saying that he is guilty but must not be brought to punishment. At this point Shattuck arrives, and is deceived by Mohun's disguise. May, angered by Ralph's attempt to escape, resolves to force him to take the right step, and as Shattuck is about to send the supposed beggars about their business interrupts their flight with:

"Mr. Shattuck, you have been deceived."

## CHAPTER V.

### INTO THE LION'S JAWS.

"MR. SHATTUCK," repeated May, "you have been deceived. This man is not——"

The words, despite her resolution, died in her throat, as the supposed leper ceased his shuffling walk toward the gate and freedom. He halted and looked quietly at her from above the disfiguring folds of his *kafieh*.

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"The man is not what?" asked Zenas in surprise at the interruption and impatient at her pause.

Imbarak had unostentatiously slipped a short, curved knife from his girdle and had moved between the detective and Mohun. The flowing sleeve of the groom's *kumbaz* promptly concealed the ugly looking weapon, but not before May had seen it. Meantime, Ralph stood motionless, his quiet, expressionless eyes still fixed on the girl who held his freedom or the detective's life in the hollow of her little hand. There was no appeal in his look, no fear; simply steady, inquiring intentness.

Yet, under that unflinching regard, May Farrar's indignation died, her resolution wavered, her sense of justice vanished.

"Well?" reiterated Zenas. "What were you going to say about that man?"

"I—I was going to say," replied Miss Farrar weakly, as she indicated Imbarak, "that he is not custodian of this garden. He is probably an accomplice of the—the beggar. So don't fee him if he shows you about the place."

"Fee him? Not I!" grunted Zenas. "Be off, the pair of you!"

Imbarak and Mohun silently turned and walked from the enclosure. At the gate Mohun halted and seemed about to look back, but Imbarak's hand was on his arm and the groom hurried him away.

"Will you please take me back to the hotel, Mr. Shattuck?" asked May. "I am very, very tired."

Two days later the little cavalcade of tourists, with their dragoman, servants, tents and luggage, started north, across the country, for Damascus. The major had somewhat hurried their departure from Jerusalem, knowing what painful associations that locality must bring to his niece's mind. By tacit consent, neither he nor Mrs. Sharpe referred to Mohun in May's presence, and after one brief, incisive *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Sharpe, Sir Arthur Cole was also prevailed upon to maintain the embargo on Ralph's name.

May was outwardly as cheerful and bright as ever, but that her gaiety was forced and her interest feigned was patent in her restless eye and pale cheek.

She had seriously considered the warning conveyed to her by Mohun concerning the danger of the Damascus visit, and had even hinted to Major Crawford that it might perhaps be well to abandon the jaunt.

But the bluff old soldier's indignant scouting of the bare idea of any peril, and his confidence in the safety of an American citizen in any quarter of the civilized or even semi-civilized globe, overbore her feeble protests and at last stilled her fears.

The girl had well-nigh implicit confidence in her uncle's judgment, and that confidence had rarely been misplaced.

Mrs. Sharpe, who had also been timid because of the rumors of impending religious trouble in the north, also coincided at last with Major Crawford's views and consented to go. The lady's only regret in starting so soon was that the delays to the American mails still prevented her from learning the present condition of the great banking house of Warren & Son.

Her fortune was all in that Boston firm's hands, and since the brief letter which informed her that a large sum of money had been embezzled and that the firm was tottering, she had had no further news from home.

She resolved, therefore, to join in the trip to Damascus, remain in that city a few days, and then return to America by way of Beirut, the nearest seaport town.

The northward journey through beautiful Samaria, with its Devon-like scenery and age-softened ruins, and through Cana, Nazareth and Southern Galilee passed uneventfully. Each day they rode from morning till night along the crooked, rocky footpaths which the natives miscall roads, stopping at noon to lunch beside some Scripture-famed stream, in the shade of a gigantic *terebinth* tree or in the mossy ruins of some crusader castle, and halting at sunset to find their tents awaiting them.

The evenings were spent in song and talk around a roaring camp-fire, and they sank to sleep under the big Eastern stars to the distant howling of moun-

tain wolves, to the laugh of marauding hyenas in the valleys below, and the distant snapping bark of jackals quarreling over carrion among the nearer foothills.

One day, after crossing a wide plateau, they came out on the summit of a precipitous hill at whose foot the blue waters of a mighty lake danced and glittered.

"The Sea of Galilee!" proclaimed the dragoman grandiloquently, and the party halted, silent, awed and admiring. Even Cole's cheerful idiocy found no voice, and the major quietly uncovered his gray head.

They encamped on the pebbly margin of the lake that night, midway between the yellow-walled, dirt-infested town of Tiberius and the ancient cluster of grass-choked monoliths that marks the sight of Capernaum.

As they sat about the fire after the evening meal a clatter of horses' hoofs broke in upon the gentle lapping of waves against the shore. Out of the gloom, into the radius of firelight, appeared a dozen mounted figures. The foremost dismounted and walked forward, saluting the foreigners with an easy grace that is a part and parcel of the oriental manner.

The newcomer was a swarthy, middle-aged man, in the baggy uniform of a Turkish cavalry officer.

"You command this party, sir?" he asked politely, addressing Major Crawford in French.

"I am in charge of these ladies," replied the major. "What do you wish? To see our passports?"

"No, sir. I am sure your passports are correct. May I speak with you alone?"

He drew the major out of earshot of the others, who looked nervously after the receding form of their protector.

"Well, sir?" said the major curtly.

He hated mystery and dreaded the long-winded, circuitous fashion in which the typical oriental usually leads up to whatever he has to say.

But he was destined in this instance to be pleasantly disappointed. The Turkish officer came straight to the point.

"I am from the barracks at Tiberius," began the Turk. "We have received orders to-day from our superiors at Damascus to turn back all foreigners—whether tourists or those traveling on business—who may be going north. I am most sorry to——"

"But what is the meaning of this?" blustered the major fiercely. "Our passports are in correct order. This is a time of peace. We carry no contrabands. I demand as an American citizen to be allowed to proceed."

"My heart is desolated, sir," said the Turk, bowing humbly and spreading out both hands in deprecation, "but you cannot proceed farther north. Our orders are imperative. No foreigners are to be permitted to enter Damascus or to proceed in that direction until—until certain expected events have occurred.

"We are the friends of your great country, we Turks. We desire no international complications. Therefore——"

"International complications!" the major snorted. "What on earth is the man talking about? Do you think I intend to stir up any complications, international or otherwise?

"We are simply going on a pleasure trip to see the oldest city in the world. And you come here in a high-handed fashion and order us to turn back. I refuse to turn back. I——"

"I am but obeying my orders, sir," pleaded the officer, "and I beg that you will be reasonable. You cannot go to Damascus."

"But why?"

"My orders gave no reason," answered the Turk evasively, "and my orders must be obeyed. I shall have to see that you turn back by to-morrow morning."

"But if I insist on going forward?"

"Your servants, sir, are all of them servants of my august master, the *Padishah* (Sultan)," responded the officer. "Without them you cannot proceed. And not a man among them will stir a foot toward Damascus when they know that the Sultan's representatives in Syria forbid them to do so."

The major, through all his wrath,

recognized the truth of this statement. He knew that no Mohammedan nor Christian native in his employ would dare disobey an order of the soldiery.

He was at a standstill, and for the moment he reflected on the advisability of giving up his plan.

But the ignominy of being forced to confess to the ladies of his party that he had been worsted by a baggy-trousered Turk was more than he could face. He did not connect the matter with Mohun's earlier words concerning the chances of a massacre, but attributed it to the red tape that swathes every move and act in the Sultan's domain. Thus from blustering he turned to pleading, but with the same result. At length he recalled the cynical yet true proverb of the East: "Every man has his price."

"*Effendi*," he said, addressing the officer in a less stormy tone, "I greatly admire that sash you wear. I wonder if you would part with it for fifty *mejidie* (about $44)?"

The officer drew back in pained surprise.

"*Howaji!*" he exclaimed. "You insult me! I am a man of honor. I——"

"Forgive me," said the major hastily. "It was a slip of the tongue. I should have said one hundred *mejidie*."

The officer glanced down at his cheap cotton sash.

"It cost me one hundred and fifty *mejidie*," he replied reflectively. "I hate to part with it. I——"

"Permit me," interposed Major Crawford, opening his pocket-book. "Permit me to offer you two hundred *mejidie*. And," he added as the other, with many protestations of undying gratitude, counted and pocketed the money, "may I ask you to continue wearing the sash as a memento of me?"

"*Effendi*, your generosity is as the light of the prophet's eyes," murmured the Turk. Then, in a more businesslike tone: "Break camp before dawn and continue on your way to Damascus. I shall say that I missed your tents in the darkness. A pleasant journey to you!"

A more suspicious hearer than the major might have detected a note of malicious irony in those last words.

Major Crawford and the officer were strolling back toward the fire when the group of cavalrymen, who had remained mute and motionless in the background throughout the colloquy, suddenly exhibited signs of activity.

One of them called something in Arabic to the officer, who gave a curt order in response. The soldiers cantered off, widening out their squad until they formed a line of videttes from lake-edge to the bluffs at the landward extremity of the beach.

"What's the matter?" queried Major Crawford, as the officer lumbered into the saddle.

"One of my men heard two horses approaching at a gallop from the south," was the reply. "Night travel at such speed is not customary."

The sound of horses approaching rapidly along the lakeside road from the direction of Jerusalem was now plainly audible even to the less keen-eared occidentals. Soon two mounted figures loomed up, shadowy and grotesque in the gloom beyond the fire. The riders had, apparently, no intention of stopping at the tourists' camp, but continued their reckless gallop northward.

"*Uiguf!* (Halt!)" commanded the officer.

One of the two riders slackened his pace, but the other called over his shoulder in a drawling, nasal twang that broke strangely on the stillness of the Palestine night: "Come along, you blame heathen! What yer stopping for? We've got no time to waste!"

"*Halte-là!*" repeated the officer, this time in French, and as the foremost rider made no sign of having heard, two of the cavalrymen spurred across his path.

There was a struggle, a scraping of hoofs as the American's mount was pulled sharply to its haunches, and then the nasal voice drawled once more, with no tinge of excitement in it: "If this is a hold-up, I warn you heathens I'm armed and that I'll commence unlimbering my battery in a second if you don't let me go."

"It's that wretched detective!" growled the major.

Then, raising his voice, he called:

"Hey, Shattuck! Those men are soldiers. They aren't brigands. You'll save trouble by yielding."

A grunt of disgust was all the reply vouchsafed, but the detective made no further resistance as the troopers led his horse within the glow of the firelight.

"This is late to be riding so fast, Mr. Shattuck," observed the major, forcing himself to speak civilly. "What are you doing here in Galilee? When I saw you last you were hunting in Jerusalem for——"

He stopped short with an uneasy glance at May, who sat, chin in hands, gazing into the fire and giving no sign that she had noticed the words.

"Hunting that slippery young cuss that gave me the slip?" finished Zenas. "Yes, I was. But I hear he's got clear of the country by taking ship from Jaffa. He got away from me, anyhow, and he may be half way to France by now, for all I know or care.

"But I thought while I was here in Palestine I'd take a look around on my own account and see some of the Bible sights I've read about. You see, I ain't likely ever to be in this part of the world again, and I may as well enjoy myself while I'm here.

"So I'm on my way to Damascus. City that St. Paul went to, you know. And——"

"Damascus?" broke in the officer in French, catching the one familiar word in Shattuck's speech. "Does your friend say he is on his way to Damascus?"

Summoning Shattuck's native servant, he began to question him sharply.

"This man says," continued the officer at last, addressing the major, "that the tall, thin American there hired him in Jerusalem and that they are on their way to Damascus. He says his employer speaks no French. I, alas! know no English. Please tell him, therefore, of the unfortunate order I have received which forces me to forbid him to go on to Damascus. Please tell him he must turn back."

Not without secret amusement Crawford translated the message. He disliked the cadaverous, drawling Bostonian, and desired for his own sake as well as for May's that the man who had indirectly caused them so much unhappiness should not be thrown further into their society on the road nor in Damascus.

He rather relished the anticipation of Zenas' discomfiture, but he was in no way prepared for the outburst of almost childish anger wherewith Shattuck received the news that he could not continue his journey.

"It's an outrage! A measly outrage!" shouted Shattuck. "I wish this nigger soldier and his whole varmint nation was in the middle of the Dead Sea. Just you translate that to him, will you!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort," retorted Crawford. "He is acting under orders in forbidding you to go to Damascus, and he has expressed those orders as courteously as possible. The only thing you can do is to yield."

Shattuck, for answer, did the most foolish thing possible. Wheeling his horse, he endeavored to bolt past his guards.

The Turkish soldiers, representatives of the finest cavalry force in the world, had gathered about Shattuck's plunging horse before the brute had gone ten feet.

There was a short, severe scuffle, and the detective, dragged from the saddle, stood profane and writhing in the hands of his swarthy captors.

"Take him to the barracks!" ordered the officer. "Let his servant lead his horse and follow. I am desolated," he resumed, turning to the major, "that such a scene should have disturbed your evening. Good-night."

As Shattuck passed the fire under guard, May involuntarily glanced up at him. Then either the firelight or her eyes played the girl an odd trick. For she could have sworn she surprised a grin on Zenas' leathery visage. The next moment she knew she must have been mistaken, for as he caught her wondering gaze fixed on him the detective's face at once resumed its look of peevish, rebellious anger.

Taking advantage of the officer's hint, the major ordered camp broken

before daybreak, and by sunrise the tourists had left the Sea of Galilee far behind them and were crossing the limestone Roman road high above the Waters of Merom.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ANOTHER WARNING.

By noon of the third day they passed Katana and reached the low hill overlooking Damascus.

The oldest city in the world lay stretched in the drowsy peace of countless centuries in the wide, cuplike valley below. On every side beyond its walls, orchards and quaint country-seats were scattered.

Far beyond, on the northern horizon, shimmered a broad band of yellow—the sands of the Great Syrian Desert that stretch away to distant Persia.

The myriad domes and minarets of Damascus flashed back the glittering light of the noonday sun. Through the city, like silver ribbons, ran the two scriptural rivers, Abana and Pharpar.

"This is Damascus!" the dragoman's phonograph-voice was droning. "The oldest city on earth and the most unchanged since the time of Haroun-al-Raschid.

"There are one hundred and twenty mosques in the city, including the great mosque. Damascus is built in the form of a spoon, the bowl being represented by that wide, sparsely settled tract known as the *Medan* (wide place), while the handle of the spoon is made up of the narrow streets and bazars of the more thickly populated——"

"Come," said the major, "let us get there at once."

Major Crawford, as they drew near to the huge East Gate, pointed out to the ladies the contented, "every-day" expressions and actions of the throngs of townsfolk who passed in and out.

"They don't look much like people who are planning trouble, eh?" he said triumphantly. "I never saw a busier, more contented-looking lot. And to think that people down in Jerusalem should be shaking their heads at our folly in coming!"

Smug-looking merchants, hideously deformed beggars, tall, dark Bedouins of the Desert, unwashed *fellaheen*, shrieking camel-drivers, ragged farmers from outlying districts, Jews in caps and gabardines, and with long side-locks of lank hair, haughty-looking men of splendid apparel and stately carriage—all swarmed in and out of the gateway in what would have seemed in an American city hopeless disorder and tumult, but which here in the East was merely workaday routine.

A string of camels coming out through the gateway as the tourist cavalcade was entering caused a momentary halt. May, looking with frank curiosity at the sea of swart faces and garish costumes around her, scarcely heard a word of the monologue wherewith Sir Arthur was regaling her.

"Beastly noisy, smelly place, *I* call it," he was saying. "It's just like a bally scene out of the 'Arabian Nights,' you know. One might almost fancy—by Jove!" he broke off at a stifled exclamation from his companion. "You look as if you were going to faint? Anything off?"

"No; I'm all right," she said slowly. "See, we can get past now. Let's hurry and catch up with the rest."

In that moment of waiting a face—upturned, eager, apprehensive—had detached itself from the throng of pedestrians about her; the face of Ralph Mohun.

As they made their way through the narrow, tortuous street toward the Hotel Basraoul, where they were to stay, May looked at the strange sights about her with eyes that saw nothing. Her brain was in a whirl.

What was Ralph Mohun doing in Damascus? Why had he come to the city against which he had so earnestly warned her? Why, knowing their intention to come thither, had he first begged her to prevent the party from making the journey and then preceded them?

No clear reply occurred to her for any of these confused queries. But the more she conjectured, the less comprehensible did the whole matter appear.

She had noticed he was still in na-

tive dress and that his face was darkened as before by some dye.

"He wanted to get rid of us! To be sure that we should not discover him in his new hiding-place and betray him!" was the solution that at length flashed into her miserable mind.

"The coward! Oh, the *coward!* I shall never give him another thought as long as I live!"

And to prove her assertion, she spent the entire afternoon in her own room at the hotel on plea of fatigue and headache, and proceeded to cure those two ailments in true feminine fashion—by a good cry.

Dusk had fallen before May Farrar rose, bathed her throbbing eyes, and told herself for the thousandth time that Ralph Mohun was beneath her notice.

Her room on the ground floor of the rambling hotel was quite dark, but through the long, open windows the first rays of the rising moon were stealing.

She walked to the window nearest her and looked out.

The Hotel Basraoul, like nearly all caravansaries in Syria, is built about a wide courtyard. May's window, opening to the floor, gave directly on this court.

She stood looking out into the shadows of the court, where the moonlight was beginning to mark the tessellated marble pavement with strange silhouettes of fretwork. In the center of the courtyard a fountain tinkled and played. About it were flowering orange trees which filled the moonlit night with heavy fragrance.

Beyond, through an archway cut in the solid wall, May could see occasional forms pass to and fro along the street on which the hotel fronted. Somewhere near-by a woman was strumming on a native instrument and singing in the minor monotone peculiar to the East.

May Farrar stepped from her room into the stillness and fragrant beauty of the courtyard. The loveliness of the night, the fragrance of the orange flowers, the wistful cadence of the music, soothed and comforted her. She sank into a stone seat at the base of one of the orange trees and raised her hot face to the breath of the evening breeze.

"Miss Farrar!"

The voice came from the shadow of the wall just in front of her. May started to her feet. But it was not the surprise of finding she was not the sole occupant of the place, nor that she should thus be addressed in English in the heart of an oriental city, that stirred her pulses and sent the blood surging in a scarlet wave to her pale face. She knew the whispered voice—would have known it at the ends of the earth. And she hated herself for the way in which the low-breathed accents stirred and thrilled her.

A man in native dress stepped from the shadow into the square of moonlight before her.

She did not need to peer into the half-concealed face to recognize Mohun.

She turned as though to go back to her room.

"Wait—just one moment!" he begged, still in the same hushed voice. "I may not get another chance to speak with you alone."

She turned on him impatiently.

"What does this mean?" she asked with imperious insistence. "Why do you dog my footsteps like this? Is it in the hope that I may humble myself before you again as I did that wretched morning when you surprised me in the Garden of Gethsemane? If so, you are destined to disappointment. A woman does not demean herself in that way the second time.

"Before you left that morning—before you ran away like a whipped cur, sneaking behind a woman's skirts for refuge—before you ran away I told you what I thought of you and how honest people regard a man of your caliber. Didn't I make it clear enough?"

"Quite."

The monosyllable, curt and impassive, checked her flood of indignation at memory of her self-abasement and his cowardice, and she found herself for the moment at a loss for words.

"Then," she began weakly enough; "then why have you forced your presence on me again?"

"To warn you——"

She interrupted him with a little, scornful laugh.

"So you said that other day. How very good of you to go about scattering mysterious warnings to all who will listen!

"Shall I tell you"—she broke off—"shall I tell you why you warned me against coming to Damascus? You intended to come here yourself to hide and you were afraid of being recognized and turned over to the police. So you tried to frighten me into dissuading my uncle from coming. Well, you failed. *Now* what warning do you want to give?"

For a second he made no reply. Then impetuously he stretched forth his hands toward her, exclaiming:

"Can't you see? Haven't you the fairness of mind to see how wrong you are? Heaven knows I've deserved no lenience at your hands, and I ask for none. But for your own sake——"

"So you said before——"

"For your own sake you *must* hear me, and you must believe me."

His vehemence held her attention—almost her belief—in spite of herself.

"You must hear me out," he repeated. "What I told you that morning of the danger of coming to Damascus was true. Then, on my way here, I heard that the military had been ordered to stop all tourists, and I felt safe about you, for I thought that even if you should be so indiscreet as to start for Damascus you would be turned back. Yet every day I have watched the East Gate in the fear of—of what I saw today."

"Well?"—as he paused.

"It is not yet too late. Go while you have time, Miss Farrar. Make some excuse—make *any* excuse—but *go*. A den of man-eating tigers would be as safe a refuge for you and yours as the city of Damascus.

"The train is laid. At any moment it may be lighted, and when it is there will be such an explosion as shall shake the civilized world to its foundations and mark this year in letters of blood and fire in the calendar of the ages. You *must* go, and go at once.

"Oh, can't you *see* I'm not lying to you, May? Can't you see I would never have followed you like this and risked your scorn and contempt if I did not——"

He paused again, checking the word he dared not speak.

"If you did not—" echoed the girl, half hypnotized by his force and pleading.

"If I did not know that you are in danger," he finished.

He was quite himself again and had his emotions well in hand.

"What is this mysterious danger you speak of?" she queried, vaguely disappointed, yet still not wholly released from the spell his words had woven.

"Massacre! The Christians and Jews of Damascus are to be slaughtered like sheep. Native and foreign alike. In the name of the prophet! The word—the signal—may be given this very night. Every day the mob that has thronged hither from all parts of Syria grows more and more restive. The leaders have difficulty in restraining the fanatics until the appointed time arrives. Daily there is some minor attack on Christians or Jews in the streets. These attacks and insults grow more violent day by day, and foreigners are especially hated. You are——"

"And believing all this, you give these poor victims no warning?"

There was a scorn mingled with incredulity in her question.

"Warning? What can I do? I have little or no knowledge of the language. I cannot warn the natives. I have gone secretly to every consulate in the city. Some consuls thought me insane; some thought I was a practical joker when I warned them of the city's fate and begged them to do something to put the Christians and Jews on their guard. Not one of them credited my story."

"Nor do I," she broke in incisively. "It is ridiculous to think that you—a foreigner—should know more than the diplomats who have lived here for years. You are either insane or——"

"You refuse to believe me?" he cried aghast.

"I certainly do. And——"

"Then," he answered with almost a groan, "there's but one thing left. If I cannot save you, I can die with you. Listen!

"I am staying at the house of Imbarak's mother in the Street of the Mehdan. It is the third house to the left before you reach the *cul-de-sac* at the end of the thoroughfare. If you need me, send there for me. The moment the massacre begins I shall be here any way at your side."

"But why," asked May, still half-mockingly—for her reason told her the improbability of his story, and experience had taught her to look on him as a coward—"but why do you offer to make such a sacrifice for me?"

"Because I—" he began impetuously, but again he checked himself, stammered, and continued with a sneer of self-contempt:

"Because I am a fool, I suppose! Good-night."

His figure had melted into the shadows of the archway before May could frame a reply.

"Ralph—Mr. Mohun!" she called softly, starting forward under the sway of a sudden, irresistible impulse. But he was gone, and the echo of her own voice, vague and ghostlike, drifted back to her from the black walls of the courtyard.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN EXPOSURE.

THE next few days were full of interest for the tourists, and May Farrar, heavy-hearted and abstracted as she was, forced herself to join in their countless expeditions about the quaintest, oldest and most thoroughly oriental city in the world.

To the inexperienced eyes of Major Crawford's party the populace with whom they rubbed elbows showed no signs of excitement or departure from ordinary routine. Merchant, beggar, peasant and camel-driver went about their business as usual in thorough oriental fashion.

Black looks, it is true, were occasionally cast on the group of foreigners. Here and there a guttural expletive of apparently no very complimentary nature was growled at them by some passing citizen or shrieked after them in the shrill treble of a street gamin. Knots of people collected to watch them with anything but friendly eyes and to exchange whispered comments of some sort.

But happenings such as the foregoing are the common lot of American or European tourists in an Eastern city.

Little as they knew of Syria, the major's party had long since grown accustomed to such demonstrations, and had been frequently assured in Jerusalem that the seeming hostility was merely the native form of expressing harmless disapproval of all foreigners and unbelievers.

The real signs of the times the visitors were too inexperienced to note. But it was then a mystery and remains a mystery to this day why the diplomats at the various European consulates, familiar with the Eastern temperament and forearmed as they one and all were by many and constant warnings, saw nothing alarming in the city's odd state of mind.

Daily new detachments of Bedouins, dusty from desert travel and armed to the teeth with flintlock muskets, horse-pistols and daggers, rode into the city or joined others of their brethren who were encamped directly outside the walls.

Wild-eyed fanatics—*fakirs* and dervishes alike — were traveling by hundreds along every road leading to Damascus; *fellaheen* and loafers from the mountain villages, from Lebanon to Hermon, were flocking in on all sides.

It was not the season of the year during which these various classes were wont to come to Damascus. Trade was dull, and produce was not to be bought or sold in quantities warranting such an ingress.

Moreover, the visitors, though present in such numbers that they slept by thousands in the open streets, comported themselves with a certain orderliness and quiet intensity of purpose oddly at variance with the usual be-

havior of the Syrian yokel when business or pleasure brings him to the metropolis.

Yet none of these things put either the proposed victims or the representatives of foreign nations on their guard. Rumors and threats of massacres are so common in that land where the only certain thing is the unexpected, that such warnings and portents as were received were treated with scorn or with apathetic indifference.

And so, lethargic as from the shock of their foreshadowed doom, the victims waited stupidly like sheep for the era of slaughter which local nobles and politicians had planned and which "the faithful" for a radius of a hundred miles had gathered to execute.

Damascus dozed under the sultry blue skies, while beneath the shadow of mosque and minaret one of the most awful tragedies in all the red annals of horror was ripening.

One morning, three days after her interview with Mohun, Miss Farrar joined the major in a walk along the Abana from the hotel to the great enclosed square used as a horse-market. The place was a babel of noise and excitement, the tramping of innumerable horses mingling with the cries of buyers, sellers and brokers.

The major, an old cavalryman, quickly caught the excitement of the scene, and wandered from group to group of the wiry, swift little horses, examining their points with the eye of a connoisseur.

May, tired of the noise, the heat and the dire confusion, said at last:

"I'll wait here under the shade of this tree while you look at the rest of the horses. Take your time. I don't mind a bit being left alone."

After the major, protesting, but secretly pleased, had departed to resume his tour of inspection, May surveyed the turbulent scene idly for a few moments, then turning back into the shade of the solitary tree she noted that the tiny patch of cool shadow was already preempted.

A man clad in the ill-fitting uniform of a Turkish gendarme stood there. He was very tall, very thin, and carried himself with a certain loose-jointed awkwardness unusual to a military man.

This oddity caused Miss Farrar to bestow a second and keener look on him, as at her approach he moved hastily away.

His face had been turned from her, but she could not mistake that shambling, slouching gait.

With a little gasp of dismay she hastened after him. The man, apparently knowing himself pursued, quickened his pace. But the passing of a consignment of horses blocked his way, forcing him to pause.

Before he could move on, May was at his side.

One look into the grizzly, leathery face, with its tight, humorous lips and shrewd light-blue eyes, sufficed the girl.

She was drawing back when Zenas Shattuck, seeing that she had recognized him, turned and faced her.

"S'prised to see *me* here, aren't ye?" he asked, grimly quizzical.

"I am indeed!" she confessed. "How did you get away from the soldiers who arrested you in Galilee, and—and *how* do you come to be wearing the uniform of a Turkish gendarme?"

"Courtesy of the police. That answers both questions. Look here, Miss Farrar, I tried to dodge you, but now that you've recognized me I know you will be telling all your friends how Zenas Shattuck's here.

"And so, while you're telling 'em, you may as well be able to tell 'em a straight story—a story that won't make me look quite like such a fool as I looked when you saw me get floored by that young scoundrel down in Jerusalem or as I looked when those heathen soldiers at the Sea of Galilee mishandled me. Care to hear about it?"

Her eager, puzzled face seemed to give him sufficient answer, for he resumed:

"Maybe it's a waste of time for me to be telling you what I'm going to do. But it riles me to have any one look on Zenas Shattuck as a jay. For I ain't one, as you'll see.

"I'll own I made a bad break when I tried to arrest that feller the very minute I got to Jerusalem instead of obey-

ing the instructions I'd received at home and handing the native chief of police the letter I'd been given by the Turkish consul general in Boston.

"That was a mistake. But I love to play a lone hand when I can. And that time I paid pretty high for the privilege. But it was the last mistake I made. There were no others."

"Not even that night in Galilee?" May could not resist the malicious inquiry.

But Shattuck grinned as he answered:

"That doesn't come under the head of mistakes, as you'll see if you can be patient long enough to hear me out. Let's get back to the Jerusalem business first.

"Even after my man gave me the slip I still stuck to that lone-hand notion. I saw that you were the only one of your crowd who didn't raise a howl against Mr. Mohun"—pausing for a moment on the name—"and so I says to myself 'That girl'll bear watching.'

"I kept my eye on you and followed you when you went out next morning. After we came back to the hotel together I hunted up the chief of police and gave him my letter from the consul general.

"He handed me out a lot of palaver, the substance of which was that the whole Syrian police force was at my disposal, or some such flowery speech. The upshot of it was that I learned through the native police about how young Mohun had been hidden and disguised as a native by his servant, Imbarak, and how you'd fooled me into believing he was a leper when I had had my hands almost on him that morning in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"It was a slick game, and I congratulate ye on it, though it made me hot under the collar at the time."

"I don't wonder!" interpolated May, stifling a hysterical desire to laugh into the long, rueful face.

"I s'pose ye don't," he retorted calmly, "I s'pose ye don't. Well, I got further news of my man. I found he had tracked off to Damascus to get away from me.

"So I got another strong letter from the Jerusalem police chief to the chief in Damascus and I came along. I stopped overnight at the various police or military barracks on the route. That night I passed your camp I was in a hurry to get to the barracks in Tiberius.

"When the soldiers stopped me, I figured out that if I showed the officer my letters and passports, you people would know that I was coming to Damascus and you'd find a way to put Mohun on his guard.

"But if you thought I'd been turned back, you might tell him he was safe. So I raised a row and got myself taken to the barracks, where I'd been going, any way, and there I presented my letters to the right authorities. I tell you that officer who arrested me had to eat dirt by the peck.

"I was fitted out with new horses, a still stronger letter, and the uniform of a native gendarme, so that I wouldn't be picked out as an American. I got to Damascus the very morning after you did.

"I was dressed like a native, so no spies Mohun may have employed could spot me as the man who was looking for him.

"I presented my letters to the police here, and they've been scouring the place for Mohun. But they are a slow, stupid lot, and besides they seem to have something else on their minds. So I haven't nailed him yet.

"But I've got a clue at last, and I mean to have the handcuffs on his wrists before another twenty-four hours are up. I knew you and he were sweet on each other, so I've shadowed your hotel ever since I've been here, hoping he'd show up. But he hasn't.

"So I s'pose you and he are on the outs. If I'd spent less time watching *you* I could have followed up my other clue and landed him by this time."

May could hardly repress a start as she realized how nearly Mohun had been captured.

Had the detective arrived in Damascus one day earlier he must have caught the rash fugitive when the latter had sought her out in the hotel courtyard on the evening of her arrival.

"I congratulate you on your prospects," she remarked, feeling the need of saying something. "What is your clue?"

"That's telling!" Shattuck responded laconically. "How am I to know you may not be in communication with him and give the whole thing away? But," he went on, seemingly more to himself than to her, "if he hadn't been afraid to show himself he'd have hunted you up before now.

"You're the only one of your whole party who wouldn't give him up to the police on sight. I saw clear enough that the rest were all sore on him for having deceived them into making his acquaintance.

"Take my advice, miss," he added more kindly, "and forget him. He's a felon, and before another month's out he'll be behind prison bars in America, or my name's not Zenas Shattuck."

"Here comes my uncle," said May suddenly, her cheeks reddening under Shattuck's blunt words; "he will be interested in hearing what you've told me."

"Then he can hear it from *you!*" snapped the detective. "I ain't forgot the measly trick he tried to play me down Galilee way. And you can tell him I said so."

Shattuck slouched off into the crowd of clamorous horse-dealers just as the major came puffing up to where May stood.

"Well, my dear," exclaimed Crawford. "did I keep you waiting long? Why"—as he looked at her more closely—"you're pale. Has the heat been too much for you?"

"I'm afraid it has," she answered. "If you will take me back to the hotel I think I'll lie down for a while."

Once safe in her own room, May Farrar sat down to think out the problem that presented itself so vividly, so distressingly to her mind.

Shattuck was in Damascus, with all the powers of the local police placed at his command. Sooner or later he must surely discover Mohun.

Moreover, he had spoken of a clue that promised to lead him within twenty-four hours to his quarry's hiding-place. What could Ralph Mohun, unarmed, unprotected, with not a friend save his native groom—what could he do against the powers arrayed against him?

"He'll be arrested and carried back to America to meet the punishment he deserves!" she exclaimed, with an attempt at vindictiveness that did not deceive even herself.

"He must not! He must be saved!" her truer nature answered in the same breath. "There is no one but me to save him. No one but me to warn him that his enemy is here. What if he is a felon, as that horrid detective said? He's nothing to me. I care nothing—absolutely *nothing* for him. But he saved my life. Shall I prove less grateful than his native groom who laid *his* life in gratitude at Ralph's feet?

"Common humanity—ordinary gratitude—makes it my *duty* to warn him! If I do it to-day he can get out of Damascus before Mr. Shattuck finds him."

In this way did May Farrar work herself into the delightful belief that her interest in the fugitive was purely impersonal and that she was in duty bound to put him on his guard, much as her personal feelings shrank from the prospect of again meeting the malefactor.

But how to convey the warning?

Her first impulse was to go out at once in search of the place he had described to her: "In the Street of the Mehdan, third house to the left before you come to the *cul-de-sac* that closes the end of the street."

She knew in a general way the locality of the Street of the Mehdan, the dragoman having chanced to point it out among others on the previous day's sightseeing tour. She could find the street and follow its course to the *cul-de-sac*. And in her independent American fashion she was on the point of setting forth at once and alone.

But prudence restrained her. She knew by this time that under his unprepossessing exterior and uncouth manner Zenas Shattuck was anything but a fool.

His interview with her, like his former acts, might very readily be a ruse to put her off her guard. Knowing she had recognized him and could tell

Ralph of his presence in the city, might not Zenas have pretended to be working on another clue merely to mislead her into relaxing her vigilance?

Might not he or some agent of his be even now watching the hotel in the hope that she might unconsciously lead the way to Mohun's retreat?

The thought of the indiscreet act she had meditated in going at once to Mohun now turned her sick. It was probably just the very thing Shattuck had hoped and expected she would do.

In the effort to save Mohun she would thus inadvertently have ruined him. He might even have been led to believe she had purposely guided the pursuers to his hiding-place.

And yet she *must* save him.

She considered the plan of writing him a note and sending it by one of the hotel servants. But even as the idea came to her there came with it the crushing certainty that any servant bearing a message or letter from her would infallibly be intercepted by Zenas or any police agent who might be on watch.

The long, lean detective with his awkward gait and drawling twang loomed before May's mental vision as the most powerful and baffling force she had ever encountered. But this thought brought with it its own panacea.

It aroused all the fighting instincts the girl had inherited from a long line of soldier ancestors. If the obstacle were great, then must she put forth the greater force or skill to overcome it.

If Shattuck were subtle she would match her woman's wit against his and win! The idea thrilled and braced her.

"I have it!" she cried at last, springing to her feet.

Her resolution taken, she lost no time in putting it into effect.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### TO THE RESCUE.

THE plan May Farrar had evolved was based on Shattuck's observation that she alone of all the party had refrained from speaking ill of Ralph. The detective regarded the others as Mohun's enemies.

If she should go for an apparently aimless stroll with one of her traveling companions, the detective would certainly not imagine she was bound for Mohun's retreat.

Her mind rapidly ran over the list.

Her uncle? He would never consent to be a party to such a scheme and would veto it from the start.

Mrs. Sharpe? The little old lady's kindly heart might induce her to become an accomplice, but she was so timid she would never stir abroad in the streets without masculine escort.

Sir Arthur Cole? At first May scoffed at this last notion, but in an inspiration she saw that he and he alone was the man for her purpose. The young Englishman's cheerful stupidity, his blind and blatant infatuation for herself, would make him an ideal assistant in such an enterprise.

Her conscience smote her at thought of thus taking advantage of the young Englishman's fatuous adoration, but it seemed the only way whereby Ralph could be helped.

Ten minutes later she entered the reading-room of the hotel, dressed for walking and drawing on her gloves. Sir Arthur Cole sat sprawled upon a wicker lounging chair, puffing at a cigarette and yawning in a dreary, bored fashion.

At sight of the girl in her dainty walking-suit, fluffy parasol, and wide picture hat, Cole scrambled to his feet, threw away his cigarette and came forward, the bored look merging into a grin of welcome.

"By Jove, you do look fit!" he declared. "Whither away? For more sightseeing?"

"No. Just for a walk and for an errand," she replied.

"Might I come, too?" he asked, eagerly grabbing up his sun-helmet and walking-stick from the window-seat.

May appeared to weigh his request doubtfully.

"If you'll promise not to ask questions as to where I'm going," she decided at last, with a purposed affectation of wilful command; "and if you'll promise to do just as I say and if you'll promise not to tell any one where we've been. There! Can you make all three pledges?"

The young man, suspecting vaguely that he was being chaffed, but not seeing the point of the joke, answered readily:

"I promise all three. Now let's be off. Luncheon is in an hour, and I hate to miss my meals. Don't you?"

Together they set out, talking gaily and sauntering along as if they had no especial destination. Cole was in the seventh heaven of conceited delight at the unusual friendliness his companion exhibited and the kind way in which she laughed at his labored witticisms.

May saw no one in the vicinity of the hotel whom she could identify as a spy.

A ragged Arab beggar lay asleep in the sun, across the road. A Bedouin, fierce of eye, swarthy of skin, stalked haughtily down the middle of the thoroughfare, gun on back.

Stray scavenger dogs snapped and snarled at each other in the dust. But for these the suburban district was deserted.

"I'm going to see an old woman in the native quarter," May vouchsafed as they crossed the Abana and reached the more densely populated part of town.

Then she added to herself in self-justification: "Ralph said himself that he was stopping at the house of Imbarak's mother. So I really *am* going to see an old woman—if she's at home."

"What a bore!" ejaculated Cole. "Old women are so stupid."

"Then you shall stay outside while I pay my visit," decreed Miss Farrar. "I won't have you yawning and looking at your watch and fidgeting me all the time I'm there. You shall stay in the road outside and you shan't have even a glimpse at the old woman."

"But——" began Cole, puzzled yet relieved.

"You promised to obey," she reminded him.

Had she been less absorbed, and had he been less thick of head, neither could well have failed to notice the electrically charged atmosphere that seemed to pervade the crowd who packed the narrow, winding streets.

There was a change, an important and visible change, in the demeanor of the townsfolk since the preceding day. Every one seemed to be waiting for something; to be keyed to highest tension; to anticipate nervously yet eagerly some great event.

The black looks and muttered maledictions that usually followed in the wake of the foreigners were to-day more overt than ever before, and it was with relief that May turned into the less-frequented Street of the Mehdan.

The little thoroughfare opened off the public square at the back of the farther bazars and was barely a thousand feet in length. Before her May could descry a high stone wall shutting off the end of the shallow, wide street and forming a *cul-de-sac*.

She began counting the houses, at length singling out one which stood in a walled garden, the door being let into the outer street-wall.

"Stop here!" she commanded Sir Arthur, "here in the shade and wait for me. Smoke all the cigarettes you can in the interval, for I shall only be in the house for a few moments."

Gathering up her waning courage, May advanced to the door in the wall and rapped.

A little iron grille was slid back almost at once, and the girl felt herself the cynosure of an unseen pair of eyes. She heard the person on the other side of the wall withdraw, and shuffling, slippered footsteps crossing the narrow court which separated the wall from the house itself.

Then the sound of murmured voices talking in Arabic reached her, and afterward a slightly louder voice which she quickly recognized as Imbarak's, speaking in English as though interpreting. A faster footfall crossed the little flagged court, the grille was again slipped back, and she knew she was once more under scrutiny.

Then the heavy, iron-banded door slowly swung part way open, and Imbarak, standing where he could not be seen by any one else in the street, beckoned her to enter.

Annoyed by these excessive precautions and the double surveillance, May Farrar stepped boldly into the yard. As she did so the gate clanged shut behind her, and Imbarak lowered the great steel bar that served as a bolt.

Having thus secured the entrance,

the groom salaamed low before the visitor.

"The *howaji* is within," he was beginning, when Ralph Mohun himself, still in native dress, brushed past a sweet-faced, elderly woman whose portly form filled the narrow doorway of the house.

"Miss Farrar!" he exclaimed. "I could hardly believe Imbarak when he told me it was you at the outer gate. May I present you to my hostess, Imbarak's mother? She has been most kind to me. I owe her and her son everything. I——"

But May, acknowledging the introduction and the old lady's reverential salute by a formal and brief bow, interrupted Mohun by saying:

"I can stay but a moment. May I speak with you alone?"

Imbarak and his mother withdrew to the interior of the house before the girl could regret her bruskness of manner or note the slight look of pain that crossed Ralph's stained face at this summary dismissal of his hosts.

"May I suggest, Miss Farrar," he began stiffly, "that whatever contempt *I* may have merited at your hands, this woman and her son deserve all courtesy. Pardon my mentioning it, but they have done everything for me, and I regret that you saw fit to show them so little consideration."

May felt that the rebuke was merited, and already her naturally kindly nature was reproaching her for her thoughtless words and curt manner. But it irked her that the reproof should come from a man whom she was befriending at so much risk.

"I might have expected some such greeting," she retorted bitterly, "but luckily I came here merely to perform an act of human kindness, and not in the hope of any especial civility from you. Let me state my business and go. Mr. Zenas Shattuck, the detective who tried to arrest you in Jerusalem, is here in Damascus, and boasts that he will capture you within twenty-four hours."

"In Damascus!" echoed Mohun in dismay. "You must be mistaken."

"I have talked with him this morning. He is dressed as a gendarme, and he has the assistance of the whole Damascus police force. I came to warn you. To prove"—she laughed in an embarrassed fashion—"to prove that you don't hold a monopoly on warnings. Save yourself while you can!"

He was looking at her with an expression she had never before seen in his dark eyes. It disconcerted her and set her heart to beating in a rapid, tumultuous way that angered her.

"And *you* bring me word? You do this for *me?*" he murmured at last.

"Not for *you*, but out of ordinary gratitude for what you did for *me* at the Jordan. And now I must go. Oh, *why* did you ever——" She was about to add "cross my path?" but checked the inexplicable, sudden impulse that rose within her and changed the words to "Why did you ever come here?"

"Why did I come? Because I knew the authorities would try to avoid complications with foreign powers by forbidding foreigners to enter Damascus while the massacre was pending. Because I thought I should be safe from pursuit here. How your party and Shattuck eluded the soldiers, who had orders to turn back all tourists, I don't know. I thought that here I should be safe until——"

"Safe in the storm-center of a massacre?" she interrupted incredulously. "If your warnings to me had been true, if there were really any danger of a massacre, this would scarcely seem to be a safe place for you."

"It was capture, not death, that I feared," he answered. "I can't explain. And it doesn't matter in any case—except to me."

"No," she assented slowly, "you *can't* explain. That is very clear. It is one of *many* things you can't or won't explain. And yet"—her voice trembled ever so little—"I'd have given *everything* to be able to believe in you."

Again that strange light in his eyes, as he took an instinctive step toward her, swayed the girl's heart with new and wonderful, yet unwelcome, emotions.

"Good-by!" she said briefly. "Leave Damascus to-day. To-morrow may be too late. And if it is any comfort to you to know it, a foolish girl will always pray for your safety."

She had not meant to say it. The words had forced themselves from her unwilling lips. She colored and turned toward the gate.

"God bless and keep you always!" muttered the man brokenly.

A mist of tears blinded her for the instant as she stepped into the glaring noonday light of the street. But she was aware of noise, jeering, and laughter directly ahead of her.

Her eyes accustoming themselves to the glare, she saw Sir Arthur Cole surrounded by half a hundred men and boys who had been drawn by the unusual sight of a foreigner in that obscure quarter, and who were subjecting the stolid Englishman to every form of insult and gibe that the malicious oriental mind could devise.

Seeing the girl, they drew back in momentary surprise. Then one practical joker in the throng shoved another man forward.

The latter jostled Cole roughly. The Englishman, losing control of himself at this ignominy, lifted his stout walking-stick and belabored his assailant over the head.

In an instant the laughter and jesting had changed into an ominous growl. Knives flashed, and the crowd moved forward as one man.

Cole backed to the wall beside which May stood trembling, and raised his stick in futile defense. Then at sight of the ring of dark, vengeful faces and the glitter of the short, crooked knives a wave of panic fear encompassed him.

Forgetful of the frightened girl, of the precepts of manhood, of everything save his own mortal danger, Cole dropped his stick, leaped up and caught the bough of a tree that projected over the wall from a neighboring garden, and by a frantic effort swung himself to the top of the wall and over on the opposite side just in time to miss a knife-lunge.

The baffled natives gibbered and swore. Suddenly one of them, pointing to the forsaken girl, yelled in exultation to his fellows:

"The *feringhee* has gone, but the *feringhee sit* remains. That is vengeance enough!"

With a howl of fanatical hatred the mob rushed upon May, who shrank cowering against the wall, covering her white face with her hands.

*(To be continued.)*

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# THE TACTICS OF TERRY.

BY CALVIN JOHNSTON.

A circus story involving an encounter between a railroad's representative and a bad elephant.

WHEN the general passenger agent sent young Terry to Marshfield to close the contract with Cooper's circus and accompany it back to Danvers, he concluded his instructions with a word of advice.

"Remember that I only send you because Brown is sick, and that your prospects as a passenger man depend on this trip. You talk a little flighty sometimes, and have an idea that you could give us all points on railroading, but just side-track your imagination and let us run the road. You'll find us ready to take care of the business after you get it."

Brown was the district agent, and young Terry his clerk. Brown and the general passenger agent were practical, very practical, and though Terry made a good clerk, he wouldn't think according to rules and was therefore considered visionary.

However, he had a keen, intelligent face and most plausible manner; but above all the general passenger agent liked his style.

"Best dressed man on the road," he had observed, which was a great recommendation in the "ornamental" department.

The next morning he was at Marshfield and closed the contract in the hurly-burly of the circus grounds; then

he notified the transportation department when they would load, and in the afternoon attended the performance. There he was soon on friendly terms with everybody, from the manager to the Barbary ape, but all other attractions paled in his eyes when he came to Selim.

Swaying from side to side, enmeshed in a mighty network of chains, stood the great elephant, at once the pride and terror of the Cooper shows.

With the long trunk and convex skull of the African species, his little eyes twinkling viciously in every direction, he was the gigantic embodiment of power and ferocity, and for the safety of the public was placed far back of the guard ropes.

"He's a wicked one," the keeper informed Terry. "I don't wonder his conscience won't let him stand still a minute."

"So you think an elephant has a conscience?"

"My boy, he can't speak, but that old dried-up skull holds more brains than the head of any man you ever saw. He's murdered three of our fellows in cold blood; planned it and then watched his chance when their backs were turned, though when I'm around he's as big a coward as ever walked. I'm the only man with this show who can handle him, but if I ever catch him watching me the way he looked at old Cassidy before he smashed him, then good-by to this circus for me."

"Was Cassidy his keeper?" asked Terry, deeply interested in the record of the old man-killer.

"Yes; here's his picture," and the other fished out a photograph of a man standing on a chair, his hand thrown carelessly between the jaws of an elephant, who stood unshackled with his trunk raised as if going through a drill.

"Well, if that's Selim he looks peaceable enough."

"That's what the authorities thought; but his legs are shackled under that hay with chains a man-of-war couldn't break. You see, after he butchered his second keeper, the authorities where we were in winter quarters ordered him killed, and as the show couldn't afford to lose him we took this picture to show them how harmless he was when he was treated right. You can't see the two men behind his legs with pitchforks; and we all had a terrible job making him stand still till Cassidy could get on that stool and grab hold of his tongue: a twist of that, you know, will bring even an elephant to his knees.

"Well, up to that time he had been friendly to Cassidy, but when the camera snapped and he jumped for his life, Selim threw the stool at him, and it tore a hole clear through the side of the building. Then he began to plan Cassidy's—— But look at the old devil now; he knows we are talking about him."

Sure enough, he was watching them curiously, and the keeper refused to discuss him any further.

"Not while he's listening," he explained, and Terry moved away, laughing at the fellow's superstition.

Princess, Selim's wife, however, received Terry's attentions and peanuts with cavernous smiles, while her mighty lord looked on with an evil eye.

During the progress of this interesting flirtation Terry forgetfully turned his back toward Selim, and the latter promptly made a "swipe" at him with his trunk. He was far enough away to save his bones, but paid ransom with a new Panama straw hat, which went sailing almost to Selim's feet.

This the jungle epicure chewed up, flapping his ears and rattling his felonous ornaments as if he enjoyed the joke immensely.

Terry bought a circus man's cap, and was shaking his fist at the big beast when the keeper ran up, pale and trembling.

"You'll never be any closer to leading off a dead march than you were right then," he said in an undertone, looking away from Selim, who again assumed that curious attitude of listening. "Won't you please get away from here; I don't like the way he eyes you. He's seen you talking to me about him, and he's jealous of Princess, too."

Terry laughed again, but he was not fool enough to despise expert counsel, and gave Selim a wide berth during the remainder of the afternoon.

Immediately after the crash of the brazen bands at the night performance, the circus began to melt away. Terry saw the great menagerie tent sway and collapse in ghostly fashion as the unseen ropes were loosened out in the darkness, and he rode down to the yards on one of the wagons.

There he was much interested in the loading, and particularly in watching the elephants place their massive heads against the heavy wagons and roll them easily up the gang-planks into the cars. He looked for Selim, but his enemy was not among the laborers.

By the time the first section was sent out, the equipment of the main tent had begun to arrive, and it was three in the morning when Terry tumbled into his berth in the circus sleeper and thanked his stars everything had gone off as advertised, which is unusual in a circus.

It seemed only a few minutes later that he was awakened by a tremendous bump and looked out of the car window to find it broad daylight and the train at a standstill on the prairie.

At first he thought they must be taking in water, but they remained so long he became uneasy, and when a flagman ran past his window to the rear he hastened to put on his clothes and go forward.

Cooper, the manager, was out before him, swearing and gesticulating to the conductor, and when Terry got in range he also came in for some choice opinions on the management of the road.

Their way was blocked by a freight whose engine had struck a loose rail and rolled over into the ditch, followed by three or four cars. Where the coupling had broken one box-car had been wrenched diagonally across the track, the rest of the train, stopped by the automatic brakes, remaining on the rails.

The two conductors sat by this obstruction smoking philosophically in the face of Cooper's argument; the freight fireman and engineer, who had jumped and escaped with a few bruises, were down by their engine.

"Can't our locomotive drag that car back on the rails?" inquired Terry.

The conductors shook their heads with unanimous contempt; but Terry, in nowise taken down, observed that the track had been torn up very little, and with the loose rail bent into place would permit the passage of their train if the box-car could be got out of the way.

He learned that a brakeman had been sent to the nearest station to telegraph for the wrecker, forty miles away at Danvers. At this the manager swore with increased earnestness, and Terry began to feel nervous.

"Why don't you ditch it?" he demanded abruptly, for this disposition to hang back on the usual course of procedure struck him as particularly out of place with a circus.

"Better not; that car's full of bananas," advised the freight conductor. "Besides, we can't turn it over with anything but jacks."

"I don't care if it's full of diamonds," declared Terry recklessly, and getting angry as the circus manager looked at his watch despairingly and muttered, "Three hours till the parade." "You can sit there if you want to; I'm going to get that car out of the way."

But here his enthusiasm got him into hot water, for the conductor tactfully observed that since he assumed the responsibility he'd better get busy, and the circus men gathered about him hopefully.

He racked his brain unavailingly for resources, and thought too late of the general passenger agent's advice.

"Aw, the Old Man be hanged," he muttered. "I only wish he was here to see his 'routine employees.'"

In perplexity he ran his fingers through his hair and knocked off the circus man's cap he was still wearing. It gave him an idea as he picked it up, and then in spite of all instructions to the contrary he drew on his imagination.

"Cooper," he called exultantly, "I've struck it."

"Well, strike somebody else next time," replied the manager savagely, wincing from a hearty slap on the shoulder and setting his diamond straight.

"The elephants!" went on Terry, and as Cooper looked at him a moment

attentively an expression of disgust crept over his face.

"By Heaven!" he said. "And *we* never even thought of them."

"Murphy," he bawled to an attendant, "bring two of the big fellows up here quick," and as Murphy was slow of comprehension he shied a clinker at him as a hint to make haste.

The idea seemed very practicable. The track here wound around the base of a low hill; on one side was a dry watercourse into which the wrecked engine had plunged; on the other side was a gentle acclivity from the track level that would enable an elephant to lean his weight against the obstructing car and push it into the ditch.

Terry ran back and uncoupled it from the rest of the freight train as the two elephants were brought up; Princess and, to the consternation of the showman, Selim himself, snapping his trunk and looking sourly at Terry.

"Now, old fellow," called Terry jovially, "here's where I get even for my hat; move up and get to work."

"Keep away from him," called Cooper warningly. "What the blazes did you bring him out here for? You know he always smashes things when you try to make him work."

"I thought you wanted the biggest," replied the attendant sullenly.

He was a new man with the show and did not understand all of Selim's eccentricities.

Princess stretched out her trunk, and Terry hurriedly went through his pockets for some circus remnants, which she accepted gratefully, and being led to the car braced herself cautiously, and, placing her head against it, gave so mighty a shove that the train crew looked on open-mouthed.

The car tottered, but even that living wrecker could not overturn it.

"Here; recollect there's bananas——" began the freight conductor.

"You shut up," shouted Cooper, shaking a huge fist under his nose; "this kid's the only one among you with sense enough to know the interests of his road, and I'll back him up for the full amount in whatever he does. It means ten thousand dollars for me to get to Danvers."

The conductor promptly shut up, and Terry, profiting by this reminder, broke into the car and dragged out a bunch of green bananas with which he rewarded Princess after she had put forth another tremendous but unavailing effort. Selim snorted at this favoritism and stretched out his trunk, but received a reproving tap from Princess. Then Cooper, turning mad, swore he was not to be bluffed by the biggest brute on earth, and grasping a hook caught Selim a vicious rake across the inside of the trunk and attempted to lead him to the box-car; but the elephant threw his head back and began to flap his ears and rock his huge body threateningly.

"See here, Cooper," called Murphy, "that'll never do. I know elephants well enough to tell you that he'll fire you through that box-car like a grape-shot if you do that again."

So they were at the end of their resources once more, but the man with the imagination had been busy solving the problem on the quiet, and suddenly appeared to the paralyzed showmen on top of the car, dangling a bunch of bananas over the end of it.

"I guess this will bait him," he called exultantly, dancing about and swinging the fruit toward Selim to attract his attention.

It did. These repeated insults had aroused the elephant to a towering rage, and now, fixing their responsibility on Terry, he gave a loud snort that made that young gentleman's blood run cold as he caught the murderous look in his eye, recalled Cassidy's fate and the keeper's remarks of the day before.

Then the light iron chains over the monster's feet snapped like whipcord, and Selim charged in a flash, his great ears flapping and trunk and legs outstretched.

Terry, half-dazed for a moment, thought of his resemblance to a huge hairy spider, then as he saw Cooper catch a grip with his hook that threw him high in the air, he sprang back for his life to a chorus of warning yells.

The tip of that terrible trunk swept his face with a blast of air hot as a furnace, and with a vision of wrecks and earthquakes he felt the box-car heave and roll over like a scuttled ship.

Princess, panic-struck at that shrill trumpet of rage, had started directly across Selim's path, and as he struck her in the flank the massive weight of both elephants was for a moment thrown against Terry's support.

Terry jumped recklessly; the next instant he was scratching and clutching at the hard, scaly cushion that had broken his fall.

He had alighted on the back of Selim, who was still staggering to recover his balance, while Princess had stumbled to her knees on the track just in time to avoid a magnificent cropper after the box-car into the ditch.

Selim trumpeted again fiercely and flourished his trunk backward. The spectators gasped and some of them turned away their heads, with the crunch of flesh and bone already in their ears, when suddenly the elephant began shivering all over and then stood still as a statue.

In that babel of cries, Terry could not distinguish one voice from another, and it had all happened so quickly that he hardly realized his position; but the ear of fear is keyed to the voice of the master, and when one man, hatless and half-dressed, ran forward fearlessly through the scattering crowd, brandishing a hook and shouting commands, Selim quaked to his cowardly heart.

Dreading fearful punishment for the wreck he had made, he stood trembling a moment, then squealing a plaintive excuse and seizing the fateful bunch of bananas that Terry had dropped, he turned tail and scuttled toward his car.

Frightened out of his anger, forgetting the enemy sprawling upon his back, he fled to his only place of refuge.

There he was headed off by his keeper, and Princess still shaking with fright obediently lifted Terry from his elevated station and deposited him on the ground, head downward, as if to assure herself that he had not cheated her by retaining any peanuts in his pockets.

Now, you may shake nerves but not enthusiasm, and once on his feet, Terry shook hands with the keeper and thanked him with remarkable composure, while Cooper mopped his perspiring brow and then solemnly handed the man a fifty-dollar bill.

"I wouldn't have had that boy hurt for a thousand," he remarked. "He said he'd get us out of this and he has; but, boys, if you ever see old man Cooper crawl on top of a box-car and go fishing for a crazy elephant with a bunch of bananas——" Here he had to pause; no instructions whatever could cover such an impossible situation.

"Oh," laughed Terry, "he's nothing but a slightly overgrown coward, after all; and, what's more, I got even with him for eating my hat by making him do a little honest work," and he looked toward Selim, who, with hypercritical remorse, was trundling meekly up his plank, for all the world like a giant mouse.

"That's all right," remarked the keeper with grim philosophy; "murderers is generally cowards, but there is times when they do business in spite of that little failin'."

They were interrupted by the jarring of the train; the track was clear, the rail set, and, pushing the freight into the first siding, they arrived at Danvers in time to parade. That afternoon Terry went to the performance with the general passenger agent himself.

Fearing to expose his favorite faculty to ridicule, he made no report of his adventure, but was nevertheless strangely averse to certain society in the menagerie tent. He had come to think over the "Old Man's" advice after the close inspection of Selim's expressive countenance, and concluded that imagination was not a very safe guide around a circus, any way.

But when the general passenger agent met Cooper, the whole story came out explosively, during which its hero modestly retired.

"Say," the showman declared by way of concluding his graphic harangue, "that kid of yours has the wise head, and he's the gamest you ever saw; never turned a hair in all that smash-up. Push him along or I'll give him a better job myself."

"Never you mind; I will take care of him all right," replied the head of the department musingly.

Then he had the effrontery to take exceeding credit to himself and wind up with the statement: "He has unusual

resources, some imagination, and can think independently of rules and regulations in an emergency."

He took Terry's arm as they left the tent and chuckled all the way to his hotel. He also told the story to every one around headquarters when he got back home, fondly exploiting the great "resourcefulness" of his representatives, till Terry and old Selim became one of the most revered traditions of the department.

# MAROONED IN 1492*

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK,

*Author of "A Round Trip to the Year 2000," "Adrift in the Unknown," etc.*

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

INTERESTED in an advertisement by one Percival Tapscott, Blinkers and Trenwick, two young Americans, visit Tapscott's lodgings and find him the possessor of some mysterious seeds, each imbued with the power of sending the person who eats it fifty years back in time. During their visit an attempt, instigated by his rival, Prof. Byngs, is made to arrest Tapscott on the ground of insanity. Tapscott eats a number of the seeds and disappears, first managing to get a note and the remainder of the seeds into Trenwick's hands.

Trenwick and Blinkers start for Europe, closely pursued by Byngs.

Abroad they meet Major Wickers, an old friend, on the point of fighting a duel. On the eve of the contest, his opponent, Baron Lauderbach, disappears, and Blinkers confesses that he has been using the seeds to get rid of disagreeable people, a burglar, Byngs and the baron having been retromoted to different periods. The major in bravado eats the seeds and also disappears. Fearful of complications, Blinkers and Trenwick leave town, but soon discover that they are closely pursued by Zimmerman, the baron's second. On the point of being arrested for the baron's disappearance, they themselves eat the remaining seeds.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HOW THEY MISSED THE MARK.

BLINKERS had Trenwyck's head on his knee and was fanning him with his hat. That was about the first thing Trenwyck realized. The sun was bright and stood directly over the *barranco*. From this Trenwyck inferred that it was high noon.

"That's right, old chap," said Blinkers encouragingly; "pull yourself together."

Trenwyck sat up and rubbed his forehead.

"What—what happened?" he asked confusedly, shading his eyes a moment from the glare of the sun.

"Just an earthquake—that's all." Blinkers answered lightly. "It shook us up considerable."

"Where's Zimmerman and—and the *alguazils?*" Trenwyck asked, still wandering.

"They're a good many years off in the future," chuckled Blinkers; "that is, if those seeds of Tapscott's are all he cracked 'em up to be."

Then Trenwyck grasped the situation. Drawing away to a boulder, he sank down on it, nervous and unstrung.

"Mix me a glass, Blinkers," said he, "and make it only a third ginger ale. I feel the need of a bracer."

"Sorry," returned Blinkers, in genuine distress, "but in the hurry of our departure the wet goods were left behind."

Here was a blow! How was Trenwyck ever to get through those trying times without that soothing beverage which had heretofore proved his comfort and inspiration?

He could not very well find fault with Blinkers, however, for certainly a vast amount of excitement had attended their exit from the age which, by a strange anomaly, lay in front of them as well as behind.

"But I hung to the tobacco," said

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Blinkers complacently, diving into a hamper and bringing up a box of cigars. "Burn one of these," he added, passing over the box.

While Trenwyck smoked he reflected. The face of the surrounding country appeared about the same, although the tower to which they had retreated when overtaken by Zimmerman and the *alguazils* had rehabilitated itself remarkably.

It was still deserted, and the whole *barranco* seemed as lonely and lifeless as when they had first entered it.

He watched Blinkers as he went whistling about the work of invoicing the few belongings they had brought with them. He was neither older nor younger than on the afternoon they had fared forth from the Siete Suelos.

"Blinkers," said Trenwyck, "I hope you are taking good care of those *tempus fugitarius* seeds. If this age doesn't suit us, we may want to go farther back."

Blinkers' whistle died away and he turned toward his friend with a very long face.

"Tren," he answered glumly, "I haven't got them."

"You haven't them?" Trenwyck repeated, starting to his feet.

Blinkers shook his head.

"You see," he went on, "after I parceled out the number we needed I laid the packet on the basket containing the ale and other things, and——"

"And we've left the seeds behind us!" Trenwyck finished.

"That's the way it stacks up. We're here to stay, I reckon, Tren."

At that juncture a sound of excited voices reached their ears from down the ravine. Turning their eyes in that direction, they saw a tall, queerly dressed man come galloping around a shoulder of the bluff on a mule.

The tall gentleman's cloak was flying out behind him, and he was getting away from some pursuing danger with all possible haste. Presently the source of the danger showed itself—a rabble of men and boys hurling stones and shouting derisively.

Three of the pack rode mules, while the remainder were on foot. The tall gentleman gave his attention to the tormentors, looking behind and holding up one arm to shield his face.

"Fair play, there!" roared Blinkers, hastening down the slope toward the bottom of the *barranco*.

Trenwyck dashed along at his side.

Their appearance had a telling effect on the tall gentleman's mule.

The brute snorted and braced back to so sudden a stop that its rider pitched over its head, landing in a melancholy heap on the rocky ground. Nor did the awesome influence of the two strangers stop there.

The mules of the pursuers unseated their riders, and the pursuers themselves paused, silent and affrighted.

Then, as one man, they whirled and raced for dear life down the *barranco*.

The tall gentleman got to his knees, glanced at Trenwyck and Blinkers, gave a groan of horror, covered his eyes with one hand and crossed himself with the other.

Blinkers and Trenwyck exchanged startled looks.

"Great Christopher!" exclaimed Blinkers. "What is there about us, Tren, to cause a panic like that?"

The tall gentleman uncovered his eyes quickly and again surveyed the strangers, curiosity struggling to get the better of his alarm.

"Yes," said he, in Spanish, "you have my name, but—but you also have the advantage of me. Where have we met?"

He picked up his hat, smoothed and adjusted the feather that adorned it, and got to his feet.

"You talk with him, Tren," said the amazed Blinkers, glancing at his friend; "he's one too many for me."

"I don't think, sir," said Trenwyck, "that we have ever had the pleasure of seeing you before. Nevertheless, we are very glad to have afforded you some slight assistance."

The tall gentleman flourished his sword toward the place where his persecutors had vanished.

"By St. Jago," he cried, "those base varlets will live to repent this! Miserable minions of a witless king, that they are!"

He turned to the others as he sheathed his sword.

"A king, mark ye," he went on, his gray eyes flashing, "who has not the enterprise to grasp the golden opportunity I have dangled within his reach, but must needs cavil at my terms!

"Granada, forsooth! He has Granada!" He laughed in his beard. "Bah! 'Tis a small mind to be satisfied with an infidel province and ignore the riches of Cathay.

"Señors," he went on, "I crave your indulgence. It is passing strange you do not know me when one of you called me by name. Christofero. You said that, I believe?" He looked at Blinkers.

"Possibly," answered Blinkers. "I have said it a good many times, and it may have escaped me on the spur of the moment."

"I have traveled much," proceeded Don Christofero, "but evil betide me if I ever before set eyes on such strangely appareled beings. May I ask where the smoke comes from?"

Trenwyck had resumed his cigar, and now, in answer to the question, he went into the process of the cigar's manufacture, describing the raw material and the blended delights to be drawn from it when properly rolled and ignited.

While they talked, Blinkers roped the tall gentleman's mule, as well as the other two that were running about the *barranco*.

"Now, sir," said Trenwyck, when he had finished with the cigar, "since I have gratified your curiosity, I should like you to gratify mine. Can you tell me how Napoleon is coming on? Has he headed his armies for the Peninsular?"

Don Christofero seemed puzzled.

"Napoleon!" he repeated, knitting his brows. "The name escapes me, señor. I don't think I ever heard of this Napoleon."

Living in those times and never heard of Napoleon! And this don had every appearance of being an intelligent man.

"Napoleon," Trenwyck explained, "is a very great general, and——"

"Was he engaged in the Moorish wars?"

A horrifying thought darted through Trenwyck's brain.

"What year is this?" he demanded.

"The year of grace 1492," the don answered calmly.

Trenwyck flung back with both hands clutching his forehead.

"And you are," he cried, "you are——"

"Christoval Colon, as they have it here; Christofero Colombo, as they call it in my native Genoa."

"Blinkers!" Trenwyck shouted, shaking his clenched fists, "Blinkers!"

Blinkers came up slowly, leading the three mules.

"What's gone wrong now, Tren?" he inquired.

"This man is Christopher Columbus. You have landed us three hundred years on the other side of that Peninsular Campaign! How many of those seeds did you use?"

"Eight apiece," Blinkers answered, his jaw falling at the evidence of Trenwyck's despair. "I seem to run to that number, somehow. That's what I gave Byngs, you know, and the baron, and there were still eight left for the major. So——"

"Eight! And you should have used but two! Oh, you *have* played the deuce!"

Blinkers started to say something about being in a flutter when he parceled the seeds out, but Trenwyck felt as though another earthquake was shaking the ground from under his feet.

Columbus thrust out his arm and supported him or he would have fallen.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SAVING THE MAJOR.

It was not Trenwyck's nature to be long despondent over any misfortune, no matter how grievous. If he had lost Napoleon, he had gained Columbus, and the situation had its amenities. They had encountered Columbus at a critical stage of his fortunes. Their Spanish majesties had been keeping him dangling in nerve-racking uncertainty

for many years, and as he was getting pretty well along—he was fifty-six—and hadn't discovered anything worth while, he was feeling blue and dejected.

When he passed along a street the children would hoot at him and say unpleasant things, and even go so far as to tap their foreheads significantly. And sometimes their elders, as we have just seen, would get hostile and pursue him with hard words and perhaps stones.

Granada had surrendered, and Columbus had been summoned to Queen Isabella's town of Santa Fe to enter into an agreement with the sovereigns for the conduct of his proposed expedition to the Indies.

All Columbus had to do was to sail west, discover countries and turn them over to the crown, and the queen would graciously pledge her jewels to outfit him.

But the Genoese gentleman had other ideas. He not only wanted to discover the countries, but he insisted on holding the whip hand over them and annexing one-eighth of all gains by trade or conquest.

Such unheard-of insolence in a nameless adventurer shocked everybody about the royal premises. Columbus was told that if he had business anywhere else their majesties would not detain him a moment.

So he took to his mule and was run out of camp along that *barranco*. Trenwyck consoled the discoverer with the announcement that, before he had traveled many leagues, a messenger would overtake him and ask him to return, because Queen Isabella would exercise her woman's prerogative and change her mind.

Trenwyck was drawing on historical facts—facts which history was yet to demonstrate — but Columbus merely shook his head and would not suffer himself to be beguiled into tarrying along the road. When he continued his journey, Trenwyck and Blinkers accompanied him, making use of the mules that had been left behind by the fleeing rabble.

"You are not of this country, señors," observed Don Christopher, as they jogged onward in company, "nor of any other country with which I am acquainted, and I have been as far as Frislandia on the north, and below the Gold Coast, in the Sea of Darkness, to the south."

"We come from America," said Trenwyck.

The don shook his head, perplexed. Then of a sudden his face cleared.

"Perchance your America is a province in the country of the Great Khan," he returned, "or mayhap one of the many kingdoms tributary to that marvelous sovereign, Prester John?"

Trenwyck wished to make a creditable impression on Columbus, and felt that the surest way not to do so would be by telling the exact truth. "Prester John," as his reading had informed him, was a mythical potentate firmly believed in by the people of that age.

For the present he thought best to adopt Prester John's country—tacitly, at least—and so lead up to the real truth by plausible stages.

"We come from a land that lies far to the west," said Trenwyck; "a flourishing republic, so large that you could tuck all Spain away in one corner and hardly know it was on the map."

Columbus looked startled.

"You could do that in Texas, Tren," interpolated Blinkers in their own tongue.

Trenwyck ignored the comment.

"We have thousands of marvelous cities and millions of people, rich, prosperous and contented."

"Don't lay it on so thick," cautioned Blinkers. "There's now and then a man—in Texas, anyhow—who isn't so prosperous and contented as he might be."

"When we travel in our country," pursued Trenwyck, warming to the subject, "it is in iron wagons propelled by steam, and at the rate of thirty leagues an hour."

Columbus held up his hands, politely incredulous.

"We have harnessed the lightning," went on Trenwyck, "so that it instantly carries our words to friends thousands of miles away."

Columbus settled back on his mule and looked wildly from Trenwyck to Blinkers.

"You'll have him going in a minute, if you keep on," said Blinkers.

"And we have big machines that print things called newspapers, turning out thousands of them an hour and giving the news of all the world on the very day the news happens."

Columbus turned pale and reeled slightly. Collecting himself with an effort, he muttered something and brushed a hand over his forehead.

"More than that," resumed Trenwyck, "we have boats that cross the Sea of Darkness in less than five days, guns that shoot ten leagues, lights so brilliant they turn night into day, instruments that——"

But Columbus could bear no more.

Suddenly he clapped heels to his mule and was off at a terrified gallop.

"There," said Blinkers, "I told you to go slow. Our nineteenth-century civilization is all right, but you've got to spring it on these people by degrees."

"I thought I *was* going slow," answered Trenwyck. "Let's catch up with him, Blinkers, and see if we can't smooth things over."

They had long since left the *barranco* and emerged upon a plain. Columbus, his long cloak flying out behind him, could be seen far in advance, pushing at speed toward a squalid-looking structure that stood by the roadside. This structure was flanked by various outbuildings which, as Trenwyck and Blinkers came nearer, were seen to be ranged around three sides of an open court.

From some cause or other, there was a great uproar in the courtyard.

Many wild, loutish-looking fellows were running around, calling wildly to each other and gesticulating frantically. Suddenly a weasel-faced, spider-legged individual shot clear of the larger building and raced across the open space with a flaming firebrand.

Meantime, Columbus had entered the courtyard. Trenwyck and Blinkers, still urging their mules to the utmost, arrived a few moments later.

As had already happened in the *barranco*, the mere sight of these nineteenth-century derelicts gave pause to the clamor. The man with the firebrand came to an astounded halt, while his excited companions drove back pell mell against the walls of the court.

A view was now afforded of a post to which a prisoner was bound with cords.

At the prisoner's feet was a heap of fagots.

The man was short and portly and bald. His garb was a fearsome combination of garments borrowed from the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, a startling contrast of prevailing modes four hundred years apart.

A doublet, much too small, covered the upper half of his body, while trousers covered the lower—trousers and dilapidated shoes. On top of the post rested a derby hat.

The man had a red face, covered with a week's growth of stubby beard, and a wide-spreading white mustache graced his upper lip. He was fairly beside himself and kept shouting at the top of his voice:

"It's round, by gad, *round!* Cremate me if you're bound to, you ignorant villains—I'll not be the first martyr to science."

Trenwyck and Blinkers stiffened in their saddles. That face: that voice!

Could they believe their eyes and ears?

Columbus strode forward, a majestic and imposing figure, until he stood in front of the man at the post. Then he turned upon the weasel-faced individual who had let slip the torch.

"Knave!" he cried. "What were you about to do to this honest gentleman?"

"He's not honest, señor," answered the other, keeping covert watch of Trenwyck and Blinkers, "or else his speech belies him. I am Antonio Trifaldi, keeper of this inn, as well read a person, if I do say it, as you can find this side of Salamanca. Ask those who know me, señor, and they will tell you so; also that I give the holy brotherhood——"

"Peace, rascal!" broke in Columbus

sternly. "What has this unfortunate done that calls for the stake and fagot?"

"Why, señor," returned the innkeeper, "he has the insolence to tell us that the earth is round, when, as every fool knows, 'tis as flat as the palm of a man's hand. For this let the flames consume him unless he recants!"

Columbus dashed at the intended victim, hurling the fagots aside and falling to on the cords.

"Caitiff!" he shouted, "know that the earth *is* round, and this man but tells ye the truth."

"Keep your hands from those cords," bellowed the innkeeper in a fury.

The passive demeanor of Trenwyck and Blinkers, who, in truth, were so much astounded they could only sit and stare, had dispelled the fear inspired by their first appearance. Following the innkeeper's lead, the rabble hurled forward to prevent a rescue.

Trenwyck and Blinkers, roused from their apathy, drew revolvers and prepared for eventualities. The worst did not come to pass, however, for just as the battle was about to open a horseman came charging to the scene. He had an air of authority and was evidently a person of consequence.

"Señor Colombo," said he deferentially, drawing rein in front of that gentleman, "I come from her majesty the queen. It is her desire that you return instantly to Santa Fe, where she will afford you further proof of her distinguished favor."

This august summons had a telling effect upon the crowd. If this Señor Colombo, who lent his own testimony to the assertion that the earth was round, was a recipient of her majesty's goodwill, then it behooved all others to bear with his remarkable opinion.

The mob disintegrated by ones and twos through doorways and by the front of the courtyard. Columbus hesitated a moment, for he had long procrastinated with their Spanish majesties and had made up his mind to appeal to the king of the French.

At last he started toward his mule, pausing on the way to say to Trenwyck:

"Sir, truth is an excellent thing, but there is sometimes danger in giving it too free a rein. This gentleman, who has just been snatched from an untimely fate, I give into your care. Hailing from so marvelous a land, you are undoubtedly equipped with superhuman abilities and will find his protection an easy matter."

With this parting shot, the great discoverer mounted and rode off with the courier.

The rescued gentleman, freed of his bonds, was leaning against the post, his staring eyes on Trenwyck and Blinkers.

"Major," cried Trenwyck, "don't you know us?"

The major put out his hands gropingly.

"Trenwyck," he muttered, "and Blinkers!"

His two friends rushed to him and caught him by either hand. The major wobbled sadly, surprise all but carrying him off his feet.

"You were right about those infernal seeds, Tren," said he; "they did the business. Have you seen Tapscott? He's here, too, and we're looking for the green packet. It's our only hope, do you hear? Our only hope!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MAJOR ELUCIDATES.

WHAT the major had said was sufficiently startling. Both Trenwyck and Blinkers began to ply him with excited questions, and he put up a hand restrainingly.

"Wait, boys," said he. "I've just weathered one of the little surprises they spring on you at every turn, in these delightful times, and I'm pretty near tuckered. Did either of you, by any chance, tote a flask of sour mash into this benighted period?"

The major's soul seemed to hang on the answer. When his friends shook their heads his disappointment was pitiful.

"I'd trade my iron foundry for a quart of it," said he wearily. "No wonder these people think the world is flat. Progress and enlightenment can't

travel arm in arm with the stuff they put into their stomachs. By gad, you ought to talk with Tapscott! There's a disappointed man for you!"

"You say Tapscott is here, major?" returned Trenwyck. "Do you mean that he's somewhere around this tavern?"

"No; he's with us in this year, 1492, and hunting like mad for something to take him out of it."

"He wants to go back?"

"Back?" groaned the major. "Good Lord, no! He wants to go *on*—on to where we came from. He's gone to Santa Fe to look for the packet and give Ferdinand a tip about the baron."

A wrathful light leaped into the major's eyes and he straightened up, threw back his shoulders and tried to pull the doublet together.

"Have you and the baron settled that little affair yet, major?" asked Blinkers.

"We're to have it out in armor, with battle axes," answered the major, "and if I don't get that fellow into the hospital he'll cut out Columbus and discover the United States for the kaiser."

All the major said merely added fuel to the curiosity of Trenwyck and Blinkers. Observing this, the major made haste to add:

"Let's go into the tavern and see if that villainous landlord will make amends for some of his evil doings by setting us up a good meal. How long since you fellows struck this golden age?"

"We got here about noon," answered Trenwyck, "by way of an old tower in the vicinity of Granada."

"That's a shade better, I reckon, than coming by Burgos. You haven't traveled so far as Tapscot and Bill Jenks and myself, and you haven't run the same risks."

"Who is Bill Jenks?" inquired Trenwyck.

"Tapscott picked him up in New York and brought him back. But I'll have to start in at the beginning of my experiences or we'll never cover the ground in a way that will make things clear to you.

"This is the inn. Lovely place, eh? Chase that pig out, Blinkers, so we can have the room to ourselves. Heaven knows I've degenerated during the past week, but I draw the line at pigs in the dining-room."

Blinkers got rid of the unwelcome visitor and the major pounded on the table with a pewter mug. After what had happened, the innkeeper was afraid to show himself.

A woman appeared, however, and the major ordered food and the best wine about the place. It was a fast day, and there was nothing but fish.

"More of that salt *bacallao*," growled the major. "By gad, I've had so much of it I feel like a herring. But it's a case of take what they give you and struggle on—until we can lay hold of that green packet."

Black bread, fish and wine was the extent of the repast, and while they lingered over it the major recounted his experiences.

"I've done a good many foolish things in my life," said he, "but for unadulterated imbecility that lapse at the Fonda del Norte constitutes my prize performance. Gad! Can you imagine my astonishment when I found myself shot back four hundred years and landing on all fours on the vacant site of that hotel?

"At first I refused to believe that those seeds had worked out according to program. I tried to get some information, but every time I approached a man with that idea in mind he'd turn and run like a frightened sheep. I got discouraged. Just as I was on the point of giving up, a man on horseback showed himself. He wore a suit of tin clothes, carried a pike in his hand, and had a sword at his side.

"The instant he set eyes on me he pulled down his visor, lowered his pike, yelled 'Santiago!' and attempted to run me down—and through. That's where I lost my coat, and I was lucky, I suppose, not to lose my life. The fellow got me on my back, drew his sword, and called on me to yield. Of course I yielded, and I told him I'd have done that at the start-off if he'd given me a chance.

"That," added the major, wincing, "is the way this hospitable century received me. And the people have shown the same friendliness ever since. The knight allowed me to get up, and I asked him what had become of the Ponda del Norte. He said he had lived in the country a good while, but had never heard of it.

"I inquired for the nearest telegraph office, and he stared at me. Then I asked the way to the railroad station, and he started to get on his horse again.

"Finally, before he rode off I begged him to tell me what year it was, and in another moment I was in possession of the dread truth. Oh, my friends, my friends," groaned the major, "can I paint the bitterness of my despair when I realized that I was an exile from a country that has not yet been discovered?

"One thing alone saved my tottering reason. If you and Blinkers were correct in your estimate of the powers wrapped up in those diabolical seeds, then the baron was cheek by jowl with me in my unhappy situation. Trading my pocket-knife for an old sword, I girded it about me and went on a still hunt after the baron. I didn't find the baron, but I did find Tapscott and the man Jenks.

"I'm not going to harrow you up with the details of their migration, Trenwyck; when you see Tapscott he'll tell you about that himself. He had come looking for you.

"Tapscott started in to enlighten the natives on various subjects, and the three of us were stoned out of Burgos. You see, everybody took Tapscott for a sorcerer, and thought Jenks and I were not any better.

"Everywhere we went we got rough treatment. Tapscott thought we could not stand the strain very long and suggested that we go to Cordova and secure the king's protection.

"But the king wasn't in Cordova. He was over at Granada putting a finishing touch to the Moors.

"Cordova came within one of being the death of us. Tapscott has got to be enlightening some one all the time or he can't be satisfied. He started in to explain the principle of a parlor match to a gang of soldiers just back from the wars. Happening to have one about him, he struck it—and when the soldiers got through with us we were at the last gasp.

"We hid out for a couple of days in a hovel belonging to a goat-herd. Meanwhile, Bill Jenks had abandoned us. I wasn't sorry for that, however. Jenks was a low fellow, and it was a seven-days' wonder with me how Tapscott had ever taken up with him in the first place.

"As Tapscott got over his physical bruises, the injury to his feelings asserted itself. He realized the truth that his progressive ideas so far outclass the times that they are impractical. If he persists, he'll find himself in the galleys or on the gallows.

"Why, look at Columbus! See the trouble he has had with that one little notion of his, which isn't a marker to the avalanche of advanced thought Tapscott is trying to turn loose. Gad! Do you know what Tapscott said to me in that goat-herd's hut?

"'Wickers,' he says, 'it's best to let sleeping dogs lie. In other words, if we keep on stirring up this particular dog, we'll have him at our throats.'

"'What are we going to do about it?' I asked him.

"'If we continue to stay here,' he says, 'we'll have to forget the civilization we have been used to and sink to the normal level of barbarism in order to be either safe or happy.'

"'We've got to stay here, haven't we?' I says to him.

"'No,' says he.

"'You can't coax me any further back,' says I, 'if that's what you mean.'

"'Thank you,' says he, 'I don't care to go any further back myself. If it wasn't for an enemy of mine by the name of Byngs, I should be well content to return to my lodgings on Forty-Third Street, in New York. But that's a minor point. Suppose we return together to the year 1892?'

"'Can it be done?'

"'Yes, with the contents of the green packet I have in my coat.'

"Then he looked for the green

packet, and we both collapsed when we found it was gone. Jenks must have taken it; in no other way could we account for its disappearance. So we set out together to find Bill Jenks. It was not difficult to follow the trail of a foreigner like Jenks. Like the rest of us, he created something akin to consternation wherever he went.

"We tagged him to a village a few leagues from here, and there, most unaccountably, the trail seemed to divide. Reports, equally credible, told of a stranger leaving the village by both an east and a west road.

"Tapscott suggested that we separate, one of us following each road. This is what we did. I saw nothing of Jenks, and nothing went amiss with me until I arrived here.

"Some swine-herds, muleteers and carters had foregathered at this place and were sitting around the well in the courtyard. They were talking about a madman—they had forgotten his name—who had told a lot of friars at Salamanca that the earth was round and not flat.

"I was irritable and out of sorts or I should never have pushed into the argument. But I did, and, by gad, I came within an ace of being burned at the stake.

"I blame nobody but myself. Experience should have taught me better.

"You and Blinkers can see, Trenwyck, how necessary it is for us to connect with that green packet. If we can't get hold of that, every man of us will have to remain here and relapse into a condition bordering on paganism."

"I'm in no hurry to pull out," said Blinkers. "Tren and I haven't had a chance to look around yet."

"Look around!" echoed the major. "Man alive, can't you take my word for it that this age is no place for a Christian gentleman who has been used to better things? Wait till you want to get somewhere and have to travel by mule! Wait till you want a horn of bourbon and have to apologize to your stomach with a swallow of *that!*"—and the major pointed to the wine that was on the table before them. "Wait, by gad, till you want to smoke, and have to——"

"Oh, if it's a smoke you want," smiled Trenwyck, "we can accommodate you. Blinkers——"

But Blinkers was already on the way to the mule after a box of cigars. A joyous smile chased the melancholy from the major's face as he took a weed and lighted it.

"Gad!" he murmured, rubbing his hands. "I feel as though I'd struck an oasis in the desert. But," he added, in sudden consternation, "we mustn't let any of the natives catch us at this, for there's no telling what——"

The major broke off abruptly as running feet were heard outside the door. Snatching the cigar from his lips, he held it under the table, just as a man ran in, slammed the door and shoved the huge bolt that held it fast.

The instant the door was closed and fastened, the man dropped breathlessly down on one knee and jerked a knife from the breast of his coat. Wickers was up in a flash.

"Jenks, by gad!" he shouted, and hurled himself on the newcomer. Trenwyck and Blinkers sprang to interfere, and Blinkers recoiled with a cry of amazement.

"It's the thief, Tren!" he gasped. "The fellow that got away with your pocketbook."

## CHAPTER X.

### CAPTURED BY MORISCOS.

BLINKERS was absolutely certain of his man. He had a good memory for faces, and, although he had had but a momentary glimpse of the thief's face on the night of the robbery, the circumstances had impressed it indelibly on his mind.

Jenks himself showed trepidation at the sight of Trenwyck and Blinkers. This, although puzzling them, was taken as an indication of a guilty conscience.

It was fortunate for the major that surprise drained the thief of his energy at that moment, otherwise the knife might have been used to some purpose. Before Jenks could recover himself, Trenwyck had secured the dagger.

"I'm up in the air, gents," said Bill Jenks. "Didn't have no idee I was goin' to meet the major here, say nothin' of you other two. Out of the fryin'-pan into the fire—that's me every trip. You're no feather-weight, major. Get off my chest, will you, and gi' me a chance to breathe."

"Where's that green packet, Jenks?" demanded the major hoarsely.

"You've got me guessin', major. I don't know where it is."

"You stole it from Tapscott," cried the major wrathfully. "Don't you tell me you didn't."

"Sure! I admit takin' the green packet; it was just a clean case of 'lift' and not much of a job at that."

"Then where is it now?"

"A bunch of handy boys went through me a ways back, on the road. And they not only frisked me for the packet, but for my gun and a few other trinkets I had about my person. That's on the level, gents. Look through my clothes and see for yourselves."

The baffled major released Jenks and allowed him to rise. The robber, readily adapting himself to the situation, looked about him with a broad grin.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, "if this ain't a surprise party I don't know one when I see it. Are there many more of the 1892 crew headin' this way?"

"Where's my pocketbook?" asked Trenwyck.

"That's so, Mr. Trenwyck," answered Jenks easily. "I was forgettin' about that pocketbook. Haven't you seen Tapscott yet?"

"No."

"Well, Taps has got the leather. He has been followin' you up to give it back, and bringin' me along to explain how you lost it. See? Taps is all right, but he's got a queer way of doin' things."

Jenks got his eye on the box of cigars and snatched one with a shout of delight. The major, with laudable foresight, gathered up a handful and stowed them away in his doublet.

"This here is the first ray of comfort I've had since we struck the times of Columbus," asserted Bill Jenks, taking a match from the table and firing his weed. "Tobacco hasn't been discovered yet, you know," he added, puffing complacently.

"Jenks," spoke up Blinkers, "what were you doing in the hall outside Tapscott's lodgings in Forty-Third Street, the morning Trenwyck and I were there?"

"Piping off you and Trenwyck," replied Jenks.

"What for?"

"Why, for Byngs. You know Byngs. He called on Trenwyck to see if the letter Tapscott gave him was for——"

"Ah!" murmured Trenwyck. "So that's where Byngs got his information. Byngs put you up to commit that robbery?"

"Well, he wanted the seeds and said that looked like the only way to get them. I fell down on the job, and—gee!" Bill Jenks hunched up his shoulders and winced at the recollection.

"Talk about your lightnin' express or the Empire State! The way I shot out of Greater New York into early Manhattan has 'em beaten to a finish. That's where I got next to——"

"That will do, Jenks!" struck in the major. "We don't care for any of your reminiscences. What we want, by gad, is that green packet. Who took it away from you?"

"There were five in the lot, every one the complexion of the ace of spades. It was a black flush, major, and I laid down my hand."

"How did it happen?" fretted the major.

"I was hoofin' it this way," explained Jenks, "and thinkin' what a desirable thing a horse would be, when all at once I set my eyes on the very thing I wanted. There happened to be a rider on the horse—a man in a boiler-plate coat and a cast-iron turban. He wouldn't stop when I told him to, but I've thought since my language was new to him and he didn't catch the trend of the order. He pulled a sword and made for me and I gave him the last four shots in my thirty-eight.

"Well, say! The bullets rattled on that coat of his and just simply flat-

tened and dropped off. They didn't leave even a scratch. The horse was scared and side-stepped so quick the man took a tumble. While I was trying to get the horse the other lads rushed in on me.

"They had me—for a minute. One slipped clear of his saddle and began to search me; when he had collected all my property but the knife, I reached for him with my right and took to my heels. They followed, as keen as a lot of bloodhounds, but I ducked for the timber, doubled back, dodged into the road and came on, full tilt. This house looked good to me, and I——"

Just there the door leading from the rear of the room was thrown open and Antonio Trifaldi burst in, his wife and others of his household trooping after him.

"The Moriscos!" cried Antonio. "Señors, a band of Moriscos are upon us—most likely the infidels led by Abu Hafiz, the Red-Handed, who would not surrender with Boabdil. We are lost, señors!"

"*Ay de mi!*" moaned his wife, and all the others began to weep and wail.

At the same moment a tramp of hoofs was borne from without and a simitar was heard to rattle against the door.

"There they are, major!" said Bill Jenks. "Those are the lads who took the green packet. If you are anxious to get it back, now's your chance."

Blinkers unleashed his six-shooters.

"I'm good for a baker's dozen of 'em," said he.

"I'm in this, by gad!" fluttered the major. "Give me one of those guns, Blinkers!"

"Here, major," said Trenwyck, "take one of your own."

Wickers, overjoyed to regain one of his favorite weapons, roared defiantly and waved the revolver over his head. His ardor was somewhat dampened by an arrow which entered by a window, impaled the crown of his derby hat and held it pinned to the wall.

"Beware!" cried Antonio, his teeth chattering. "The barbs are poisoned—a mere scratch means death!"

He fell groaning to the floor, and the rest of his household fell with him.

"Open the door, Blinkers!" yelled the major. "We'll give 'em a volley!"

Jenks closed up the window with a bench.

"You might just as well launch a thirty-eight caliber bullet at an ironclad," said he, "as to blaze away at those steel-plated Moriscos."

"We can scare their horses, anyhow," said Blinkers, making ready to unbolt the door.

"How many of those Moriscos did you see, landlord?" asked Trenwyck.

"There may have been a score, señor, or there may have been a hundred," answered Antonio between his rattling teeth. "You must know that I was in fear of my life and did not stay to count."

The barricaded window commanded the front of the house. Trenwyck looked out between the edge of the bench and the window casing and saw five stalwart warriors, wearing coats of mail, with bucklers on their left arm, simitars at their sides and battle-axes and cross-bows at their saddle-cantles.

One of the five had spurred alongside the door and was about to try his heavy ax on the oaken planks.

"There are only five," said Trenwyck, turning away. "Get ready for them—they'll force the door in a minute."

Hardly were the words out of Trenwyck's mouth when the door shivered under the impact of a mighty blow. Another fell and the bolt yielded, the door leaping inward, wide open.

Four revolvers cracked, and every horse reared and leaped away. Two of the riders were dismounted and sent sprawling.

"At 'em!" whooped the major, a weird figure in his nondescript costume, charging headlong through the opening.

Bill Jenks, being unarmed, kept discreetly within the house, but Trenwyck and Blinkers were not slow in following the major. The Moriscos had stirred up considerably more of a hornets' nest than they had counted upon, and the three who still kept their saddles whirled and fled.

Trenwyck managed to catch one of the free horses and the major the other.

After a little difficulty they mounted and gave pursuit.

"We must have that green packet, Tren," shouted the major, "if we have to kill every man-jack of 'em to get it!"

Darkness was falling, and the course the Moriscos took led through a dense grove of cork trees. The trees, of course, intensified the gloom, and the pursuers could hardly see their horses' heads.

Trenwyck himself was beginning to realize the necessity of recovering that green packet. Merely a few hours in those exciting times had convinced him that he was out of harmony with them to an extent that would make life miserable and disastrous.

However, he did not want to tear himself away until, like Blinkers, he had had an opportunity to "look around." When the time *did* come that he had obtained his fill of that era, it would be pleasing to reflect that means were at hand for leaving it.

Trenwyck had not known that Tapscott commanded the future as well as the past, but he was fully prepared to believe it. A man who had accomplished so much in one direction could hardly be denied ample powers in the other.

The fleeing Moriscos were followed by ear alone. The thump of hoofs ahead could be plainly heard, and it was not difficult for a trained ear like Trenwyck's to distinguish the sound from the galloping of his own mount and the major's.

That grove seemed interminable. The blackness thickened, if anything, and the pursuers kept pounding on, hoping against hope that they might overhaul the trio of pagans.

"By gad, Tren," panted the major, "I've just thought of something!"

"What is it?" asked Trenwyck.

"We left two of these black rascals at the inn. How do we know that one of that pair has not the green packet?"

"We don't," answered Trenwyck, "but Blinkers is there."

"And so is Jenks," added the major apprehensively.

"I'll match Blinkers against Jenks any day you can find in the calendar," said Trenwyck confidently. "If the green packet is found, Blinkers will have it."

At that precise juncture a startled yell broke from the major.

"What now?" cried Trenwyck.

"I'm grabbed!" roared the major. "Look out for yourself, Tren, or you'll——"

The major's voice died away in an incoherent gurgle. Just then Trenwyck was grabbed himself — caught about the waist by an arm of steel and swept helplessly from the saddle. He struggled with all his might, making his captor so much trouble that a mailed fist descended on his head and laid him limp and senseless across the withers of the other horse.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DELIVERANCE.

TRENWYCK revived and found that he had a lump on his temple and a tremendous headache. Under him was a mat of sheepskin and around him were four earthen walls, suggestive of a subterranean retreat.

A wooden door was let into one of the walls, and near the door was an iron bracket supporting a ewer of oil and a floating wick. The stench from the primitive lamp was overpowering and the light flickering and unsatisfactory.

Trenwyck raised himself to a sitting posture, the rattle of a chain accompanying the movement. Investigation revealed the fact that his waist was encompassed by an iron band, which, in turn, was connected to the wall by the chain.

A movement on the right drew his attention, and he saw the major, likewise secured, leaning moodily against the wall at his back.

"How are you, Tren?" inquired the major.

"All right, except in my head," Trenwyck answered. "Did you suffer any damage?"

"Only my temper—that's all. Two of those black villains laid an ambush for us while the other one continued to ride and draw us on. You're beginning

to get a taste of life as they live it these days. By gad, a fellow never knows what minute is going to be his next!"

"Where are we, major?"

"Underground, and that's about the extent of my knowledge. The Moors have laid us by the heels, although what in Sam Hill they took us prisoners for, when it would have been a heap easier to cleave us in half with a battle-ax, is more than I can understand."

The major was a sorry-looking sight. His hat was gone—it had been left pinned to the wall of the inn—and he had kicked out of one of his shoes during his recent struggles. One of the cigars he had stored in his doublet was broken, and he was endeavoring solicitously to repair it and cover the rent with the brittle wrapper.

"Did you have your senses when you were brought to this place, major?" asked Trenwyck.

"What few senses Heaven has given me, yes," he answered deprecatingly. "If I had been fully equipped in that regard, I should never have tampered with those infernal seeds in Burgos."

"Couldn't you tell where we were brought?"

"No more than a fool. We rode through the timber, then we went down hill, a gate opened and we dismounted. After that, you were carried and I was dragged into this hole and the chains put on us. If those Moors had——"

"Hist!" whispered Trenwyck, hearing sounds on the other side of the door.

The next moment the door opened, and a young woman, who looked as though she had stepped bodily out of the "Arabian Nights," stood before them. The major drew a quick breath and rubbed his eyes, then he pulled his bare foot under him, settled his doublet more becomingly, and tried to bring some sort of order out of his chaotic appearance.

The girl was rather above middle height and had a face of remarkable beauty. She was fairer that the Spanish women and had thick black hair that descended to her waist.

A long tunic of linen covered her slender form, confined at the waist by a jeweled cincture. On her head was a small cap, flashing with gems. To this cap a silken veil was attached, but she had drawn it aside and thrown it over her shoulder.

Her ankles were bare and her feet were covered with small, pointed slippers.

And then, she was fairly blazing with jewelry.

Diamonds girdled her small throat, drooped from her ears and scintillated in her black hair. Her ankles were encircled with carcaxes, or foot bracelets, studded with jewels, and her arms were similarly decorated.

"Gad," breathed the major, "I can't understand why these Moriscos wanted to plunder Jenks when this young lady, who must be one of them, wears wealth enough for a king's ransom."

After a moment's pause, the girl softly closed the door and advanced upon Trenwyck. Pausing in front of him, she addressed him in an unknown tongue.

He shook his head. Then she tried him in Spanish, and he made answer in the same language.

"My name is Zayda," said she, "and I am the daughter of Abu Hafiz, one of Boabdil's greatest soldiers. It is not allowed that I should come here"—a modest blush dyed her cheek—"but when I saw you brought to this place I was filled with compassion for you."

She knelt down and began wrapping a linen bandage about Trenwyck's bruised forehead.

"Just my luck!" growled the major in English. "*I* never roused a woman's compassion or anything else but a sisterly regard. Now's our chance to get some information, Tren. Ask her where we are and what her father, Mr. Abu Hafiz, is going to do with us."

When the girl finished with the bandage, Trenwyck thanked her and requested her to tell them in what sort of a place they were imprisoned.

"In the old times, señor," said Zayda, "when my people conquered Granada, the Christians fled and took refuge in the mountains or in underground retreats similar to this. Now that the Christians have regained the country,

the Moors who will not yield are driven into the old hiding-places."

"What is to become of us, señorita? Why were we captured and chained up in this fashion?"

"You are thought to be sorcerers and magicians," answered the girl readily. "With your aid, my father hopes to drive the Spaniards from the country and again place Boabdil on the throne of Granada."

"Whew!" muttered the major. "Mr. Hafiz is giving us a mighty large order!"

"Does your father think," went on Trenwyck, "that chains and caves could hold us if we were really sorcerers?"

"I know not what he thinks," answered the girl, "save that he is wild to recover our lost country. You will sleep now," she added, passing to the door, "and in the morning my father himself will talk with you."

"Just a minute, fair lady — just a minute," spoke up the major. "Can you tell me if your honorable father has a little parcel wrapped in green paper in his possession?"

"He has," said she. "together with other articles of necromancy taken from a stranger like yourselves who was encountered on the highway."

Having given the major his answer, Zayda departed.

"Gad!" jubilated the major. "We're in the same lone cavern with that packet, any way. That's some consolation. And talk about superstition! Why, they've all got it—Christian and infidel alike. It's the curse of the age, Trenwyck."

"Possibly we can turn it to our advantage, major."

"To our advantage!" sniffed the major. "Why, man, it's the one thing we have to fight in order to preserve our lives. What do you mean, anyhow?"

"I hardly know what I mean—yet," answered Trenwyck, and straightened himself out on the sheepskin mat and went to sleep.

When he was awakened, it was by Abu Hafiz digging him in the ribs with the toe of his pointed shoe. Back of Hafiz stood the other two warriors, and at Trenwyck's side, her face discreetly veiled, knelt Zayda, holding a basin of perfumed water.

"Now for act two," came from the major. "As usual, Trenwyck," he added morosely, "you head the list when comforts are dispensed. It's that young woman's compassion again, I suppose, but look out that it doesn't develop into something serious."

Hafiz spoke to Zayda in their own tongue.

"It is day, señor," said the girl to Trenwyck, "although you cannot know it in this dark abode. My father desires that you perform your ablutions and after that you will have food."

The cool water was refreshing, and when Trenwyck had dried his face and hands on a square of damask he felt a hundred per cent better. Wickers was visited next, and then two basins containing meat and bread and a flagon of wine were brought in.

The Moriscos seated themselves gravely on the floor and waited with patience until their prisoners had satisfied their hunger. The major smacked his lips over the wine.

"The vintage of the grape," said he, "can never apologize for the vintage of the corn, but this comes nearer a good excuse than anything I have yet tasted. That stuff isn't half bad, Trenwyck."

"Throw me a cigar," said Trenwyck. "Let me see if we can't work a spell and get out of here."

Wickers threw him a cigar, and Trenwyck lighted it and leaned calmly back against the wall while he smoked. The girl's astonishment was plain; that of the warriors was not so plain, although perhaps as profound.

Abu Hafiz salaamed.

"For the love of Allah," he asked, being interpreted by his daughter, "what mystery is here?"

"We are just getting our nerves in shape for a little fine work," explained Trenwyck.

"My father would know, O workers of wonders," said Zayda, "if it is permitted for Moors to do likewise."

"Tell your esteemed parent, blossom of paradise," returned Trenwyck, "that it is permitted—on one condition."

"My father would know the condition," said the girl.

"That he remove these chains and deliver to my friend the green packet taken from the other stranger."

"Abu Hafiz says," returned Zayda, after talking with that gentleman, "that you name two conditions and not one. The first you can probably accomplish by yourselves, when the incense gives you sufficient power; as for the second, he begs leave to present your friend with the green packet."

And forthwith Hafiz took the packet from a purse at his girdle and presented it to the major. The major's delight was unbounded.

"Now," he gloated, "let me but meet the baron and settle our account, then ho! for the nineteenth century and my post at Barcelona."

"Give a cigar apiece to Hafiz and the other two, major," said Trenwyck. "If you can remember your first cigar I guess you can understand the sort of conjuring we're to do."

"Gad, Tren, but you've got a head!" chuckled the major, handing out the weeds.

"Is there not one for me, dispenser of marvels?" inquired Zayda, piqued at the apparent neglect.

"It is not permitted to women," explained Trenwyck as the major instructed the warriors how to proceed in the mysteries.

The Moors began to talk among themselves.

"What says your worthy father, blest of the peri?" inquired Trenwyck of the girl.

"He calls for the blessing of Allah upon these wonders, never before realized outside of the seven heavens," she answered.

"Does he feel the coming power?"

"He feels something, but whether it is the power or no he confesses ignorance."

The assiduous attention the Moriscos gave their cigars lapsed into apathy by swift degrees. Suddenly one got up, spoke with Hafiz and staggered out.

"What says the worthy companion of thy father, pride of the harem?" asked Trenwyck.

"He swears by the beard of the prophet, wisest of all conjurers, that never before in his life has he felt as he does now," replied the girl.

A second also got up and left.

"Muley Hassan," the girl reported, "takes oath by Mohammed's shadow that his brain reels under the spell of the incense. He would be excused to seek his couch."

Finally Hafiz himself got painfully to his feet. He muttered something, pulled at his beard, and made three attempts at the door before he could get through it.

"My father swears by Allah, master of miracles," said the girl, "that he hangs in mid-air, like Mohammed's coffin. What is to be will be, and while hoping for the best he is at all times ready for the worst."

"Have you the keys to these manacles, Zayda?" asked Trenwyck.

"I can get them," she answered.

"Then do so, for it is better that we retire from this place."

She started obediently for the door.

"Will ill betide my father for this power he has invoked?" the girl asked.

"Not if he does not attempt to hinder our departure," said Trenwyck.

Returning with the keys, Zayda freed the prisoners of their chains. Then, in a further attempt to propitiate them, she brought pointed shoes and a turban for the major, thus adding still further to his mixed ensemble.

Next she conducted them along a corridor echoing loudly with the groans of the afflicted Moriscos, to a place where the horses were stabled. They made considerable noise opening and shutting doors, but the warriors were too much wrapped up in themselves at that moment either to know or care what took place around them.

The trappings for the horses were vastly different from those with which Trenwyck and the major were acquainted, but under Zayda's instructons the animals were made ready. Then the outer door was unbarred, and an incline leading upward into the broad light of day lay before the escaping prisoners.

Up into the blinding sunshine they passed, scarcely able to see after being

so many hours in the semi-gloom of the Morisco's retreat. The major was shaking with inward mirth, for not only had he the green packet safe, but the apt way in which Trenwyck had wrought their release was intensely diverting.

"Jason," said he, "that was just simply beautiful! But we mustn't forget to thank the lady. Do it handsomely, my boy, and give her something for a remembrance."

Trenwyck turned to follow the major's suggestion—which he had in mind to do, any way—and was surprised to find the lady at his elbow, holding a horse of her own. Not only that, but she had an *albornos*, or traveling mantle, wrapped about her.

"I am going with you, señor," said she quietly.

To say that Trenwyck was taken aback would paint his feelings too mildly. For a few moments he could say nothing, then when he had found his tongue he exclaimed:

"Why, my dear young lady, you would not forsake your father?"

"It is only a matter of time," she answered, "until my father will be captured by the infidels, and either find lodging in the Vermilion Towers of our own Alhambra or sent to join Boabdil in his exile. I have no wish to share such misfortunes.

"Surely," she went on, stretching out her hands imploringly, "you would not abandon me to so hard a fate? And, even if the infidels did not come, my father would know that I had assisted you to escape and I should suffer for what I had done. I must leave here, señor; if not with you, then alone."

The major was enjoying everything that morning, and did not allow Trenwyck's perplexity to escape him.

"Show your gratitude, Tren," said he. "The young lady is right. Her compassion for you has gone far toward placing her in this unfortunate situation. And remember, please, that haste is an essential part of the program. If we delay too long, there'll be another race and we'll be in the lead this time, instead of the Moriscos."

Trenwyck assisted Zayda to her saddle, then climbed to his own horse. The major had already mounted.

"I will lead you to the road," said Zayda, and started forthwith.

Presently they came out into the highway and headed in the direction of Granada. Trenwyck was studying over the difficult problem of what was to be done with this Morisco girl, who was evidently a person of some importance among her people, when the solution of it was abruptly taken out of his hands.

A roar of galloping hoofs echoed to them through the grove. Before they could retreat, had they so desired, a body of horsemen hove into sight and bore down on them at full speed. They were knights, undoubtedly, for they were all in full armor save one who rode in the van. This man had a familiar, nineteenth-century look to Trenwyck, although his face had an expression that was strange.

There was a moment of silence, followed by a wild shout from the major:

"The baron! Now, by the Lord Harry, we can have it out!"

With that, Wickers launched himself straight at the rapidly approaching horsemen.

*(To be continued.)*

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## A MODEL GIRL.

JUST meek enough for submission,
Just bold enough to be brave;
Just pride enough for ambition,
Just thoughtful enough to be grave.
A tongue that can talk without harming,
Just mischief enough to tease,
Manners pleasant enough to be charming,
That put you at once at your ease.

# JIM WILSON'S REVENGE.

BY NEAL HARPER.

How an ex-prize fighter contrived to show his gratitude in a matter of canine justice.

JIM WILSON was one of the ugliest pieces of humanity the Lord ever turned out of His workshop. He had been a pugilist in the old days when that "profession" was on easy terms with the law and when a "mill" could be "pulled off" without fear of being raided by some doughty sheriff and his beagles.

Now that the game had been placed under a ban, Jim threw up the sponge, and, forsaking the glare of the roped arena, had betaken himself to the less brilliant confines of Eaton, a little town in the State of Ohio, where with his wife, a frail little body, he determined to spend the remainder of his days. He soon attached himself, not unlike a barnacle, to one of the second-class barrooms in the double capacity of bartender and bouncer. It was in the latter rôle that the "bums" first made his acquaintance, and on divers occasions the possibilities of aerial flight had been vouchsafed them through contact with Jim's huge No. 11 boot.

It proved a forceful, not to say painful, method of teaching, but it produced results, and Jim soon established the reputation of being a man of strenuous parts.

About two weeks after Jim's arrival, his wife became ill and hovered between life and death for two months before a decided change for the better was noticeable.

Her recovery was due solely to the devout and careful attention of Dr. Haight, who, besides being a gentleman and a doctor, was a sportsman and an athlete of reputation.

Jim's gratitude over the recovery of his wife was deep and heartfelt, for with all his notoriety as a tough he loved his better-half and treated her with respect.

Things went along smoothly with Jim for about a year, when it came to be whispered about that a little stranger was soon to visit them. Dr. Haight was of course consulted, and, as the expectant time drew near, made frequent visits to the ex-pugilist's home, situated near the edge of the village.

About this time the doctor received as a present from an Eastern friend a pair of finely bred coach-dogs, of which he was very proud. They accompanied him on all his professional visits, and soon came to be known to every one in Eaton, so that when the doctor's buggy was seen approaching, the eye instinctively sought the two dogs who trotted peaceably in the rear.

On a certain Friday afternoon, in pursuance to a hasty message from Jim, the doctor jumped into his buggy and sped toward the little home, the two dogs following in their accustomed places behind the vehicle.

The buggy rolled quickly down the main street and turned a corner, when suddenly two ferocious bull-dogs shot from the doorway of a butcher's shop and made for the poor coach-dogs. Each singling out a victim, the bull-dogs closed in and a terrific fight ensued, in which one of the coach-dogs was killed and the other maimed for life.

The loss of one of his pets was deeply felt by Dr. Haight, and when Jim heard of it that worthy swore loud and long, vowing that he would make the butcher pay for it.

The fight stirred the town to its very foundations and was the sole topic of conversation for days. The *Daily Trumpet*, the one newspaper the place boasted, devoted a column to the affair, and wound up by saying it was sorry for the doctor, but the fight was "a durned good one."

So the world rolled on, and after a few weeks the incident was forgotten by every one save Jim. That individual felt even more sorry for the loss of the

dog than did its owner, for he argued that he was indirectly the cause of its death inasmuch as the doctor was on his way to visit his wife when the fight occurred.

One afternoon toward five o'clock Dr. Haight's bell was jangled violently, and the doctor, on opening the door, discovered Jim Wilson standing on the top step, hat in hand.

"Hello, Jim! What's the trouble? Baby sick?"

"Nop!" answered Jim. "'Tain't the kid; nobody's sick. I come to ask a favor of you, doc."

"Well, what is it?" inquired the doctor.

Jim fumbled with his hat, and, hesitating a moment, said: "Doc, I want to ask if you'll let me have your hoss and buggy t'morrer afternoon for about an hour."

The doctor looked puzzled for a moment, and before he could reply Jim continued: "Now don't ask no questions, doc. Just let me have the rig and I promise I'll bring it back in an hour just as good as it was when I took it. I ain't goin' to drive more 'n fifteen blocks, and I hope you won't refuse, for I need it awful bad."

After an effort to find out the cause of his request, the doctor told Jim he might have what he asked for.

"Thanks, doc!" was all Jim said, and, giving the other's hand a squeeze, turned on his heel and strode off down the street.

The request so puzzled and amused the doctor that he could not get it off his mind. He was not alarmed for the safety of his horse and buggy for he knew Jim to be a man of his word, but somehow he felt uneasy and almost regretted his action.

Jim, meanwhile chuckling inwardly, made his way to the saloon, where he quickly busied himself behind the bar, polishing glasses and serving out drinks to customers. Along about eight o'clock that night he was seen to hold mysterious conversation with Bob Hilton, a dog fancier of the town, whose sole claim to fame lay in the possession of two fine bull terriers.

The next day dawned cool and clear; long before sun-up and while the streets were yet deserted, Jim and Hilton, each carrying a grain-sack over his shoulder, walked quickly down the street leading to the saloon, arriving at which both entered, closing the door and relocking it from the inside.

Placing the sacks on the floor, they took hold of the bottom ends and, carefully lifting and shaking them, tumbled out the two bull terriers that were at once the pride and joy of Hilton's heart.

Jim produced a can of black paint, and with the aid of a brush painted spots on the bodies of the terriers, so that when he had finished they looked as like two coach-dogs as it was possible to make them.

Having completed the work, Jim and Bob took a recess long enough to enable them to inspect a bottle of rye, after which they led the terriers into a back room, where they tied them to a table-leg and left them to dry, taking care on coming out to lock the door.

After another look at the rye bottle, Jim let Hilton out by the side door and then proceeded to open the saloon for the day's business.

"There'll be something doin' this afternoon and no mistake," he chuckled as he threw open the blinds and hurled an empty tin can after a cat nosing in the gutter.

All that morning Jim continued in rollicking good humor, setting them up to the gang three times in succession, an act of generosity that occasioned much comment as to Jim's sanity, which, however, was not allowed to reach his ears.

Three o'clock came and with it Bob Hilton, who was greeted with a mysterious wink from Jim and a request to have a drink, which Bob of course could not refuse out of sheer politeness.

The clock's hands pointed to half after three when Jim took off his apron and reached for his coat and hat. Having put them on, he gave Hilton another wink and went out through the side door, Hilton following.

They set off down the street, and in twenty minutes returned with Dr. Haight's horse and buggy.

Leaving Bob to hold the reins, Jim

hurried into the saloon and soon reappeared with the two metamorphosed terriers, each wearing a collar to which was attached a slender cord.

This he tied to the rear axle of the buggy, then, climbing in alongside of Bob, took the reins and drove off.

They turned into the street that led past the butcher's shop, and as they drew near the fatal corner Jim could not repress a smile as he beheld the butcher's two bull-dogs dozing lazily in the doorway. They were curled up side by side, taking small notice of what was going on about them, and not until the buggy was directly opposite did they manifest any signs of life.

When they saw their old victims, as they supposed, trotting peaceably along, there was a pricking up of ears, while a look of astonishment seemed to spread over their homely features.

"Surely those can't be the same duffers we chewed up several weeks ago? Didn't the fools get enough? We'll fix 'em this time!"

Whatever their thoughts were, it didn't take the butcher's dogs long to get into action.

As the buggy swept round the corner the two dogs came after it full tilt. Hilton leaned out from his seat and spoke to his terriers: "Give it to 'em, boys!"

They seemed to understand perfectly, for they snapped the frail cord that bound them to the axle just as the butcher's dogs hurled themselves upon them. There was a howl, and the next moment two bundles of dog flesh went rolling about the street, chewing, biting, scratching, and snarling until it seemed as if Bedlam had broken loose.

People gathered from all points of the compass as if by magic; shops were emptied, windows thrown up, and necks stretched forth in wonderment. Jim stood up in the buggy yelling wildly.

"Go for 'em, boys! Give it to 'em! Chew their blamed heads off!"

The butcher, hearing the noise, ran out of his shop with a cleaver in one hand and a knife in the other and attempted to part the combatants. Jim jumped in front of him, and, shaking his fist under his nose, threatened to kill him if he interfered.

The fight was of short duration, and when the dust of battle cleared the butcher's two dogs lay dead in the street, while the masquerading coach-dogs stood over them, panting and gasping.

Leisurely picking up the two bull terriers and placing them in the buggy, Jim and Bob got in and drove off to the doctor's home, where they left the rig and then wended their way back to the saloon.

Jim was the hero of the hour, and was kept busy all that evening serving out drinks to the crowd that visited the saloon to offer their congratulations. Bob Hilton, too, came in for his share of praise, and swelled up to such an extent that it was feared he would burst.

Dr. Haight called the next day to inquire after Jim's health, and it was noticed that he grasped his hand and shook it with more than usual fervor.

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## THE TRADESMAN'S SONG.

DOLLARS and dimes, dollars and dimes!
I've counted them over a million times;
Till my brain is weary, my heart is sick,
With memories thronging, thronging thick,
Of a low brown house and a field of clover,
With the bubbling bobolinks caroling over,
Where the droning honey bee breakfasts and sups
In the sunshiny gleam of the buttercups.

Gold, gold, silver and gold!
What are they worth when all is told?
Only enough to eat and to wear,
And a shelter that shields not from worry and care!
Oh, to flee from it all for a day in the clover!
To hear the bobolinks caroling over!
With the droning bees to breakfast and sup!
And, ah, for the gold of a buttercup!

*Emma C. Dowd.*

# THE HOODOO RANCH.*

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

**An inheritance that was unexpectedly come by, miraculously reached, and which staggered its possessor when finally viewed.**

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

RICHARD WALLACE is a young college graduate thrown upon his own resources in New York. He has failed in various pursuits, and has reached his last cent. At this crisis he is notified that an uncle has died, leaving him a cattle ranch at Mackinville in the wilds of Arizona. Wallace works his way to New Orleans, where he stows away on a cotton freight, and after numerous adventures reaches Mackinville.

He finds himself owner of a large property greatly in need of improvement. The day after his arrival, he visits his nearest neighbor, Bethune, and his granddaughter Eunice. She has promised to be the wife of De Paro, a cattle rustler, to save her father from the consequences of shooting De Paro's brother. The wedding is to take place on the following day. Bethune asks Wallace to marry Eunice, and the sudden relief that Richard's consent brings to the old man causes an attack of heart failure, and he dies.

## CHAPTER IX.

I WIN A TRICK BY A CLOSE MARGIN.

FOR a moment I stood nonplussed. I did not care to interrupt Mr. Jaffry's game again, but I did want to know where the justice of the peace lived.

While I was pondering, it suddenly occurred to me that in my eagerness about the wedding I had forgotten to tell Mr. Jaffry that Mr. Bethune was dead.

I hurried back to the hotel, Mr. Jaffry was just putting up his cue.

"Find him?" he asked as I entered.

"I found him, but he will not perform the ceremony. Now I want the justice."

"Do you mean to say that Slimpeke wouldn't go? I never knew that sky-pilot to refuse a fee yet, of any kind. What did he say? Too far?"

"There is a little tragedy behind this."

And then I explained the circumstances.

"I see. I see. Well, Justice Briggs has an office alongside the drug store. That is, he did have. I think—no, he did not. The drug store used to be on the other side of us. But Briggs' office is a thing of so many translations that it matters little where it is. You'd better go to his house."

"Would he see me at this time of night?"

"Yes. Like as not you will find him sitting on the front stoop playing with some big dogs."

"Where is his house?"

Mr. Jaffry directed me.

"Are you interested in the affairs of Mr. Bethune, out near me?" I inquired then.

"Bethune? The old gentleman? Yes. We have his papers. We stand in the same relation to him as we did to your uncle. He had us name our firm as executors of his will."

"Well, he is dead."

"What's that? Old Bethune dead!" exclaimed a man, striding up. "Why, he was hale and hearty when I saw him last."

"He has been failing," said Mr. Jaffry. "That affair of his son and De Paro knocked the old man all to pieces. Well, I will be out some time to-morrow," he added, turning to me again.

I found the justice, as Mr. Jaffry had said. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and had a couple of rabbit hounds at his feet.

"Justice," I began, "Mr. Jaffry sent

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me to see you. You do not know me. My name is Wallace."

"Any relation to the Wallace who lived out yonder on the ranch?"

"His nephew. I own the ranch now."

"Well, it ain't a hull lot to own. But it might be made better. He was a stingy cuss."

"I came to see you about a wedding, justice. I am to be married to-morrow and I want you to come out and perform the ceremony. Will you come?"

The justice patted the head of one of the dogs.

"You see," he said slowly, "to-morrow is court day. I've got three drunks, and some shooting-up cases to-morrow."

"This is an exceptional case, justice. Unless I marry Miss Bethune before ten o'clock to-morrow, Mr. Slimpeke will marry her to a man named De Paro, who has her in his power."

"The hell he will!"

Justice Briggs drew back and stared at me.

"Did Slimpeke tell you that?"

"Yes. De Paro has already engaged him and paid him in advance."

"Let me see," said the justice. "De Paro was sent up for two years by a Federal court for stealing cattle and horses from the Indian reservations. That was about two years ago. By Jove, it was! He must be out now!"

"To-morrow is the day," I repeated. "And if he has set the time at ten o'clock he must expect to get out early."

"He is out now!" exclaimed the justice. "Did you tell Slimpeke that you were to marry Eunice Bethune?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, we ain't got no time to lose. I'll git my boots on. Hey, Si! Ho, there, stable!"

"Yes, sir," came a man's voice.

"Hook up to the road wagon. Hurry up!"

"Yeah," came the answer again.

In a very few minutes the justice was driving a fine pair of horses along the road with "Si" in with him, and my pony, pretty well tired out, trying to keep up with him.

The sturdy and willing little animal kept along at a strong canter, and about two o'clock in the morning we reached the ranch.

Solemn and silent, Miguel stood before the door.

"Have you seen any one, Miguel?" I asked.

"No, señor."

"Is Manuel taking a rest?"

"No, señor. He has gone over to the other house to see if all is right."

"That is good. Now we must wake Miss Bethune."

"I am awake," called the girl's voice. "I could not sleep."

We went in. Miguel had lighted the oil lamp, and Miss Bethune was reading a little testament she had carried in her pocket from her home.

"My dear Eunice," said the justice, taking both her hands in his, "I am so sorry to hear of this. And I know you are anxious about De Paro. But you have placed yourself in the hands of a brave man—I can see that by the cut of his jib. Now, I expect they will try a trick or two, so we must get together on our job at once—I should say right here at your grandfather's side."

"Yes," replied Eunice. "He wished it done."

I had never worn a ring. I had never seen a ring on my mother's finger that I could remember. But the justice got over the difficulty by lending me a neat ring from his own finger.

"They did not use rings so much when I was young," he said. "I was married without a ring. But times change. Now, you use this, and then you can buy another one when you go to town."

We took our positions at the side of the dead man.

"St!" came from the door. "Here they are!"

"Who?" I asked, as the head of Miguel began to disappear.

"The other gang!"

"Hurry!" said Eunice nervously.

It was a wedding against time. The justice chuckled.

"We've got to do the thing solemn-like," he said. "They have got to go clear to the house and back."

Eunice was trembling.

The justice knew the ceremony by

heart. He was deliberate, but not slow. The last words of his final prayer were being said when from the door came the words:

"St! Here they come back!"

The clatter of hoofs reached us, and, peering out, I saw the group turn in through the mesquite gate.

"Shall I shoot?" asked Miguel.

"No. Let them come in," said the justice.

Many a time afterward I regretted that I had not told Miguel to shoot.

The crowd—if four could be called a crowd—dismounted and walked to the door.

"What's doing to-night?" I heard a voice say, and Eunice shivered.

"That is De Paro," she whispered.

"Come to a death chamber with less confusion," said the justice sternly.

"That you, justice?" said De Paro. "Who is dead? What is up?"

"Mr. Bethune dropped dead this afternoon."

"Is that so?" said De Paro, and there was a note of success in his voice.

"And Eunice is here? We went to the house. You know, justice, that Eunice is to be my wife, and the Rev. Mr. Slimpeke is to marry us."

"If he does," said the justice grimly, "I shall arrest the Rev. Mr. Slimpeke for aiding and abetting in the crime of polyandry."

"You what!" gasped the reverend gentleman.

"You understand, sir, what I mean. There is no Miss Eunice Bethune. I have just finished the ceremony that makes her the wife of Richard Wallace. And whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder. I will now fill out the marriage certificate."

De Paro's face, under the light of the lamp, was ghastly. Had the justice not been there it is more than likely that he would have shot me on the spot.

The two men with him seemed to want to get away.

"Well, accept my congratulations," said De Paro finally. "You beat me by a length, but I have no hard feelings. So long. I'll see you again under other circumstances."

"This is ready now for your signatures and ages," said the justice. "We will have my man Si as a witness and your two men there.

"By the way, Wallace, you take care. You want to look out for this De Paro. He is as cruel as Lucifer and as slippery as an eel. If you see him, and he looks dangerous, get the drop on him first. Nobody will hang you for shooting De Paro. Come, Si, we must be jogging along. I congratulate you both and hope that your lives will be happy."

He kissed Eunice, and I walked to the door with him. When I turned to go back to my wife, I heard a fall and found her unconscious on the floor.

## CHAPTER X.

### I AM THE CHIEF WITNESS BEFORE THE CORONER'S JURY.

It required some effort and time to restore my wife—how strange it seemed to think of her as such—to consciousness, and the early dawn was breaking when at last I had her in a comfortable state of mind.

I sent Miguel and Manuel over to the Bethune house for a bed, and in another hour I had Eunice sleeping soundly. I knew she would have a trying day, and wished her to be fresh in mind and body ready for the ordeal of the coroner's jury.

As for myself, I was in too much of a mental turmoil to think of sleeping. I sent the men to their duties, feeling less sorry for their lack of sleep than I would had I not gone all night without any and ridden to Mackinville and back as well.

They could get rest during the day, while I did not expect any.

About ten o'clock that morning a procession was discovered coming along the road from the direction of Mackinville.

In the van I recognized Mr. Jaffry and Mr. Jones in a buggy. Then came Justice Briggs, who could have had no sleep.

There were others in the wake of these, and I knew that they were coming to my ranch. In fact, they did turn in at the mesquite gate and stopped before the adobe house.

"We came early, Mr. Wallace," said Mr. Jaffry, as he stepped down from the buggy. "The coroner has another case for this afternoon and wanted to get through."

"The case of Mr. Bethune ought not to take him long," I answered.

I was introduced to the coroner—a tall, dark-featured man, evidently an old settler in the territory, and his grizzled, honest but homely appearance won my confidence at once.

"I'll view the body first," he said.

I took him inside, and he examined Mr. Bethune's remains carefully.

The noise of the arrival of the coroner's party had aroused Eunice, and she came in from the kitchen where her bed had been set up.

"Is there any trouble?" she asked.

"Not a bit, Miss Bethune," answered the coroner. "Beg pardon, I believe you are Mrs. Wallace now. Somebody told me. I think it was Jaffry.

"I brought a jury with me, knowing how useless it would be to expect to find one here," he went on. "We will get down to business at once."

He called off the names of the jury, Mr. Jaffry and Mr. Jones both being among the twelve who convened outside.

"Gentlemen of the jury," began the coroner, "you are called to determine the cause of the death of Mr. Bethune, who has been an inhabitant of this county for several years. You all know him, and you need not be told of his character or habits.

"He is within this house, the property of Mr. Richard Wallace. I have examined the body and find no marks or contusions. I find no evidence of violence or foul play. I will call Mr. Wallace.

"Mr. Wallace, how long have you known Mr. Bethune? How long had you been acquainted with him before he died?"

"About four hours."

"State the circumstances of your first meeting."

"I had been on a tour of inspection on my ranch, and saw his house. I had but just arrived to take possession of my property, and wanted to get acquainted with my neighbors. I rode to his dwelling and met him and Eunice."

"What took place there?"

"Nothing of importance. They felt relieved that I was not some one else whom they feared, and we had a short conversation."

"Did you invite Mr. Bethune to your house?"

"I did not. He said he had something of importance to talk about and that he would drive over yesterday noon."

"And he did so?"

"Yes."

"What happened here?"

"He told me of the trouble between his family and De Paro, and suggested that I take Miss Bethune to be my wife."

"Upon that short acquaintance?"

"There was really no acquaintance. But he said he could trust me and feared me less than he did De Paro. He said that he did not expect to live long. In fact, he did not. I signified my willingness to marry Eunice if she consented, and the excitement of having, as he thought, defeated De Paro, caused his death."

"Then what?"

"I placed him in my bed, brought Eunice over, went to Mackinville for the justice, and we were married about two o'clock in the morning."

"Did Mr. Bethune say anything about a fortune? What he was going to leave his granddaughter?"

"He spoke about the ranch. That is all."

"Was there another witness to the death of Mr. Bethune?"

"There was not."

"That will do, Mr. Wallace."

Eunice stepped forward courageously.

"You are now, I believe, the wife of Richard Wallace?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have not known him long?"

"No, sir."

"About how long?"

"I saw him a few minutes yesterday at our house, and last night when he told me my grandfather was dead."

"And yet you married him. How was that?"

"It was at my grandfather's request."

"Did he make the request of you?"

"No, sir; of Mr. Wallace."

"How do you know this?"

"Mr. Wallace said so."

"You believed Mr. Wallace implicitly, I presume?"

"I did, and do."

"You did not see your grandfather alive just before he died?"

"A half hour before. He harnessed his horse to the buckboard and left the house. I did not know where he was going. This was about four o'clock. At about five o'clock Mr. Wallace came for me and informed me that grandfather was dead."

"Do you know anything about your grandfather's circumstances?"

"I know he owned the ranch, but had little money. The last two years have been disastrous. No rain to speak of, and he was old and worried."

"What was he so worried about?"

"About me. He often said he wished I was married to a good man who would protect me."

"You needed protection?"

"Yes. I was involved by my father in a matter over which I had no control. Unless I had some one to protect me with the right a husband has, I would have been compelled to marry Frederick de Paro."

"Which was distasteful to you?"

"Very."

"You married Mr. Wallace without question?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do. Now, gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the testimony of Mr. Wallace, the only witness of the death of Mr. Bethune, and of his granddaughter, who has told you something in the way of substantiation of Wallace's testimony. Now, if either side desires to be heard through counsel, the time is ripe."

"I see no reason for counsel," observed Mr. Jaffry.

"But wait," said Jones. "It seems in a case of a sudden death like this that a little caution is necessary. Here we have an old gentleman, owner of a fine, large ranch, well known and well liked in the community. On the other hand, we have the testimony of the only person who admits he saw the old man die, and this person is absolutely unknown in the vicinity.

"It seems to me that we should proceed with caution. It is true that Mr. Wallace established a somewhat easy identification of himself as the legatee under the will of Thomas Wallace, and we gave him possession. But we are not yet through with our investigations. It would not do to permit a property such as this to go to the wrong person. Now, admitting that Mr. Wallace is honest, that he is all he purports to be, that he is the real owner of the ranch of Thomas Wallace, we see no reason to suspect him of murder.

"But, on the other hand, suppose he is not the heir of Thomas Wallace; suppose that, instead of inheriting this ranch, with its acres and herds, he is an impostor. Then we see a purpose. He may lose this ranch, but by becoming the husband of Eunice Bethune he has control of another ranch, not so large, but of better land. You see the point, gentlemen."

I was dumfounded at Jones, but before I could speak the portly form of Justice Briggs became erect.

"Mr. Coroner and gentlemen of the jury," he began in a deep, sonorous voice, "I have sat as justice of the peace in Mackinville, Pima County, for many years. I have heard Mr. Jones on the affirmative side and negative side of all sorts of questions; I have had him appear before me as prosecutor and as counsel for the defense. He has won cases and lost them. He has made able speeches and arguments, and he has made poor ones. But in all my career I never knew him to make such an ass of himself as he did just now.

"I married these young people at the bedside of the deceased. There was no attempt to make it appear a love-match. It was simply a proposition following a suggestion of the old man's to have the girl he loved so well taken care of by a strong, brave man.

"Suppose the motive was to gain possession of Bethune's ranch. How would a man who has but just arrived here

know that De Paro had anything to do with the Bethunes? De Paro was tried before a Federal court, and has just finished two years for cattle and horse stealing. How would a man in New York know that? Had he wanted to gain the girl and the ranch, it was not necessary to kill Bethune. He would not have known of a reason for haste unless Bethune told him. Bethune died here, which shows that he came here to see Wallace.

"All this tommyrot about murder is silly and cruel. It will come to pass after a while that Jones will see a murderer in every person who may see another person drop dead. Bally! Mr. Coroner, charge the jury."

"It now rests with you," said the coroner to the jury. "You must find a verdict on the evidence."

As he spoke, moved perhaps by a fear of what the verdict might be, Eunice placed her hand in mine.

"We don't need no time fur fixin' things," said the foreman. "The verdict is—— Wait."

There was whispering, nods of heads, and then the foreman continued:

"Mr. Coroner, the jury's verdict is that Mr. Bethune came to his death because he was old and weak, and when he got a man to take care of Eunice his work was done, and he went to a much-needed rest."

"Is that the verdict of each and every one?" asked the coroner.

"It is," said each one, and the coroner's jury had done its duty. I served them all with lunch, and Eunice helped. It developed that one man in the crowd was the Mackinville undertaker, and he at once took charge of the body by order of the coroner.

Having made arrangements for the funeral, they left, and Eunice and I were alone again.

## CHAPTER XI.

### I AM LED INTO ANOTHER DIFFICULTY.

EUNICE'S mother had been buried in the little cemetery at Mackinville, and old Mr. Bethune was placed by her side. We attended the funeral, and returned to our ranches toward evening on the third day after the old man's death. We had said but little about business matters while the old gentleman's body lay in the house, but I knew the affairs of both places needed attention. Eunice was at all times shy when in my company, and I refrained from offering her any attentions that might have a tendency to upset her. I thought it better to give the girl a chance to get acquainted with her husband.

It was more like a business partnership. Neither of us had had a chance to know whether we loved each other or not.

When we arrived from Mackinville, Eunice went about getting supper. We had decided to live in the Bethune house, for it was more comfortable.

At the supper table I said:

"Eunice, we have of necessity neglected things, but now that the worst is over we must get to work. We have on our hands two large ranches and neither in good condition. I have just ten cents to my name. How much have you?"

"Well, Mr. Jaffry said that Mr. Jones and he were the executors, and that he thought the money would amount to about a hundred dollars."

"A hundred dollars would not go far toward improving three thousand acres of dried-up land. But we must do the best we can. I suppose everything depends on a good rain."

"Yes; a hard rain would do us a great deal of good. It washes the sand from the grass and wets the ground. The cattle do better, and we could sell some. Grandfather had no sales for a while."

"Oh, we will get along. I will ride out and see Miguel in the morning, and your head man. What is his name?"

"Juan Hastala."

"Is he to be trusted?"

"Grandfather always said he was a good herdsman. I do not know much about him."

"Well, we will soon know more. We are partners now in more senses than one, and we must make our property pay. I have read of irrigation. If we had the money, and got a practical man down here, we might turn the old rookery into a decent ranch."

"Grandfather spoke often about that, but he never had the money."

"We must take that up as soon as we get on our feet. Do you know how many head you have on the place."

"No, I do not; but it is in the book. We can look after supper."

Eunice made a pretty picture in her black gown, sitting at the table opposite me, and I began to think that life on a ranch in Arizona was not so bad after all.

We had scarcely finished supper when there was a knock on the door, and it was at once opened and a man walked in.

"This is Juan Hastala, my head man," said Eunice.

Hastala bowed rather awkwardly, and seemed excited.

"Somebody better come out," he said to Eunice. "There is trouble on the west border. There's a gang of rustlers there, and they will get half the herd of ponies if we can't double on them and head them off. The boys are doing all they can, but we need some one in authority to lead."

I rose to my feet.

"Mr. Wallace is the one in authority," said Eunice. "But, Richard, do be careful! They are desperate men."

"I will," I answered.

I rushed out with Hastala and mounted my horse, which was nibbling grass not far away.

We galloped in the dusk up toward the northwestern end of the Bethune ranch and into a grove of locust trees.

"Hear them?" asked Hastala.

I did hear a sound as of shooting, and now and then a shot.

"If you take that way around, and I this," said Hastala, "we will reach the two parts of our gang."

I took the northern route around the locusts, and he the southern. I had only a pistol, and as I rode I drew it, ready for business.

I was almost at the end of the locusts when suddenly my horse gave a snort, and with a mighty struggle against odds he plunged headlong to the ground. I was thrown violently, and my pistol flew from my hand.

I rolled over, but before I could pick myself up there came a laugh from the locusts, and three men piled upon me, pinning me helplessly to the ground.

"Be quiet, señor, or it will be worse for you," said a voice.

"What does this mean? What rascality is this?" I asked.

"This is not rascality," came a reply, with a laugh accompanying. "This is business. Come, boys, take him to the *mesa*."

I was pinioned, my arms being fastened behind me with a lariat, and I was then led on foot some distance before I knew in which direction they were taking me.

"This ought to be far enough north," said one of my captors.

"We are out of Pima County now."

They turned to the left then, going westward. After a walk that brought us well toward midnight we began descending, and once I slipped on a rolling stone.

The hill, or whatever it was we were going down, was covered with a growth of pine. I was securely tied to one of these, and one of my captors lay down near me. The others climbed back to the higher ground.

"My friend," I said to the fellow on the ground, "perhaps you know and perhaps you do not know that you are committing a crime. Now, then, why am I lured into captivity like this, and who has done it?"

"I tell you the truth, señor; I don't know who. It was because the boss ordered it done, and we get shot if we do not. I do not know you. I have no feeling. I obey or get shot."

"What is the object?"

"That I know not. You will know tomorrow."

My position was not comfortable. I was tired after the hard day and wanted rest.

"Suppose you release me and let me lie down," I said. "I need rest."

"I cannot, señor. You might run."

"If fear of that prevents you, I promise not to run. I can't stand up like this all the rest of the night."

"I will try, señor."

Loosening his revolver significantly, he released the knot sufficiently to let

it slide down the tree trunk, and I found a more comfortable position and went to sleep.

Strangely enough, unused as I was to a life of danger, I felt no real fear. I did not know what lawless men might do in remote places. I did feel an anxiety about Eunice, and had no doubt that my capture had something to do with her and De Paro.

I resolved to escape and shoot De Paro on sight. It seemed the only way of getting rid of him.

I was awakened by a kick from a heavy boot, and saw a short, heavy-built man standing over me.

"Come along!" he said roughly. "The boss wants you."

"Yes, get a move on!" added another.

There were four altogether, and they released me. Then one fastened a rope to one arm, and in this fashion, like a bull to market, I was led down deeper into the valley where there was a path running along a little stream.

## CHAPTER XII.

### I HAVE A STRANGE MEETING AND CONVERSATION.

After that it was impossible to judge of distances or direction. We followed the little stream through a long, dark gorge, from which, by looking up, we could just see the narrow strip of sky above.

The water rushed through the gorge in a foaming rapid, though its volume was small. Then we came to a cascade where it was necessary to use the hands in making the descent down the jagged rocks.

My four conductors did not speak a word. I asked a few questions, but they did not answer. At the cascade they released my hands, and two went first, the other two following behind me.

Once at the bottom the path was more difficult.

By looking ahead and seeing numerous turns in the gorge, I judged it was of tortuous route. We trudged along without talk until I thought I should drop from weariness and hunger.

But we finally came upon a calm little pool, and running down from the top of the gorge, close to the rocks, I saw an iron ladder.

"Up," said one of the guides, and as before, two went first, then I, and the other two followed.

It was like a different country from that where the ranch was situated. There it was a sea of dry, parched grass. Here there was not even grass.

It was a barren, stony region, with here and there a clump of cactus or mesquite showing that a bit of soil had been decent enough to remain among the rocks. Stuck in one of these little groves I saw a small hut.

It was built of logs with the bark on, mud had been plastered in the cracks, and the door was shut. We walked up to it, and one of the men pushed open the door.

As I have stated before, I had not lived a roving life, and my career had not brought adventures or strange scenes. I was therefore amazed at what I saw when the door of the hut was thrown open.

There was a table, on which were books and papers. There was a chair near it, and on this chair sat a man.

His face seemed to strike me with peculiar emphasis the moment I saw it.

It was not a bad face, but there were deep furrows, and the eyes were shifty, as of one who had lived a life of dissipation.

He looked up at me as I entered, and for a brief moment his sunken eyes brightened. But they became dull again, and he relaxed into apathy.

"Has the boss been here?" asked one of my guides roughly.

"No, he has not," answered the man.

"Well, he will be. Here's the fellow."

Again there was a seeming flash in the eyes of the sitting man, but again it was extinguished.

He rose from his chair, and to my utter astonishment I saw that he was chained.

A stout cable ran from one side of the little hut to the other, and on this there was a running ring with about three feet of chain connecting that with an iron band around the man's waist.

It flashed over me at once that this was a maniac placed there, perhaps, for treatment, or to keep him where he could do no harm.

He offered me his hand, which I shook.

"You may go," he said to the men. "When De Paro comes he will understand."

The four filed out, leaving me standing there wondering what strange game Chance was playing me now.

Again the man's eyes showed life and animation. He looked at me keenly, studying me from head to foot.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Richard Wallace."

"I regret, Mr. Wallace, that I cannot offer you a chair. You have walked a long distance and must be weary. If you will take my chair I will stroll up and down a little and get some much-needed exercise."

"I do not wish to deprive you of your seat."

"You will not do that. I must take sufficient exercise or the brute who has me in his power would never feel the weight of my hand when I once get free."

"Who has you in his power?"

"Frederick de Paro, the greatest scoundrel God ever let live on earth."

"Then it must have been De Paro who had me lured to captivity."

"Yes," he answered.

"What does he want of me?"

For a moment the man hesitated.

"He wants you," he began, and there was a pause.

"He wants you," he said again slowly, "to set me free."

Here indeed was a proposition. I was not a blacksmith. I could no more have broken that chain than I could fly.

"But how can I release you?" I asked.

"Well, one way is to take my place. The other is to sign the paper De Paro will put before you."

"I don't understand," I replied. "This is a great mystery to me. Why I should be called by a herdsman to help rout cattle thieves and be led into this scrape by my own men is something I cannot understand."

"I understand it perfectly, and so will you when I have told you a bitter story of a wasted life and miserable wretchedness. Let me ask your name."

"I told you my name. It is Richard Wallace."

"So you did. Are you a relative of Tom Wallace who lives on the ranch near Mackinville?"

"I am his nephew. My uncle is dead, and I own the ranch."

"Let me ask you this. Are you married?"

"Yes."

"Tell me the name of the girl you married."

"Eunice Bethune. She lived on the next ranch. Her grandfather died in my arms, and he wanted her to marry me so that I might protect her from a compact she was compelled to enter into by a drunken brute of a father whose soul had been lost in whisky and who gambled her away to De Paro."

The man's head drooped.

"I am that drunken father," he said hoarsely, "and I deserve every word you say."

"Are you John Bethune?"

"Yes."

"But I do not understand! You and De Paro were friends."

"In a way we are now. But De Paro trusts nobody. If you will listen I will tell you the story and you may shape your course. How did you know that I gambled my daughter away to De Paro?"

"Your father told me so."

"And you say my father is dead?"

"Yes. His funeral was yesterday. He died of a broken heart."

John Bethune sighed.

"Two years ago," he said, beginning his story, "I never drew a sober breath. If you drink, young man, let it alone. People think there are two kinds of people in this world—those who drink and those who do not. There is another class, unclassified by scientists, but known to the initiated. That is the class that is never sober. That kind of man may never stagger, and may bear himself well-mannerly at all times. There is a mental drunkenness that is worse than all the physical effects of the stuff.

"I was a mental, or soul drunkard. I was never drunk, never so that I could

not conduct business, but perfectly unconscious of right or wrong. I walked as straight as you do.

"Have you ever read that book 'The Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'?"

"Yes."

"You remember that a certain drug turned Jekyll from a pleasant, affable gentlemen into a fiend."

"Yes."

"But as Jekyll he never knew what he did as Hyde."

"Yes."

"The man who wrote that thought he had hatched out an original idea. He was mistaken. This world is full of Jekylls. Transactions in business are going on every day by men who do not remember them, and would not enact them were they in their right minds. Jekyll had to take a drug to recall himself from Hyde. But these mental drunkards I speak of have a cure simply in leaving whisky alone.

"Now we come down to that awful Sunday two years ago. I had been drinking heavily, and we were gambling. I played recklessly, and I remember afterward that I felt bad in the head. Whether it was the effect of such whisky as I always drank or whether somebody put something in it I do not know.

"But I was informed afterward that I had sworn my daughter to De Paro, and made her sign a promise to become his wife upon his return from Prescott, where he was placed in a Federal prison for raiding the cattle ranges of the White Mountain Indian Reservation.

"For a wonder I was sober. I did not remember the promise, or having wagered my daughter. I denied it. I went to see De Paro in prison, and charged him with lying. I swore my daughter should never marry him. He laughed at me. I said I would go home and never drink another drop of whisky and protect my daughter from him. He laughed again.

"I never reached home. How he communicated with his pals I cannot imagine. But on my way from Stanwix to the ranch I was knocked down and captured and brought here. I was chained as you see me now, and I have spent the intervening two awful years in this hut.

"They feed me, and have done so, waiting for De Paro to return. He is free now, and enraged because you headed him off and married Eunice. I am glad. I rejoice. But now he has us both in his power and can do anything he wishes."

"He can't do one thing," I said.

"What is that?"

"Compel me to sign away my legal rights as the husband of Eunice Wallace."

The miserable man's head fell again to his chest.

"Suppose on the one hand there was liberty for both. On the other death or imprisonment like mine. Which would you do?"

I had begun to feel sympathy for the man. Now, detestation was taking its place.

"Man, are you sane?" I exclaimed. "Which would you have me do?"

"Sign!" he whispered hoarsely. "I shall go mad in here."

*(To be continued.)*

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## NATURE'S ART.

THOUGH I am poor, and cannot buy
The rare, time-mellowed things of Art,
God keeps an open gallery
Of glories for the poor in heart
Whose walls are hung with grander show
Of color than old Titian knew,
With outlines Michelangelo
Wronged in the best cartoons he drew!

*Maurice Thompson.*

# TOO SMART.

BY DOUGLAS PIERCE.

The trail of the absconding bank teller that was covered not wisely but too well.

McCUTCHEON was working late at the bank. It was the night before his summer vacation, and he had told the cashier that he wanted to get his work all up before he left so that there would be no trouble during his absence.

What he really meant was that he wanted no trouble during the next four or five days. After that, he was quite satisfied that there was going to be trouble, and plenty of it.

But McCutcheon cared little for that; for by that time he would be safely out of the way, and he had no intention of coming back.

So he toiled away at the big ledgers, muddling accounts, and covering up the long tale of his peculations by a series of false entries, and congratulated himself that he had managed the affair throughout with a good deal of cleverness.

Two months ago he had seen that ultimate detection was assured, and he had then set to work to plan his escape.

Being one of the older employees, he had no difficulty in securing for his vacation time the most desirable two weeks of the summer; and then, when by keeping his ears open, and a surreptitious eye upon the bank's correspondence, he had learned that Barr, the president of the institution, was contemplating a trip to New York, he had very promptly arranged to make his own departure coincidental by trading his own recreation period for that of one of the less-favored clerks.

The rest was easy. Before starting, the president very naturally cashed a check for the expenses of his journey. It was for five hundred dollars; but McCutcheon, as paying teller, entered it up as for fifty thousand dollars.

The difference covered the sum of his defalcations, and gave him enough ready cash to start upon his flight and to establish himself in some foreign country where extradition treaties do not prevail.

Then he ostentatiously announced that he intended to spend his two weeks fishing at a resort in the West Virginia mountains, and actually purchased a ticket to this point. Even now an elaborate luggage of rods and tackle and outing accouterments lay at the station, packed and checked through to this pseudo-destination.

McCutcheon never expected to claim this baggage, of course. On the road to the fishing resort there was a junction where a man could easily slip from one train and on to another, and so by a series of connections eventually reach Mexico, whence it would be plain sailing, he thought, to Central America and safety.

The ruse was bound to be discovered in time, he realized; but it would at least serve to throw his pursuers temporarily off the scent, and so give him a better chance.

He calculated that before the cashier could discover the shortage, communicate with the president and get upon his trail, he would have a start of five or six days, any way.

His work upon the books was all finished at last, and with a bang to their heavy covers he stowed them away in the safe. Then he busied himself gathering together some personal letters and a few private belongings he kept in his desk.

While at this task he was suddenly interrupted by a sharp rat-a-tat upon the big iron outer door. For a moment he was overcome by an unreasoning panic.

Was it possible that, despite all his care, some knowledge of his operations had reached his superiors, and that the officers were even now come to arrest him?

Cautiously he tiptoed to a window and peeped out. Then he breathed a great sigh of relief.

It was only a messenger boy standing there in the moonlight, with his wheel beside him and his knuckles industriously beating a tattoo upon the grated panel.

McCutcheon threw up the sash and hailed him.

"Well, it's about time some one was answerin'," growled the lad. "You must t'ink I'se got nottin' to do but play de bass drum on dis ole coffin-lid all night."

The teller paid small heed to his petulance.

"What do you want?" he demanded impatiently.

"I'se got a couple o' messages here fer you folks." The boy produced two yellow envelopes from his book and read the superscriptions. "One fer Barr an' one fer McCutcheon. Where'll I find 'em?"

"The last is for me," said the man inside, signing for it in the book which the boy handed up to him, and hastily tearing open the flap.

It was a communication from the manager of the West Virginia hotel informing him that rooms had been reserved for his occupancy.

He laid it open on top of his desk, where it could not fail to be seen by his associates. It would help carry out his deception, he thought.

"Well, you ain't told me yet where I kin find Barr," the boy's voice broke in again upon him from the window.

"Oh, yes." McCutcheon wheeled quickly about and glanced at the clock. "Why, if you hurry," he said, "you can probably catch him at the Myrtle Street depot. He leaves for New York on the 11.30."

"I kin make it all right," the boy announced confidently, and leaping upon his wheel shot away down the moonlit street.

McCutcheon's own train on the other road left at 11.45, and he, too, decided that it was about time to be setting forth.

Letting himself out of the bank, he carefully closed and locked the door behind him, although he could not restrain a faint ironic smile at the uselessness of his action.

"There's no use, however, in permitting everybody to know that the horse is stolen until they find it out for themselves," he muttered, as the old proverb of the stable door recurred to his mind.

Impulse inclined him to take a back way from the bank down to the railroad station, for he already felt like a fugitive from justice; but common sense quickly argued that there was as yet no need for him to skulk, and that it were better for him to court notice than to shun it.

Accordingly, he caught a car and rode in quite open fashion down to the Putnam Avenue depot, which, by the way, was much nearer to the bank than the Myrtle Street stopping-place where President Barr was just about then taking the east-bound limited.

Likewise, when McCutcheon arrived at the station, he displayed himself boldly upon the platform, and even stood chatting with a policeman whom he happened to know until such time as his train whistled in.

Then, with a cheerful good-by and a wave of his hand to the friendly officer, he clambered aboard, and took a seat in the smoking compartment of the sleeper.

A hasty glance along the platform had assured him that no one of whom he need stand in fear was taking the same train. He could make the exchange at the junction without dread of any one inquiring into his action.

Lighting a cigar, he threw his head back against the plush cushions, and gazed indifferently out of the window at what he believed was to be his last sight of the familiar old town.

The engine gave a premonitory cough, the conductor vigorously swung his lantern and shouted "All aboard!" the long train glided smoothly forward. With exulting heart, McCutcheon cried to himself, "We're off!"

But just at that moment he caught sight of a well-known figure flying, suitcase in hand, down the station steps and across the platform. The train was already acquiring speed, but this man seemed determined not to be left behind.

After the departing cars he raced, and by an almost superhuman effort caught the rail of the last sleeper and swung himself up on its steps.

It was the coach at the forward end of which McCutcheon was even then ensconced, and the man was President Barr!

For one second the guilty teller was simply paralyzed with astonishment and terror. Then the sheer instinct of self-preservation aroused him to action.

With a smothered ejaculation he sprang to his feet and hurried into the forward cars. Through a string of sleepers he passed on the double-quick, and finally swung himself, gasping and trembling, into a seat in one of the day coaches.

He would have flung himself from the train, but already it had gained such momentum that such an act would have been simple suicide.

He could assign no other reason to Barr's unexpected appearance than that the president had in some way discovered his criminal operations, and was now on board to apprehend him before he could escape.

Each moment he expected to feel a stern hand descend upon his shoulder, and a grim voice announce in his ear that he might consider himself under arrest.

But gradually, while he sat there cowering, suffering in anticipation all the pangs of capture, his practical intelligence began to reassert itself.

It was impossible that Barr could have spotted the trick which had been played upon him so soon. This would have involved his return to the bank, a careful examination of two or three different books, and scrutiny of the balance sheets for a month back; and for that there had manifestly not been time.

Still, what was the man doing on this train bound for Richmond, Virginia, when by all rights he should have been aboard the east-bound limited and headed for New York?

It was a puzzling conundrum, and McCutcheon could make little of it until he finally thought of the telegram which he had directed to be delivered to Barr at the station.

Ah, that was undoubtedly the explanation. The message had contained some word which had caused the president to make a quick change in his plans, and he had hurried across town just in time to catch the other train.

McCutcheon could now laugh at his fears. Barr was probably in bed back in the sleeper by this time, with no idea that his teller was on the same train with him.

Nevertheless, the fugitive decided it was just as well for him to remain where he was, and he resolved to be very wary in his movements when he disembarked at the junction. It was just possible that Barr might happen to glance out of the window when they came to the stop.

So the train rolled on through the night, up and down grade, over long trestles, down into deep shadowy cuts, through the black gloom of tunnels——

And then suddenly, with a crash and a roar and an abrupt, shivering, grinding stop, came inferno!

McCutcheon never knew how it happened, but presently he found himself up on a hillside, while beneath him lay a heaped-up pile of kindling-wood, already touched with the lurid glare of leaping flames—the ghastly ruin of what only a moment before had been the train on which he was traveling.

From the wreck arose the wails and shrieks of the injured and dying. Already the gleam of hurrying lanterns and the sound of chopping axes showed that the rescuers were rallying to their task.

McCutcheon hastened to join them. At such moments there are no good or bad men. The first impulse of every human being is to render what aid he can to his companions in distress, and this fleeing criminal's one idea just then was to make himself of service.

Seizing an ax, he plunged manfully into the work, and for a season no man there toiled to better advantage than he; but suddenly his own situation was recalled to him with something like a shock.

From under a pile of blazing timbers he dragged forth the crushed and unrecognizable form of President Barr. Unrecognizable to others, that is; to

himself there was certain identification in the watch which the dead man was grasping, and which he had evidently seized from under his pillow at the first crash.

All the rest of his belongings had been consumed by the flames.

In that moment, the hero was again transformed into the skulking thief. As by a flash of inspiration, McCutcheon saw the advantage to which this discovery could be turned.

Quickly stooping, he slipped the watch from the dead man's hand into his own pocket and put in its place the one he himself wore. Then he slunk up the hillside away from the wreck, and presently striking a country road, strode doggedly along it with his face turned toward the West.

The next evening, in a distant city, he read an account of the accident in a newspaper, and saw in the list of the dead his own name.

* * * *

A week later, as McCutcheon was sauntering leisurely down a San Francisco wharf toward the steamer on which he had booked passage to the Orient, he was startled at hearing himself hailed by name. Wheeling sharply about, he encountered face to face Tom Burke, deputy sheriff of the town from which he had fled.

"How in the world did you ever trace me?" he gasped when he had made certain of the other's fell intent.

"Didn't," responded Tom laconically. "I came out here on the trail of President Barr, who, it seems, has robbed the bank to the extent of nearly a million dollars, but when I found this morning that you were the man I had been following, I got to wondering what you were doing so far from home when by rights you should be under the daisies. I wired back for information, and learned that you had been at the same game as Barr, so I guess you had best put off that little trip to Japan for a while."

"But how did you ever discover that Barr had started West?" questioned the miserable captive, when he finally comprehended that the guilty president had attempted the same dodge as himself. "I should have thought you would first have looked for him in New York?"

"Well, we should," admitted Tom Burke, "if it hadn't been for a clue that dropped accidentally into our hands.

"You remember the telegram you got the night you left?" he went on. "Well, one of the clerks happened to notice on the back of it next morning a faint impression of another message which had come off while the two were going through the copying press. Out of curiosity he held it up to a mirror, and made out that it was addressed to Barr. It gave him a hint, too, of what the president had been up to, and so let us get right to work on the case.

"With the evidence of the telegraph boy, and the cabman that drove him over to Putnam Avenue, we had his start down to a moral certainty, and the rest, of course, was merely routine. We probably wouldn't have worked so hard if we had known it was only a small thief like you we were chasing, but for a million-dollar rascal we spared neither trouble nor expense."

"I seem to have been a little like the parrot in the old story, don't I?" said McCutcheon with a wan smile. "I was too blamed smart!"

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## CHILDHOOD'S BOOKS.

'TWERE well with most if books that could engage
Their childhood, pleased them at a riper age.
The man, approving what had charmed the boy,
Would die at last in comfort, peace, and joy;
And not with curses on his art who stole
The gem of truth from his unguarded soul.

*William Cowper.*

# DOWNING THE KING-PIN.*

BY MARCUS D. RICHTER.

A conspiracy against a Wall Street manipulator which found itself astray and wrought fear and frenzy aboard an ocean liner.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

CALVIN TRAINOR, a cripple, accompanied by his sister Helen and his aunt Mrs. Shackelford, is sailing from New York on the steamer Yantic to consult European specialists. Brandon Burgess, a Western cotton speculator, and his secretary, Horace Tarr, are bound on a Mediterranean cruise in the former's yacht, the Babbler. Burgess is in love with Helen Trainor, and at the last moment sends Tarr to accompany her party, thinking he may be of some service to them. Tarr's cousin, Ben Crowding, is Trainor's valet. Helen finds that the wrong trunk has been sent to her stateroom. A search in the baggage hold reveals no trunk with her label, H. T. in a black diamond, although there is one similarly stenciled in red. This trunk is identical with Tarr's, supposed to be on the Babbler.

Tarr is much puzzled by the occurrence, and also by the actions of Crowding, who obviously has not slept since he came on board and who seems afraid to do so. He has seen him receive notes which appear to agitate him greatly, from a little Italian lad, Angelo, in the steerage, that came from an old woman whom Tarr suspects to be Brown, a former associate of Crowding's, in disguise. He is also worried over a plot to overthrow Burgess in the cotton market. In spite of the precarious state of his affairs, Burgess, he learns, has left New York.

Crowding's condition becomes worse. He grows delirious, and attempts to break into the baggage-hold. Tarr's relations with the Trainors are strained, owing to a false report circulated by Kinney, one of the brokers in the plot against Burgess. A message comes from the Babbler by wireless, bidding Tarr open his trunk, which is by mistake on the Yantic. "It is a matter of life and death."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### UNDER SUSPICION.

THAT the situation in the captain's cabin was strained an unprejudiced onlooker would have seen at once, but Horace Tarr was too angry to be much impressed by Captain Holds' threat of imprisonment.

"What do you mean by speaking in this way to a passenger?" he demanded, with glowing mien. "You forget yourself. You are in command of this ship, it is true; but your authority does not extend to the passengers, excepting in time of danger."

"By heavens!" ripped out the captain, clinching his hands. "I've got something besides the welfare of the passengers on my mind."

He began to pace the room, and talked on:

"You can't blame me, Mr. Tarr. You've behaved in nowise like a gentleman since you came aboard here. And when a man puts himself under suspicion, he must expect folks to watch him."

"What do you mean?" demanded Tarr.

"You picked a row with one of the other passengers—what's his name, Kinney!—and you'd have continued the scrap to-day if Brier hadn't been at hand. You see, I know all about it."

"You seem to know so much about it that I wonder at you," sneered Tarr. "I have picked no row with Kinney——"

"Nonsense, Mr. Tarr!" exclaimed the captain. "Don't deny it. I know all about it. If two men wish to fight over a woman, all right; it's not my business. But damme! they can't do it on my boat."

Tarr was too enraged for utterance at this point, and the captain maundered on.

"I have heard some other things regarding you that are suspicious. Your

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employer bears a bad name. He is known to be in desperate straits, and these messages we have received point to the fact that he is hunting for the Yantic out here. Now, is the man crazy, or has he some ulterior design upon us?"

"Oh, you are an ass!" shouted Tarr, losing complete control of his temper. "I wonder your owners should let you sail out of New York with anything greater than a brick-scow! You're a blithering idiot!

"Don't talk to me, sir!" he added, as the captain came around the table, sputtering with rage. "And don't you get in reach of my hands, or I'll throttle you! I believe half the people on this ship have gone mad, and I don't know but I shall, too, before we get to land."

He started for the door. Captain Holds, quite as excited as himself, shouted to him to come back.

"Don't you dare go out o' here without telling me what that message means!"

"How do you suppose I know what it means?" cried Tarr.

"But it's addressed to you. Your employer sent it by way of the Peruvian Monarch. It must have cost him at least two hundred dollars to send the message aboard the Monarch and have it transmitted to us. What does it mean?"

"If it was my message, how came you by it?" demanded Tarr, turning on him.

"I had a right to it—for the good of the service."

"Then find out what it means—for the good of the service!" repeated the passenger, and flung himself out of the room.

The captain did not follow him, but from the sounds which reached his ears before he left the passage upon which the suite opened, Tarr judged that the Englishman was in a state bordering upon apoplexy.

For his own part, he was quite as exasperated, and had he remained longer he knew he should have thrown himself upon the Yantic's commander and either done, or received, bodily harm.

In all his life Horace Tarr had never been so insulted. And yet there was an element in it so ridiculous that he found himself laughing aloud, though very harshly, as he reached the upper deck.

The news of the slump in cotton, and of Burgess' strange and hurried departure from New York in his yacht, assiduously circulated and commented upon by Kinney throughout the Yantic, had doubtless reached the captain's ears.

Being a "blooming Britisher," he was naturally suspicious of anything or anybody so thoroughly American as Brandon Burgess. The king-pin of the cotton corner was in Holds' mind a modern pirate of no little ability.

"And even Calvin Trainer calls poor Brand that," muttered Tarr, a shadow crossing his face again.

Captain Holds, disturbed by the fact that the Babbler was searching for the Yantic, knowing that he, Burgess' secretary and confidential employee, had come aboard the steamship at the last moment of sailing, and feeling the responsibility of the vast sum in the strong room of the ship, had jumped to the ridiculous conclusion that there was a conspiracy to rob the Yantic of the twenty millions in gold.

"Think of the romance of it! A modern pirate, sailing in an up-to-date steam yacht of the palatial furnishings of the Babbler, holding up a steamer in mid-ocean and demanding of the passengers 'their money or their lives'—and possibly blowing open the door of the treasure vault and making the captain walk the plank!"

Tarr laughed again at the fancy.

"'Y gad! I wouldn't care much if they made old Holds walk the plank. He's a beast!"

Then he went back to his stateroom and relieved Dr. Meachem.

"Our patient seems a little easier," said the physician, showing no curiosity regarding Tarr's interview with the captain. "His temperature has decreased."

"He was sensible for a half minute early this morning," Tarr told him.

"Good! Did he speak to you—tell you anything?" And *here* Dr. Meachem displayed some considerable inquisitiveness.

"Why—he started to," admitted Tarr. "But I declare I couldn't make out what he meant. And in a moment

he was back, rambling the same stuff he's been talking these two days.

"Too bad—too bad," said the physician, shaking his head. "If we could only know what troubled him and assure him at some moment of consciousness that the cause of the trouble was removed, I'd have better hope of his recovery."

He went away, but Tarr was so deep in thought that he scarcely noticed his departure. The physician's remark regarding Crowding's delirium had caught the passenger's attention.

Again the secretary took out the paper upon which he had jotted down the phrases which issued from the sick man's lips. He read it through and then looked at the two messages which had reached the Yantic in so strange a way.

The first, transmitted by the Savoird, showed that Burgess, on the Babbler, was chasing the Blue Crescent steamship. The second—the one he had picked up from the captain's table just now—was directly from Burgess, addressed to Tarr himself.

"Your trunk on Yantic by mistake. Open it at once. Matter of life or death."

At first Tarr had seen no possible sense in that message. He owned but one trunk, and that was the one he had sent aboard the Babbler the day before he left New York. How could that have got aboard the Yantic?

It suddenly flashed across his mind that the yacht had lain, by sufferance of the directors of the Blue Crescent Company, on the other side of the pier from the Yantic. It was possible that the trunk might have gone aboard the steamship instead of the yacht.

But why did Burgess chase the Yantic to warn Tarr to open the trunk? And where was the trunk itself?

"I've got the end of the thread—I swear I have!" whispered Tarr, the papers shaking in his hands. "That trunk of mine is in the hold—the trunk marked with the red diamond!

"Great heavens! What is the danger which menaces us all? It must be something of deadly import—'a matter of life or death,' as Burgess says—to send him chasing us half across the ocean.

"He warns me to open that trunk. And here is Ben Crowding muttering in his delirium a desire—a desperate desire—to open something. The same trunk, perhaps?

"Was that why he tried to get into the hold when he went mad? Is he connected with *this* mystery? By heaven! the two secrets are the same.

"Ben sent off my trunk to the wharf. He locked and strapped it for me. What is there in the thing which endangers us all?"

He sprang up at this point, ready to rush below himself, and, like Crowding, seek to tear open the hatch leading into the trunk hold.

But that would not do. They would think him as crazy as his cousin.

Surely, however, there was some mystery connected with the trunk Trimble had found below.

Young Angelo had been frightened by it or by something about it. The boy had spoken of it to the mysterious old woman in the steerage, the old woman (?) had in turn told Crowding, and the latter had started on a mad run for the orlop deck, where he had been captured as a madman.

"I have it! Crowding did something to my trunk, or knows about something having been done to it. He didn't know it was brought aboard the Yantic, however. I told him it was going to the Babbler—and, by Jove! it was ticketed for the yacht, too.

"When he learned that, by some mysterious fate, the trunk with the red diamond painted on it was aboard this vessel——

"I must get at it. I must have it dragged out and opened. Burgess would not be chasing us if it was not most important. *What* shall I do?"

He paced the cabin for a minute or two, then dropped into a seat at the tiny desk in the corner. Despite the pitching of the steamship, which was now buffeting waves of considerable height, he began hurriedly to indite a note to the captain:

DEAR SIR:

I believe I have fathomed the meaning of the message transmitted from the Peruvian Monarch, and which was sent

me by my employer, Mr. Brandon Burgess. There is a trunk in the hold marked with a red diamond and the letters "H. T." It is my property, but I did not know it was aboard the Yantic. I have reason to believe that some danger menaces the ship because of this trunk. Will you give orders to have it brought up from below? I have the key in my possession. Respectfully,

HORACE TARR.

He sealed this hurriedly, went to the door, and found a sailor standing close by, evidently on guard.

"Is the captain on the bridge?" he asked the man.

"He is, sir."

"Please give this note to him at once."

"I'll get it to him, sir," said the man, touching his cap.

Tarr noticed that he did not leave his post, however. Evidently he had received strict orders to guard this particular cabin.

A steward was passing, and the man spoke to him and sent the note by his hand. Tarr then retired to the cabin and waited.

Minute after minute passed. Tarr began to grow exceedingly nervous. Having satisfied himself that there really *was* something the matter with the trunk Trimble had found below, while searching for Helen Trainor's, the secretary was nervously anxious to get at it and examine its contents.

By and by a rap came upon the door. He pulled it open in a hurry. Another boy stood there and silently proffered Tarr a note.

The passenger tore it open. It was on the captain's official paper, and was written by his clerk:

Captain Holds begs leave to inform Mr. Tarr that he is not such a fool as Mr. Tarr evidently considers him. In addition, Mr. Tarr is recommended to remain in his stateroom until the end of the voyage. For the good of the service.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE LIMIT OF AUTHORITY.

THEN Tarr truly did go mad! He had shut the door to read the captain's message away from the curious eyes of the steward.

With a snarl of mingled rage and despair, he tore the paper to fragments, threw them on the floor, and stamped upon the bits. Crowding started up in his berth, muttering, and, recalled for the moment from his own trouble, the secretary ran to the sick man's side and soothed him.

This was a fortunate happening. It reminded Tarr that he had somebody to think of besides himself. It would not do to make a disturbance here while Ben lay so ill.

Nevertheless, when Crowding was quiet again, Tarr went to the door and stepped out upon the deck. Instantly the purser, as though expecting this, stood before him.

His bulky frame barred Tarr's way.

"What do you mean?" demanded the secretary, in a low voice.

He was aware that several sailors were lingering in the vicinity. It was evident that the intention was to seize him and lock him up if he created a disturbance.

"There is no use in making trouble, Mr. Tarr," said Brier. "Don't kick. It's foolish. I warned you before. The captain has a right to do this."

"We'll see about that when we get to land."

"I reckon we will," said the purser, with a sneer. "Now, are you going to behave?"

"But, good heavens, man! Aren't they going to get up that trunk and look into it?"

"Now, that'll do for that, sir!" snapped the purser. "Don't let us have any more of it. We know all about your trunk. Go right into your cabin and stay there!"

He fairly pushed Tarr back into the room. The latter, boiling with rage, bit his lip till the blood came to keep from bursting out upon the officer.

But his fear of what was to follow—of what threatened the Yantic and her passengers—finally stifled his feeling of personal insult. Crowding knew that the trunk in the hold threatened some awful peril to them all; by some means Brandon Burgess had learned of the

danger, too. And here these thick-headed officers of the Yantic would not believe him.

It was damnable! He, the only man aboard who suspected what threatened (Crowding and the disguised man in the steerage both being in the plot to injure the vessel—or so Tarr believed—did not count), was disbelieved and flouted when he would save the ship and her company from danger.

Exactly what the threatening peril was he did not know. But he could guess. Messerode had told him that Angelo C'Asago had reported a sound from the trunk like the ticking of a clock. Tarr had heard of explosive bombs which were set off by clock-work.

Crowding, in his delirium, talked about something set for one hundred hours. A clock-work bomb might have been thrust into his trunk, set to explode at a certain time.

*Why* this should have been done did not concern the secretary now. The fact that it was possible, that this explanation was reasonable, was all that he thought of.

He paced the confines of his cabin, at times wringing his hands, tempted again and again to burst open his door and shout to crew and passengers alike a warning of what he felt threatened.

At any time the bomb—if bomb it was—might explode. The horror of that possibility well-nigh turned his brain.

Little wonder that Ben Crowding had become irresponsible when he learned that the trunk was aboard. Hundreds of people were put in jeopardy by the presence of the trunk on the Yantic.

He thought of Helen Trainor, and Calvin, and Mrs. Shackelford—friends who had shown him much favor in the past. He forgot their attitude toward him now.

They were in deadly peril, he believed, and he was made helpless to avert the calamity by the stupidity of the captain and officers of the ship.

He hoped that Helen would come to the door to inquire for Crowding, or offer her services as nurse again. But evidently the captain had strictly ordered every passenger to keep away from the stateroom where Tarr was practically a prisoner.

Noon came and passed, and the uncertainty had told strongly on Tarr's self-control. Every sound made him start expectantly; every pitch of the wallowing steamship seemed the first heaving of the decks which would follow the explosion in the hold.

The weather had kept most people below, and that, more than aught else, was the reason for the young man being left to himself in the stateroom. The deck was continually sprinkled by spray, and now and then the rain descended, beating like a thousand drumsticks directly over his head.

Crowding was disturbed as the storm increased, and murmured painfully as he was tossed about in his berth. Tarr had sometimes to sit beside him and fairly hold him into the bed.

Once or twice the secretary thought his cousin recognized him. His eyes opened wider, and he seized Tarr's hand with a feeble grasp.

The latter did not remove the clinging fingers, but waited for them to relax of their own accord. Suddenly Crowding struggled off his pillow and pulled himself upright with an access of strength which quite startled Tarr.

"Horace!" he gasped.

"I'm here, old man. I'm right here," said Tarr soothingly, yet with shaking voice. "What is it?"

"Something—something I must tell you. Let me think—let me lo—How long have I been sick?"

He spoke little louder than a whisper, but Tarr, with his ear held close to the feeble lips, heard.

"It was Saturday—past noon!" exclaimed Tarr, panting with excitement.

"Saturday—past noon," murmured the sick man. "Something I must tell——"

His voice was dying away into murmuring once more. His cousin was half-mad with disappointment and despair. Was the man's elusive consciousness to slip away again without his making himself plain?

"For God's sake, speak!" burst from Tarr's lips. "Tell me if I'm right. If you can't speak, nod to me. Is it the

trunk—the trunk with the red diamond on it?"

His eyes were close to the clouding orbs of his cousin. Instantly their expression changed. Tarr saw that his wandering attention was caught.

"Is it *my* trunk? Must I open it——"

A shrill scream—quavering, agonized—burst from the pallid lips.

"Save them! Save them! Before ten to-night. In God's name, Horace!"

He struggled for breath, his hands waving freely. Then he began to mutter the old form:

"The red diamond! I must open that," he gasped, but this time Tarr was sure he caught the right word; "I must open that *trunk*. I must stop it—I must stop it. Only one hundred—— * * * punishment too great. These innocent people—God help—— * * * Happy, untroubled—secure * * * Set for one hundred—— * * * One hundred hours and then—HELL! A FLOATING HELL!"

The last despairing word seemed to leave Crowding's body with his very breath. His eyes had grown glassy. He dropped from Tarr's arms upon the pillow, a dead weight.

His cousin actually believed the man had died with that cry. He fell back from the berth, sobbing and gasping.

A pitch of the steamship threw him across the cabin. He brought up at the door.

Seizing the knob as though it steadied his soul as well as his body, Tarr waited a moment for the reverse plunge of the great ship. Then he swung open the door and dashed out upon the deck.

His advent was so sudden that he had passed the guard and run half the way forward before he was stopped. So wild was he—so distraught in appearance and manner—that it was little wonder if they thought him mad.

Brier was the only officer who reached him. Two of the sailors had him down by then. Tarr was cursing and crying aloud by turns.

"Let me up! Fools! Fools! You don't know what danger you are in. The ship and all hands are in peril. I tell you. Curse you! Curse you!"

"He's gone looney, sir, like that other did. What'll we do with him?" demanded one of the seamen.

"I tell you, Brier," cried the passenger hoarsely, struggling between the two men, "I must see that captain! He must listen to me—a matter of life or death——"

"What's this row?" suddenly demanded the gruff voice of Holds. "Who's that? Damme! It's Mr. Tarr."

"Aye, Mr. Tarr!" gasped the secretary, finally struggling to his feet, the seamen still clinging to his arms. "You beast! You fool! You'll hear me now, I hope. There's danger every moment you hesitate to bring up that trunk and open it."

"Be still!" commanded Captain Holds. "I tell you I won't hear to any more of this foolishness. Go back to your room."

"And let these innocent people be blown to the devil?" shouted Tarr.

"Be still! Choke him off! Does he want to start a riot?" queried Holds irritably.

"What do you mean by being blown up, sir?" demanded Brier, in wonder.

"I know now why Burgess is trying to reach us, and what he meant by his message to me. There is a bomb in that trunk——"

"Bah!" exclaimed the captain.

"How do you know?" asked Brier.

Tarr hesitated. He could not tell Crowding's story—such of it as he knew himself.

"I tell you it is so. I swear it! It may go off——"

"Ah, you go off to your own quarters and stay there!" ejaculated Holds.

"There is peril in waiting an hour, sir——"

"Be still! Some of the other passengers will hear you, and then there'll be a nice panic."

"By heaven, sir! Their blood will be on your head——"

"Take him back to his cabin!"

"I won't stay there. I warn you I'll shriek the truth aloud. You shall not——"

Holds uttered a round oath, and went to the limit of his authority. "Take him below, Mr. Brier. To the brig

with him. And if he makes a noise, gag him."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### IN DURANCE.

THE brig of the Yantic might well be called the "sweat-box." It was situated almost over the boilers, on the orlop deck, and although its walls were grated on all four sides, the ports of the ship were too far away for the ventilation to be good, and every time the door in the compartment bulkhead behind this cage was opened the unfortunate occupant was enveloped in gas and smoke from the stoke-hole.

Horace Tarr, in his rummaging about the steamship, had overlooked this place; but had he already experienced all its discomforts, he would have made no more strenuous fight against the carrying out of Captain Holds' outrageous order.

Slightly built as the passenger seemed, the two men who held him had found him no weakling.

When the purser stepped forward to place his hand upon him officially, Tarr broke away from his captors and struck out wildly for freedom.

Aided by a lurch of the steamship, his blow sent Brier to the deck, and he fell hard. Holds had come down from the bridge, and if it were possible for his countenance to be more highly colored than usual, it had now achieved that distinction.

Although he was no longer a young man, Holds was a vigorous one. It was whispered that he had begun his sea career as a mate on one of the last Liverpool packets that tried to compete with steam navigation.

Beside an old-time packet, the present day cattle-boat which we hear so much about is a haven of rest and comfort. Men were often killed by their brutal officers on the packets; they are only mauled on the cattle-boats.

The influence of wealthy relatives had helped Holds up the ladder until he had stepped upon the quarter of one of the largest and finest steamships of the Blue Crescent Line. And this statement does not belittle his seamanship.

But the captain of an Atlantic liner has to be something more than a good navigator. Indeed, he has really little to do with the actual sailing of his ship.

Captain Joshua Holds had, during the years he was progressing up the ladder before mentioned, gained a certain veneer which became him very well. The passengers liked his bluff, hearty manner, and the ladies called him a product of the "old school" of courtliness.

Now, as he ripped back the cuffs of his coat and started for Horace Tarr, his eyes ablaze and his lips dropping abuse of the foulest character, his lady passengers would have been extremely astonished to see Captain Holds.

But Tarr had met bullies before. Wherever men congregate for toil of any kind, especially where the restraining influence of woman is for the greater part eliminated, there are men who desire to lead the herd, and awe all beholders, by physical prowess.

In the West, it had been "the bad man"—the cow-puncher who is usually a second-rate hand on the ranch, but a first-class hand in a scrap, and noted for his gun-play. Tarr had run up against such on more than one occasion while he had served on the Trainor place.

The captain bore down upon him now with every apparent intention of giving the passenger a manhandling that he would have cause to remember for longer than the voyage lasted. His passion had escaped all bounds.

Tarr had no intention, however, of suffering calmly under the burly fellow's attack. If he was slight, he was wiry and quick.

He side-stepped as Holds ran at him, and the blow aimed at his head landed vainly in the circumambient air, and with a force which all but carried the angry man off his feet.

Tarr, seeing, as he hoped, a chance for escape, started for the after-companion-way leading to the saloon deck. His mind was made up to shout aloud the warning which he conceived due the other passengers.

Crowding's broken words had assured him that great peril threatened the

ship. That trunk (his own trunk, as he now believed) contained that which might send the Yantic to the bottom of the ocean.

If Crowding's overstrained brain was not entirely wrong, the climax of the mystery was almost due—before ten o'clock this Saturday evening. Believing, as he did, that in some manner a powerful explosive had been placed in the trunk marked with the red diamond, Tarr thought it better to create a panic among the passengers than to allow this bull-headed captain to shut him up and refuse to examine the trunk.

If the passengers—especially the women—were once frightened, and were told what little Tarr himself knew, a dozen captains would be unable to stand between them and the opening of the trunk-hold.

Therefore, he ran, ready to shriek his information aloud the instant he reached the open deck below.

But he did not reach it. Plunging down the stairway, he fell fairly into the arms of Trimble, who was coming up.

"What's this? What's this, sir?" demanded the junior officer, holding Tarr with insistence, warned of the riot above.

"Let me go!" gasped the passenger. "It's life or death, I tell you! Let me go!"

But Trimble had heard and distinguished the commands of the captain.

"Stop that man! Stop him, I say! I'll make it hot for every one of you if he escapes below."

The precipitation with which the sailors, and even Brier, charged the companionway, showed in what fear they held the captain's threat. Another surge of the ship landed the entire party in a heap at the top of the flight.

"Let me go!" panted Tarr, seeking to tear himself free from his captor.

"Can't sir; sorry, sir," said Trimble, taking an extra turn of his first in the back of Tarr's collar. "Captain's orders, sir."

"You don't know what you are doing!" cried the breathless passenger. "The captain is a reckless fool. He would endanger all our lives."

"He'll have to answer for that, then, sir. We have nothing to do with it," Trimble declared seriously.

"But, man alive, it will be too late!" the other cried, as he was hauled out upon deck.

These several incidents had taken less than two minutes in the acting. Only by chance had they been unseen by any passenger. And when the enraged Holds ran again at Tarr, while he was held by the junior officer, the secretary expected to find no champion to defend him.

Holds rushed across the deck, and this time his great first found its mark upon Tarr's jaw. It was a slanting blow, however, or the bone might have been crushed.

Unable to run or to properly defend himself while held by the junior officer, it looked to Tarr as though he was in for fearful punishment at the hands of the enraged captain, who immediately aimed another blow at his head.

But in a flash Trimble drew Tarr aside and received the brunt of the stroke on his own upraised arm.

"I beg your pardon," Trimble said respectfully, but looking straight into Holds' blazing eyes. "I cannot detain this man while you strike him, sir."

"Let him go, then, blast you!" yelled the captain, almost dancing in his rage, and trying to dodge around Trimble's stubborn form to get at that of Tarr.

"You must not strike him, sir," panted Brier, coming up. "It will make trouble for everybody concerned."

"I tell you this is mutiny!" shrieked Holds.

"But remember we are on a first-class steamship; this isn't a merchant vessel," Brier warned him.

He, too, interposed his body between the angry captain and his victim. The former began to cool down a bit.

For an officer to strike a passenger is an almost unheard-of indignity. Holds believed he was handling a malefactor or a very suspicious person at least, yet there might be some mistake, and having been halted in his first intention of taking summary vengeance on the unfortunate, his common sense came to his rescue.

"Take him below, then—instantly!"

he roared. "And I tell him right now that the first thing I shall do when we reach port is to jail him.

"Let me tell you fellows," he added to the two subordinate officers, who had really saved him from the result of his own explosion of temper, "this is no ordinary man we are dealing with. He's not a common thief or card-sharp.

"I am convinced there is a plot of wide scope against us—against the ship and her company. We are not being followed by that yacht for nothing.

"You all know, as well as I, what we have aboard here, in addition to the lives in our care. I warn you to keep this fellow close, and allow him to have communication with no living soul but yourselves.

"As I said before, if he is determined to talk—if he as much as whispers—gag him!"

Tarr was nigh breathless, anyway. He had lost none of his pluck, and, had he been free, would have stood up to the captain and taken his punishment with the hope of getting in a good blow or two himself.

With Brier and Trimble on either side of him he was helpless, and could only turn a threatening scowl upon Captain Holds as he was forced away.

"Ye'd best keep quiet and mind his orders, sir," said Trimble, yet never relaxing his firm grip of the passenger.

"But the man is a beast! He struck me when I was helpless," Tarr gasped.

"We are not here to discuss what our superior officer has done, Mr. Tarr," Brier said sharply. "No words, now."

"But let me tell you fellows——"

"Tell us nothing!" commanded the purser.

Brier was evidently a good deal of Holds' way of thinking—he believed that Tarr was not as innocent as he pretended to be.

They hurried him below, taking the forward companionway, and thence going by the sailors' runs to the orlop deck. And so Horace Tarr soon found himself in that most unpleasant place—the steamship's brig.

The worst of it was, it seemed as though he had made no real fight for his liberty. There was not a shadow of heroism in what he had tried to do or the manner in which he had endeavored to do it.

Not that these facts impressed him, but the futility of his attempt to save the ship and her passengers from the result of a criminal act by his cousin (or some other) made him gnash his teeth with rage.

These under-officers would not listen to him. He dared not tell the few members of the crew who passed his place of captivity, for he knew that either Trimble or Brier would at once gag him if he did so.

And all the time the actual moment of peril was approaching—if Ben Crowding was to be believed.

There was no little worriment in his mind regarding his cousin's present condition, too. Now that he had a moment to think of it, he remembered how strange the young man had looked when he, Tarr, left the stateroom.

For all he knew, Crowding might be at his last gasp—and was, perhaps, alone.

Tarr nigh went mad himself in those first few hours of his incarceration.

His physical discomforts—even the bruise made by the captain's fist upon his cheek—were not what troubled him. His was mental agony that alternately chilled him and again bathed his limbs with the sweat of fear.

He saw few of the ship's company through the bars of his cage. Once Trimble brought him something to eat, but refused to talk with him.

Tarr believed the junior officer to be a particularly sensible and level-headed man, yet he knew it was useless to seek to relate what he suspected about that trunk below. Trimble would obey the captain's orders blindly, despite the fact that he had personally intervened to save the prisoner from a brutal punishment.

If he hoped to warn the ship's company of the peril—hardly defined in his own mind, yet nevertheless real enough—it must be through some other person. And everybody seemed to avoid the brig.

Orders had evidently been given for all to keep away from the place.

And imagine Tarr's feelings when he

reviewed his own situation here in the very heart of the Yantic. If it was a bomb, or some other explosive, secreted in that trunk, and the ship blew up, escape would be impossible for him.

The day wore by. Tarr will never have a very clear remembrance of the tedious hours. He is positive that, together with the heat and his mental worry, he was made unconscious for a good part of the time.

Suddenly he roused to see a face peering between the bars of his cell. For a minute he blinked at it without recognizing the features.

It was Messerode, the Italian waiter, who had become Calvin Trainor's valet when Crowding was taken ill. The man's lips moved, and Tarr heard him whisper his name:

"Mr. Tarr! Mr. Tarr!"

With a shock the young man roused himself. He sprang across the cell.

"Messerode!" he exclaimed. "You can save us all. That trunk——"

"It is about that, sir, I come to inquire. I have heard something. Danger lurks there, eh, signor?"

"So I believe. Has Crowding — has he spoken?"

"He is unconscious yet, sir, I believe. But the boy, Angelo——"

"No, no! There is one other person who knows—he knows all the mystery, I believe. Go to him."

At the moment both were startled by the sound of hurriedly approaching footsteps along the passage.

"Be quick, sir! Who is it?" murmured the Italian.

"Brown—no! You don't know him by that name. It is the old woman you pointed out there in the steerage. She is a man," cried Tarr, with less grammar than energy. "*He* is in the plot——"

"What's this?" roared the voice of Brier, the purser.

He flashed on an electric light in the passage near the cell. But like a shadow, Messerode had disappeared.

"You have been talking to somebody!" cried the purser. "I heard you. This has got to stop, Mr. Tarr. And—and," he peered about, "where is the person with whom you talked?"

Tarr refused to make any answer to the inquiry.

"There is something deep in this, Mr. Tarr," declared Brier, his face pale. "I have half believed all along that the captain was a fool. But now——"

He turned suddenly and shouted for one of the 'tween-deck officers. This latter he sent for a pair of handcuffs, and, unlocking the cell, the purser entered, and, in spite of Tarr's expostulations and struggles, locked these irons on the passenger's wrists.

Then he forced a bit of clean sponge, soaked in wine, between Tarr's lips, and tied a towel firmly over his face, so that he could neither speak nor breathe through his mouth.

"That'll do for you, young man," he declared, and going out of the cell, left a wooden-faced seaman on guard before the door.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### HELEN TAKES A HAND.

A BIG steamship like the Yantic does not pitch in an ordinary sea, but this was an extraordinary swell which had been gathering for days. Most of the passengers, especially the ladies, did not leave their own private cabins on Saturday morning.

But although Messerode, the new valet, brought to the stateroom of Helen and her aunt a most cheerful message from Calvin, Helen was not contented to remain in her berth. Against the feeble expostulations of Mrs. Shackelford, the girl arose and made her toilet under difficulties.

She sallied out into the saloon about the time that Horace Tarr was being bundled below, by order of Captain Holds, and shut into the ship's detention cell. She knew nothing of this trouble, yet it was with a gravely anxious face that she sought her brother's room.

Calvin had been obliged to remain in bed, and he found the inaction wearing in the extreme.

"Have you heard from poor Crowding?" was his greeting.

Helen had not been outside, she observed.

"What's the matter, old lady?" asked

her brother. "Something is worrying you. Is it Horrors?"

"Partly. I am so desperately disappointed in him!" and the girl suddenly dropped her head upon her brother's shoulder and the tears flowed.

"Tut, tut! Helen of Troy in tears! The weeps have attacked you, too, have they? That is surely because of association with Aunt Im."

Helen was a strong-minded woman without the usual failings accredited to her sisters. She seldom gave way to such emotion as this, and Calvin knew that the matter was serious; but he was too delicate to comment upon the reason for his sister's weeping.

"I am disappointed, too," Calvin said gravely, "but I never knew old Horrors to do anything the least bit mean before; and if he has seemed to now, it may be that *his* associations are unfortunate"—and his eyes twinkled.

Helen wiped her eyes and sat up.

"It is over now, Cal," she said. "But I was not wholly troubled by Mr. Tarr's strange actions. I must tell you that it is whispered about the ship that he has been practically made a prisoner in his own cabin by the captain."

"What for, in heaven's name?"

"Nobody seems to know exactly. It is something about his intimacy with Mr. Burgess. All kinds of wild stories are being told about *him*."

"Who—Burgess?"

"I don't much fancy that Kinney," muttered Calvin.

"He is not the only person who believes that Burgess has gone to pieces. And then, we heard last evening about the message from the Savoird, you know. Well, this morning it is said that another passing steamship communicated with the Marconi operator here, transmitting a message from the Babbler to Mr. Tarr.

"Burgess must be scouring this part of the ocean looking for the Yantic, and every steamship he sees he signals and sends messages to Mr. Tarr, in hope that they will reach him. It must cost him a mint of money."

"I should exclaim!" cried Cal.

"What it means, I don't know. But Mr. Brier told the steward that he believed that Burgess 'was no better than a pirate.'"

"Such nonsense!" exclaimed Cal, laughing.

Helen laughed, herself.

"I have heard you use the same expression in referring to him," she said.

"Humph! Well, not just that way, Helen."

"At any rate, this last message has stirred up the officers of the Yantic. It is a fact that Mr. Tarr is practically a prisoner in his own room. But that is not why I am so horribly nervous, brother."

"What is it? Let your old budder know, Nellie," Cal urged, patting her hand.

"I am afraid I shouldn't trouble you with my fancies," she said weakly.

"You've come here to talk something over with me. Out with it!" cried Cal vigorously.

"Well, I will! It is about Crowding. There is something on his mind."

"Good Lord! We know that," in disgust. "Tell me something new."

"But, Calvin, it is something dreadful—terrible!" said his sister, in almost a whisper.

Her eyes grew big with fear, and he saw that she was mentally viewing possibilities of which he knew nothing.

"What is it, Nell?"

"That is what I wish I knew. He is delirious, you know. Dr. Meachem has been trying to explain a lot of medical terms to me—all dealing with Crowding's case. But I am a woman and cannot understand such things.

"But one thing I *can* understand," she went on, with vigor. "The poor fellow keeps repeating, over and over, thoughts which seared his mind and heart when he was stricken down. I believe that this fact has impressed Tarr, and he fears that Crowding has committed, or knows of, some awful thing."

"Think Tarr knows what it is?"

"No. Perhaps not. But he looks badly himself—or he did yesterday."

"Poor old Horrors," murmured Cal.

"But Ben Crowding's delirium scares me. It is all about something that is to happen, or perhaps has already happened, on a boat."

"On *this* steamship?"

"I—I don't know. I am really frightened, Cal. There is something Crowding desires to do with all his heart. He had it on his mind to do when he was stricken——"

"Why, they say he was trying to get into the hold when he collapsed."

"Into the trunk-hold—where they searched for my trunk?"

"Sure!"

"And you remember that my trunk was marked with my initials, with a black diamond stamped around them? Well, Mr. Tarr mentioned owning a trunk marked in the same way, only in red. You know, our initials are the same."

"What of it?" asked Cal, in wonder.

"One of the things that Crowding keeps saying is 'The red diamond!' It seems to signify something frightful to him. And Tarr's trunk is so marked——"

"But he didn't bring a trunk aboard. He told me he had already sent his trunk aboard the Babbler before Burgess changed his plans."

"I know it," said Helen hastily. "But they found a trunk marked like his while they were looking for mine."

"No!"

"Yes they did. And I asked the steward if there was any other person aboard with the same initials, and there is not. Of course, the passenger list assured me that there was no third 'H. T.' in the first and second cabin. But the steward knows of nobody in the whole ship that would have a trunk like that."

"You think it is Horrors'?"

"And with the red diamond on it."

"But—but what does it mean? What do *you* mean? I can't see through the thing at all," cried Cal excitedly. "What has this to do with Crowding's fear?

"The mere fact that Tarr's trunk got aboard here in some mysterious way isn't a reason for his cousin's going to pieces as he did. Think how the poor devil must have suffered in his mind before he lost his head completely!

"Think of his fear of sleep. Think of his terror at losing consciousness for so much as a moment. Remember how he put that iron down his back to awake him if he dozed off in his chair while setting beside me at night.

"He was so frightened by his own dreams that he dared not close his eyes. The man's conscience was seared by the memory of some awful crime—so it looks to me. I don't take much stock in Dr. Meachem's diagnosis, that the whole trouble was imaginary. What is this trunk? What is the mystery, anyway?"

"That is what I long to learn, brother. It is what we *must* learn."

"Do you think Tarr knows?"

"I don't know. I don't know what to think. Crowding talks about innocent people being imperiled by this thing, whatever it is. Something is going to happen, he fears. If Horace Tarr knew——"

"By heavens! Do you think he would allow other people to be endangered, even to save himself?" cried Cal. "You don't know him as well as I do, Nell. He has played the fool with this Kinney, but I think I know why."

Helen blushed and shrank from him, with head aside.

"Don't dodge the matter. He likes you a deal better than he ought, perhaps—better than you care to have him, Nell. I thought at first that he might be 'warning off the dogs' for Brandon Burgess' sake——"

"Stop, Calvin! You mustn't talk so."

"All right. I'm sorry I quarreled with Horrors, though. He's a good fellow, even if he isn't the sort of a man you'd choose.

"I tell you what to do, dear. You send up word to him that I must see him. You can keep away, and I'll get from him all he knows about this mystery of Crowding's. Be sure of that."

"But they say he is a prisoner."

"Nonsense! This captain is a bully—he shows that. Like enough he doesn't want any trouble among the passengers, and he has advised Tarr to keep to his own room so that he won't have another row with Kinney. Send word to Brier that I must see Tarr. That's a good girl."

But Brier came down to see Calvin himself.

"Mr. Trainor, I am forbidden by the captain to take your message to Mr. Tarr," he said gloomily.

"What do you mean?" demanded the cripple.

"What I say. Mr. Tarr cannot come here to speak with you, nor can you go to him."

"I should say not—in this sea," observed Cal. "But I do not understand. Do you mean to say that Captain Holds denies one passenger the privilege of communicating with another?"

"In this case—yes," admitted Brier slowly.

"Why, that is monstrous," cried Cal, with a sharp laugh. "Does he know what he is about? This curtailing the rights of a free American citizen——"

"I—I can't talk to you about it, sir," interrupted the purser. "I am forbidden. A captain is absolute master on his own ship."

"Not of his passengers."

"Captain Holds claims that jurisdiction. He says he knows what he is about. I advise you to let him alone."

"But, by Jove," cried Trainor, "I shall do nothing of the kind. I want to see Tarr, and if he is a prisoner in his cabin——"

"It's worse than that, sir."

"What do you mean?" cried the other, startled by the purser's manner.

"He's in the sweat-box below," whispered Brier.

"What's that?"

"The brig. Where we put refractory seamen or stokers."

"Imprisoned! This is incredible! I—I——"

"Whatever may be my private opinion of Captain Holds' action, I can say nothing, sir," Brier hastened to say. "I might do the same under similar provocation——"

"What in heaven's name has poor Tarr done?"

"He threatened to arouse the passengers—to create a panic. That would never do, you can see, Mr. Trainor, for great harm might result."

"But how? What about? Why should he do it?"

"I'm hanged if I know, sir, unless it was to make trouble for the captain, whom he seems to dislike."

"I never heard of such a thing!" gasped Calvin.

"He is a quarrelsome fellow, you know," said the purser. "His row with Mr. Kinney showed that."

"Then he has become quarrelsome since he came aboard this steamer. I've seen him where men are inclined to draw and shoot at the drop of the hat, and I never saw a gun in his hand. Yet he wasn't considered a coward. There is something wrong about this, Brier. I must see the captain."

"You'll take my advice and let him alone, sir," said the purser as he went out.

Helen had remained outside, in the saloon, and was not long in coming back. Messerode was expostulating with the cripple and urging him not to try to get up.

"Indeed, signor, it is not wise for you. The sea is soon to be smoother, eh? But not now—not yet."

"Why do you want to do such an insane thing, Calvin?" Helen asked sternly.

"I tell you, Nell, I've got to. Tarr is in trouble. This fool of a captain has imprisoned him in some sort of a hole below."

"Imprisoned him!"

"That's what Brier says. And he warns me not to say anything to Holds about it. But I swear I shall! I'll not hear of such an outrage."

"But why has he done this?" demanded his sister in wonder.

Then she saw that Messerode was listening intently and that his teeth were gleaming behind his parted lips. Evidently the Italian was deeply interested.

"You know about it, Messerode?" she demanded suddenly.

"Si, signora. 'Tis so. I know."

"Well, speak up!" cried Calvin.

"It is that there is a plot to rob the strong room—the money vault. We haf heard of eet in the steerage," said the man, forgetting his usual English in his interest.

"There is twenty millions in gold in

the vault, they say. There is a plan to steal it, and Mr. Tarr knows about it—or something," he concluded rather vaguely.

"Horrible!" cried Helen.

"You don't believe it of Tarr?" cried her brother.

"It is absurd. Of course not!" she replied, her eyes flashing with anger.

"That captain is a fool," groaned Calvin, feeling himself powerless. "To think of believing such idiocies."

"It is terrible!"

"Why, how could the strong room be robbed? Twenty millions of money! Goodness! Does the captain think poor Horrors would put it in a sack and then swim away with it? He'd have to hold up the whole ship to do it, too!"

"No, no!" cried Messerode, shaking his head. "There is another ship following us. It is looking for us one, two day, now. Aboard that ship are Mr. Tarr's friends. When it meets the Yantic——"

"The Babbler!" gasped brother and sister together.

Messerode nodded again.

"That is it. It is the name. I haf heard it below."

"*What* an ass that Holds is!" groaned Calvin.

Helen rose determinedly.

"I am going to see him. Yes, I am, brother! You cannot go in this weather, and he might not talk with you. But he shall talk to *me*." And with her lips firmly compressed, and without another word or listening to any expostulations from Calvin, she left the cabin.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HELEN AS A CHAMPION.

As has been intimated, Captain Joshua Holds, bully though he was, had shown himself susceptible to the charm of woman—especially to such a woman as Helen Trainor. And when she appeared before him now, dishevcled and flushed from her strenuous journey to the ship's bridge, she was very beautiful indeed.

Holds saw her coming, clinging to the life-line that had not yet been removed, although the sea was fast moderating. He hastened down from the bridge to meet her at the foot of the ladder.

"My dear Miss Trainor!" he exclaimed. "You are brave to venture out. Not half a dozen of the male passengers have done that."

"There is one gentleman who seems to be out," Helen said pointedly.

The captain looked at her questioningly.

"I mean Mr. Tarr," she said, her face flushing more deeply than wind or weather had made it. "I understand that he is not in his cabin."

The captain's features clouded instantly. His grizzled eyebrows seemed to rise automatically like the hair on the neck of an angry dog, and a dull gleam came into his eyes.

"Miss Trainor, I am obliged to be the ruling power in the conduct of my ship. I am sorry this has occurred, but the man threatened to disturb the peace of all hands — perhaps bring about a panic—and I had to send him below."

"It is unheard of, Captain Holds!"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Trainor. I have good reasons for restraining him—excellent reasons," declared the captain stiffly.

"What reason, sir?" she demanded, looking straight at him.

"I—I do not think it wise to discuss that point with you, Miss Trainor. It should be sufficient that I found it necessary."

"But it is not sufficient, Captain Holds!" she exclaimed, her face whitening now excepting for the burning spot on either cheek. "Mr. Tarr is an American citizen; he has certain rights even on a ship flying the English flag. It is an unheard-of thing—an outrage."

"Miss Trainor, you are discussing something which you do not understand. The man is a quarrelsome fellow——"

"Why do you say that?" she interrupted.

"*You* ought not to ask me that question," he said with more than a suspicion of a sneer. "Mr. Kinney can perhaps tell you."

She was furious at this, but kept her voice calm and looked at him still unshakenly.

"I am tempted to believe, Captain Holds, that this man Kinney received just punishment at Mr. Tarr's hands. I understand that he tried to start trouble again with Mr. Tarr yesterday afternoon. And it is a poor reason for depriving a passenger of his liberty. That is *not* your real and true reason, Captain Holds."

"Well, perhaps it isn't," he admitted, goaded to admit the truth. "You seem to know a good deal about the matter, young lady——"

"I do!" she declared blindly. "And I see no reason for your cruelty. His cousin is ill, too, and Mr. Tarr was nursing him."

"Like enough *that* fellow was mixed up in it also," Holds muttered reflectively.

"In what?"

He looked at her searchingly, shaking his head.

"Tarr is a suspicious character. He is employed by a man who is a lawbreaker and a swindler——"

"What! Mr. Brandon Burgess?"

"Oh, I have received plenty of information regarding *his* reputation."

"From Mr. Kinney, perhaps?" suggested Helen, smiling coldly and finding herself in the equivocal position of defending the cotton king.

"And why not? He is well versed in Wall Street affairs."

"And a personal friend of Mr. Burgess' arch enemy, Aaron Lodowick. I say nothing for Mr. Burgess' business; I do not approve of any man gambling in the necessities of life, and cotton is a necessity of life for many, many poor people. But that Mr. Burgess would stoop to anything low——"

"I know—I know!" exclaimed Holds sharply. He was determined to end the discussion. "But the matter is on a different basis. The man has lost his money. By this time, had he remained in New York, he wouldn't have had a cent. And I believe his intentions are bad. I learn that he has a very powerful yacht, well manned and fully as heavily armed as a small cruiser——"

Helen burst into a laugh which she could not suppress. For a minute Holds glowered upon her, and then, with a muttered oath, turned sharply around and ascended the ladder to the bridge.

"I know my business, young woman!" he flung back over his shoulder. "Tarr stays where he is."

That certainly ended the matter, as far as Helen's intervention was concerned, but the girl turned away in a flame of anger at the captain's injustice and brutality.

She made her way along the staggering deck to Tarr's stateroom, the seamen who saw her expressing in their faces their wonder at her appearance on deck.

She found Dr. Meachem sitting by Crowding. The latter was asleep, and, strangely enough, seemed calm.

"A change has taken place in our patient," the physician whispered. "A change for the better, I hope. Either this is the sleep of complete exhaustion or his mind has been relieved of the mental pressure that was upon it."

"Has he been conscious, doctor?"

"That I couldn't tell you."

"Doesn't Mr. Tarr know?"

"I—I haven't seen Mr. Tarr since early this morning. He said his cousin was conscious for a moment during the night."

"Do you know what this dreadful captain has done to Mr. Tarr?" she asked him directly.

"I hope you won't ask me about it, Miss Trainor. I deplore what has occurred, but as an officer under Captain Holds I can say nothing."

She saw that there was nothing to be gained by following the subject further with the physician. Nor would he let her relieve him at his post.

"One of the stewardesses is coming up by and by to sit beside him," Dr. Meachem explained. "I hope that the poor fellow will be better when he awakes. I want to see him at that time and I shall stay until then myself."

The sun had burst through the clouds when Helen came out of the stateroom. Some of the men had ventured forth, but she was the only woman outside, and she was too troubled to remain and be talked to.

Going down, she bethought her of the

C'Asagos, in whom she had taken such an interest and for whom the entertainment had been arranged to take place this Saturday evening. The usual concert for the benefit of the sailors' orphans and widows would be given the night before the Yantic landed her passengers.

The Italian woman had heretofore been particularly voluble with Helen, for the young signora was the only person among the first cabin passengers who spoke her own language to such perfection.

Helen's interest in settlement work among the poor of New York's congested quarters had given her this, as well as other advantages, in dealing with such people.

The C'Asago woman had poured out her burdened soul to her, but now Helen found her in tears and unwilling to explain the cause of them.

All that she could get out of the unfortunate creature was that her boy, Angelo, was the cause of the tears, and, catching Angelo before he could escape, the young lady tried to get from him an explanation.

But Angelo was dumb. The child looked frightened, too, and started at every sound.

His own face was streaked with tears, but he stubbornly refused to open his heart to the young lady. Quite puzzled by this, Helen made her way back to her brother's cabin. Calvin had insisted on rising, and Messerode had just got him settled in his chair.

The girl came in, full of the mystery of the C'Asagos' tears, and after putting the toilet articles away the valet slipped out of the apartment.

Helen was deep in her whispered story of Tarr's incarceration and of her unsuccessful interview with Captain Holds, and neither she nor her brother noticed the Italian's departure. Calvin was greatly enraged over the treatment accorded his sister by Captain Holds.

Never since his unfortunate accident had he so railed at fate for placing him in his present physical condition.

"Oh, for ten minutes to stand up to the brute!" he exclaimed, shaking his head, his eyes shining. "And I can't do a thing for poor Horrors!"

"The captain must certainly be punished when we get ashore," declared Helen.

"But good heavens," muttered her brother; "suppose——"

Then he stopped and Helen seemed to read this thoughts with a single penetrating glance.

"You mean 'suppose we do not get safely to land?'" she whispered.

Before he could reply, there came a timid rap at the door. Helen answered it.

There at the threshold was the slight figure of Angelo C'Asago. He was half-choked by sobs, and glanced now and then over his shoulder as though fearing pursuit.

"Why, Angelo!" she cried. "What is it?"

A passing steward saw the boy and bore down upon him.

"You are not allowed here, youngster," he cried.

"Stop!" commanded Helen. "I sent for him—at least, I want him now that he is here," and she quickly drew him into the room and closed the door.

*(To be continued.)*

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## A PRICELESS JEWEL.

THERE is a jewel which no Indian mine can buy,
No chemic art can counterfeit;
It makes men rich in greatest poverty,
Makes water wine, turns wooden cups to gold,
The homely whistle to sweet music's strain;
Seldom it comes—to few from heaven sent—
That much in little—all in naught—content.

*J. Wilbye.*

# The Mixer and "The Tender Pash."

BY GEORGE L. GIBSON.

What came of Culbertson's butting in on a lovers' quarrel.

I HAVE discovered, in contemplating Culbertson's many bad breaks, that the particular symptom which denotes that a man is seized with the fell disease of "mixing in" is a desire on the patient's part to interfere with something entirely out of his province—to oversee matters, indeed, for the management of which he hasn't the first ability.

This being the case, it was fated that Culbertson should at some time dabble in what Joe Wardwell calls "the tender pash"—otherwise love. One couldn't imagine Culbertson himself in love or any girl loving him; he'd never have time for it. But he managed to butt into the affair between Dan Elwin and Dolly Macy with his usual unholy success.

Dan's reputation as a gay boy drifted home before his sudden return from college in his junior year. There must have been something in the stories they told, for Dan had his choice of buckling down to business with his father in Wall Street or taking a ticket with no return coupon for the West.

Whatever the trouble had been in the college town (and the gossips persisted in connecting a girl with it), Dan had been steadier than a pendulum for two years before he began shining around Dolly.

And Dolly wasn't a girl to go into the game with her pretty eyes shut—trust girls nowadays for knowing all that's good for them. The engagement was finally announced, and everybody but the Old Betties and Joe Wardwell were glad.

Joe didn't want to lose his chum and housemate; Culbertson, as one of the aforesaid Old Betties, groaned and shook his head, prophesying a horrid finish for both Dolly and Dan.

"A fellow with the reputation Dan has is sure to make a high-spirited girl like Dolly unhappy," the Mixer declared solemnly.

And then he proceeded (I won't say with malice aforethought, for Culbertson doesn't have to be malicious to bring about his fatal results) to do his prettiest to queer Dan with Dolly. And this is how it happened:

Dan and Joe had apartments together in the Henrietta.

Despite Joe's free and easy Western manners, slangy speech, and red hair and freckles, he has artistic tastes of the first water, and those rooms were the star bachelor diggings of the hotel. Decorations and all were according to Joe's "notions."

Every girl they knew was crazy to see the rooms. Some rubber-neck society reporter wrote something about them for one of the gossip papers, and for the first month or two Dan and Joe were plagued to death dodging people whom they didn't care to invite up but whom it was hard to ignore.

One evening Joe and Culbertson happened to be dining together at the Scratch Club (the Mixer claims to be artistic enough to hold a membership there), and Dolly Macy and her aunt were with a crowd at a neighboring table.

After dinner the two parties intermingled, and Joe and Culbertson found Dan's sweetheart and Mrs. Blair upon their hands.

Naturally, Dan had never invited Dolly to the Henrietta alone, and she had never had so good a chance to see his diggings before. She started the idea, and her aunt backed her up.

"Of course, if you'd like to come up!" cried the thoughtless Joe. "I'd be delighted. And maybe Dan will be in. He's out at a dinner to-night."

"Yes, I know," said Dolly demurely. "He told me it was a business engagement."

And so they trailed over to the Henrietta, and instead of leaving word down-stairs for Dan that there was company (as Joe certainly should have done had he kept his wits about him), he led his visitors straight up to the rooms and ushered them in.

Mrs. Blair, the most proper matron you ever saw—so proper that she should never have married, but remained a spinster to the end of time—sat straight up on the edge of a divan, half sorry that she had come, after all. But little Dolly could not hide her interest and curiosity.

Was this Dan's? And did Dan sit there? Oh, here is his picture in hunting costume! And she turned her plump shoulders to the others while she examined this closely.

And so she went around scrutinizing the fellow's curios and keepsakes. A bunch of stage pictures in a photo frame jarred her, until Joe courageously admitted that they all belonged to him.

Joe is a faithful chum and would have sworn his life away to save Dan Elwin.

Then suddenly they heard the elevator door click, and then a shout of boisterous laughter in the corridor outside. High pitched above the deeper tones, a girl's voice said:

"I'll bet old Joe's at home! We'll stir him up, boys!"

Joe and Culbertson started and exchanged glances of mingled horror and alarm.

That was Kitty Bridge's voice, and although there was no real harm in Kitty, still she's not the sort of girl that Joe could introduce to Mrs. Macy and Dolly.

Besides, if voices were any touchstone, she had several men with her—and probably no chaperon.

Kitty was never bothered much by such useless furniture as chaperones!

Then the bell rang.

It was odd that the clerk had not telephoned up first, but Kitty Bridges was equal to anything, and this was likely to be a surprise party — and it certainly was a noisy crew there in the corridor.

"Are—are you expecting other visitors?" asked Mrs. Blair stiffly.

"I can't imagine who that can be!" declared Joe unblushingly, but with a despairing look at Culbertson. "Just see who it is, will you, old man?"

And the Mixer sprang into the breach.

Joe Wardwell would better have tried to manage the affair himself, but for the moment he forgot Culbertson's fatal inclination.

As Culbertson bustled toward the door, Joe tried to gain the attention of his two visitors at the end of the room. Mrs. Blair, however, had taken fright.

"We really must go, Mr. Wardwell," she said decisively. "Come, Dolly!" and she turned to sail majestically out of the apartment.

Culbertson had opened the door a little way, darted out, and closed the portal before the boisterous crew could burst in. He was greeted vociferously, not only by the three men, but by Kitty herself.

"Hush up, for pity's sake!" exclaimed Culbertson, who knew them all. "Kitty, do behave! Why can't you be like other girls and bring somebody with you?"

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Kit saucily. "If there is any safety in numbers, I always am perfectly safe." Which was true enough, for she was a "good fellow," and in her off-hours from the theater usually managed to have half a dozen men about her.

"Sh!" whispered Culbertson in agony. "Joe's got some company."

The door latch clicked. "There! They are coming out! For pity's sake behave, Kit!"

"What'll I do? Hide?" she demanded in mock terror.

"Don't make it worse, Kit!" begged Culbertson. "Here! One of these fellows must be your brother. Joe may have to introduce them to you——"

The elevator stopped at that instant and out stepped Dan Elwin. "Hello, Kitty!" he exclaimed, shaking hands. "What's up?"

Culbertson had turned back to meet Joe and Mrs. Blair and Dolly at the door. Kitty seized upon Dan.

"Saved! Saved!" she exclaimed in a tragic whisper. "You shall be my brother, Dan!"

"That's all right, Kitty! You know I can't be anything nearer and dearer to you. But this *is* sudden!"

The other fellows burst into laughter again. Kitty slipped her arm into Dan's.

"You're my chaperon. Your chum has visitors and he doesn't want to shock them with wicked little *me* appearing *sans chaperone*."

Dan began to laugh, too, when the visitors mentioned appeared in the corridor.

"No, no!" Mrs. Blair was saying; "we positively *must* go, Mr. Wardwell. Good-night!"

"Why, here is Mr. Wardwell now!" exclaimed Kitty, with an elaborate air of carelessness. "Brother Dan and I have *so* long promised ourselves the pleasure of calling——"

The wicked minx copied Mrs. Blair's tone of high-bred coldness to the life, and swept poor Joe, who stood perspiring in the doorway, a deep courtesy.

And there was Dan Elwin and Dolly, face to face!

Kitty clung with both hands to her "brother's" arm. Dan's countenance changed from gay to grave in a flash.

He could not explain without making a mess of it, and, any way, he would have put Kitty in a queer position by saying a word.

Mrs. Blair did not see him at all, but brushed by to the elevator, and, followed by Dolly with her cheeks afire, disappeared in the descending car.

Then that crowd of rioters burst into the rooms, deriding Joe, and otherwise showing that they considered the laugh on him.

They didn't know Dolly Macy and her aunt.

Dan sat like a graven image on the edge of a chair until Kitty took her crowd away. Culbertson tried to sneak out with them, but Joe commanded him to remain.

Between them they explained the matter most miserably to Dan.

He said nothing, but picked up his hat and coat and went out. Later Joe learned that he had gone to Dolly's house, sent up his card with a request that she see him and hear his explanation, and that she had sent back the card, saying that she was "not at home."

The next day he received the ring and several little trinkets back, and his letters.

That was all. Not a word. Not a chance to explain. Not a sign afterward that Dolly cared. Oh, she was a proud young woman!

And the Mixer couldn't see that it was his fatal propensity to do the wrong thing at the wrong time that caused the wreck of love's young dream in this case.

He said that Kitty should have known better than to take *Dan* for her brother. His suggestion was all right, Culbertson declared.

Naturally, Dolly believed that Dan had deliberately lied to her, adding that crime to the one of being familiar with such a glaringly stagy person as Kitty Bridges. She was such a haughty young lady that none of her own or Dan's friends seemed able to get at her and patch the matter up.

As much as I have always liked Dan, I must admit that he gets rattled easily. He is young, too, and honestly loved Dolly. The way she had thrown him down just about ruined him. He mooned about at first, spending his time for the most part in trying to meet Dolly for a word of explanation, and in this way he neglected business, and his father, who was a regular martinet, jumped on him.

When a young fellow receives his walking ticket from the girl he loves, and is told several times a day by his parents that he is positively "no good," it is not strange if the boy gets reckless. He had a serious flare-up with his father and left town.

The first I knew of it, Joe Wardwell burst into my office one morning and told me. Joe related something further.

He had considered himself all along as partly responsible for the misunderstanding between his chum and Dolly Macy, and he had finally, the evening before, managed to get Dolly's ear and bulldozed her into listening to the true and unvarnished tale of how Dan had

come to pose as "that creature's" brother. (Poor Kit! The members of her own sex do not like her a little bit!)

Dolly, it seems, saw a great light.

She had cried on Joe's shoulder (Joe didn't tell me *that*, however), and admitted just how miserable she felt. And finally she sent a message to Dan by his proxy.

Dan was to bring her ring back, and she would forgive him. It was a puzzle what she had to forgive the poor fellow, but it's always best to let the girl think she is acting in a magnanimous manner.

But when Joe went home there were Dan's things topsy-turvy and a brief note left stating that he had taken the ten thirty train for Philadelphia.

And Joe was worried.

He did not know where Dan would stop there; telegrams to several hotels brought no reply, and Joe could not leave town himself to find his chum. If Dan did not turn up with the ring and square matters with Dolly pretty soon, it might be all off again. Oh, Wardwell was in a great state of excitement!

Now, I couldn't drop my business any more than he, to run over to Philadelphia after a lunatic of a boy who was bent upon making wreck of his fortunes because a girl had turned him down. I suppose the "tender pash" *does* rather pale on a man when he's been married as long as I have.

So we were up a stump until suddenly I had a most brilliant idea. If I have many of them as brilliant I'll probably go broke.

I remembered that Culbertson was coming back from his regular Baltimore trip and that he would be at the Middleton House some time on this day. He always stopped over a few hours in Philadelphia.

"Wire Culbertson," I said.

"Gad!" cried Joe. "I'll do it. Confound him, he was partly responsible for this mix-up. He must find poor old Dan and bring him back. I'll tell Dolly that Dan's father sent him out of town on business, and that I'll reach him by wire and bring him home. Hope to thunder he hasn't pawned the ring!"

Evidently Joe knew something of Dan's reckless state of mind. It seemed that the poor fellow had lugged around the ring ever since Dolly returned it—a continual reminder of what he had lost.

Well, as the melodramatic writers say, "the scene now changes." Culbertson found Joe's wire awaiting him at the Middleton House, and the Mixer really is a good-hearted chap.

He dropped business at once and went out as a searching party of one to rescue Dan Elwin from the result of his own blunderings.

Dan had really made up his mind that "it was all over." His father had told him he was a disgrace to the Elwin name (of course, he had said that forty times before, and never meant it), and Dan had drunk just enough to make him believe that the old man was right. Culbertson found him in a place where he might have got into trouble, but the boy was still sane enough to listen to reason and understand what Joe had done for him. Dolly was waiting for him—and the ring.

He almost embraced Culbertson in his joy, and the Mixer got him out on the street in a hurry.

But that was a bad move. The night air seemed suddenly to send the fumes of the drink Dan had swallowed to his head. He recited his wrongs, and his gratitude to Culbertson for rescuing him, in most tragic tones.

Culbertson had a bad quarter of an hour getting the young fool to his hotel; every policeman they saw followed them to the extent of his beat.

And when they lined up before the desk in the big hostelry which Dan had chosen, the clerk hesitated to give Culbertson the key to Dan's room because he called him out of name. The fool boy had not signed his right name on the register.

Finally, however, Culbertson impressed the clerk with his sincerity, and they went up-stairs. He helped Dan off with his clothes and put him to bed, where the boy at once became oblivious to everything.

Unfortunately, Culbertson could not stay with him. He had an important engagement in New York early in the

morning, and it was almost time for his train then. To add to his disturbance of mind, he found the lock of Dan's door would not perform its proper function. It failed to fasten the door.

There was Dan, dead to the world, a plain temptation to any dishonest hotel employee or any passing thief. He had considerable money, his watch and pin, and above all the diamond ring which Dolly was waiting for him to return to her.

Finally the Mixer believed he had a grand idea. He gathered up all the boy's money and valubles, put them in an envelope which he sealed, wrote Dan's name upon it, and gave it to the clerk to put in the safe. Then he hustled and caught his train. Culbertson was sitting in my office about noon the next day telling me all about it when Joe Wardwell came in. By the look on Joe's face one would think that anxiety had become a chronic state of mind with him.

"Say!" he gasped. "Do either of you two fellows know where Dan Elwin is now? You sent me word, Culbertson, that you'd fixed him all right in Philadelphia, and that he'd be home to-day.

"Dolly's worrying the life out of me, and Mr. Elwin has sent up twice to know what is the matter with the imbecile. If he and Dolly ever compare notes, it's all off with poor Dan. What in the dickens did you do to him last night, Culbertson?"

"Why, I told you what hotel he was stopping at," cried the Mixer. "And he should have been here by now, any way."

"I've telegraphed that hotel. Nobody registered there by the name of Elwin. This is a nice mess!"

Just at this moment Culbertson's office-boy came in with a Western Union envelope.

"This came collect, Mr. Culbertson. I paid for it. Is it all right?" he demanded.

The Mixer grabbed it and tore it open. It was a wail of distress from Dan Elwin:

> Searched town for you. Come identify me my hotel. Won't give me envelope.
> D. E.

Joe pounced on it and read the message at a glance.

"What does it mean?" he demanded.

Culbertson began faintly to tell the story. When half through with it, Wardwell broke out:

"You several kinds of a blankety-blank idiot!" he roared. "Don't you see what you've done? Of course they won't let him have the money and stuff. You wrote his own name on the envelope instead of the one he'd signed to the register. I don't suppose Dan knows anybody in Philadelphia who can identify him."

"I—I——" gasped Culbertson.

"Oh, yes; you mixed in as usual!" snapped Joe. "Come on! You've got to go over there with me and square this, and get Dan away. First we know he'll be arrested and his father will hear of it. It will be all up with him and Dolly then, sure!"

And Joe made Culbertson go. But to tell the truth, I have always thought that the Mixer seemed to be more of an instrument of fate in this matter than is usually the case. He didn't butt into the "tender pash" on either occasion of his own volition.

Dan and Dolly are as happy as turtle-doves now, and the senior Elwell seems really to begin to see something of value in his son from a business standpoint. But Joe Wardwell still declares that Culbertson's temperamental peculiarities very nearly ruined the Elwell-Macy romance for good and all.

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## HOME JOYS.

SWEET is the smile of home; the mutual look
When hearts are in each other sure;
Sweet are the joys that crowd the household nook,
The haunt of all affections pure.

*J. Keble.*

# WHO AND WHY?*

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR.

A story of college life with a tragic start and an atmosphere of solution-defying mystery.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ARTHUR STANTON, toastmaster of the freshman dinner at Old Orange College, is kidnaped by nine sophmores. They give him chloroform to keep him quiet, but are later horror-stricken to find him dead. He has been stabbed with a dagger of glass.

The nine sophomores are summoned to President Cady's house, where Coroner Jackson and Chief of Police Cottrell place them under arrest (they have already been suspended) for complicity in the murder of Stanton. Courtney fails to respond when his name is read by Cottrell. He has been seen leaving town, satchel in hand. A search in his rooms shows that his departure was hurried, and also results in the finding of the handle and upper portion of the glass dagger among his possessions. A telegram is sent him, and he appears on the following day from his native town, whither he had gone believing himself expelled from college by the rules already existing against hazing.

At the preliminary trial it is discovered that both Courtney and Stanton have been interested in Effie Hilton, a girl in the town, who, in a spirit of perversity, had lately refused Courtney's offer of marriage, telling him of her previous engagement to Stanton. Ormsby, one of the nine sophomores, gives the only direct evidence against Courtney, who refuses to say anything in his own defense to his lawyer, Professor Wilson, or to tell how the dagger came into his possession. The jury renders a verdict of guilty.

Professor Starling, amateur detective, undertakes to investigate the case. The clues lead to Effie Hilton, whose brother is in Ossington in search of Stanton's uncle. He discovers that the elder Stanton has been murdered in his apartments. He appears to have been shot from behind while standing at the telephone. Is there any connection between the murders?

## CHAPTER XIII.

### HOW THE WILL READ.

"DID you say that your name was Sherlock Holmes, professor?" asked Chief of Police Morton.

His tone was playful, but his voice had lost its sarcastic note. Professor Starling's skilful line of deduction attracted him and aroused his professional interest.

"Egad, professor," he went on, "it is too bad for the New York police that you did not choose to go on the force instead of wasting all your time teaching physics and the like to young gentlemen. What a detective you would have made."

"Are you serious?" asked the delighted professor.

"I certainly am, sir. First of all, I was prepared to scoff at you and your theories. You see, there are always so many people anxious to advise the police, and their suggestions are generally impossible.

"At first I was inclined to include you among them, especially when I learned you were a college professor; for who ever heard of a college professor turned detective? But now I begin to believe in you, and to think, by gad, that you may be right on this thing. What are you going to do next?"

"I would suggest," was the reply, "that we call up Mr. John D. Warren and find out if he held any conversation with the dead man over the 'phone last Tuesday. That may furnish us with a pretty good clue."

"But won't he be in his office now? That number is his home address," suggested Morton.

"No. I know Mr. Warren, you see. His office and house are both together. We ought to get him without any trouble. Here goes for an attempt, any way. Hello, Central, give me 652 Old Orange."

The professor waited, receiver at ear, for two minutes, while Hilton and the chief of police stood eagerly at his side.

**This story began in the June issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The three back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 30 cents.*

"Hello, Mr. Warren, is that you?" said the professor at length. "This is Professor Starling of Old Orange University. How do you do, sir? Very well, thank you. Say, Mr. Warren, I want to ask you something of considerable importance. Did you get a telephone call from Ossington last Monday or Tuesday night? What's that you say? You do remember receiving some sort of a call last Monday night? Was it from your client, old Daniel Stanton, can you recall?

"What's that? You say that on second thought it wasn't a call at all? Central called you up and then said 'Never mind.' Somebody in Ossington had been trying to get you, but she couldn't connect with them now that he had got you, eh? Do you remember what time this was, Mr. Warren? Ten fifteen P. M., you say? All right, sir. Very much obliged. Good-by."

"So that first clue fails," remarked the chief of police, as the professor replaced the receiver.

"Not at all, my dear Chief Morton. It has succeeded and furnished us with some valuable information. It is just as I thought.

"You understand what Warren said? Somebody in Ossington called him up at ten fifteen Monday night, but when he answered his 'phone the somebody had disappeared. You know what that means, chief. It means that old Stanton was shot down at ten fifteen Monday night as he was trying to telephone to Warren.

"Now, if we could get a little interview with the telephone girl who was on duty that evening, we might learn some more important facts."

"The telephone exchange is right across the street. We might step over there," suggested the chief, by this time thoroughly interested.

The trio made its way to the local exchange, where five girls and a manager attended to the telephone needs of Ossington.

"I want to talk to the young lady who had 'phone 5591 Ossington last Monday night," said the chief of police to the manager.

The latter did a minute's thinking.

"Last Monday night. Let me see," he said. "I think Miss Sherwood had that switchboard then. Oh, Miss Sherwood! Will you step this way, please."

An intelligent looking girl left the switchboard and came over to the manager.

"Miss Sherwood, this is Chief of Police Morton. He wishes to talk with you," said the manager, turning and leaving the girl alone with the three men.

"Miss Sherwood," began Morton, "did you answer 'phone 5591 last Monday night?"

"I did, sir," replied the girl timidly.

"What time did the party call? Can you remember?"

"Yes, sir. I do remember. He called only once that night, and that was a little after ten."

"Ha!" exclaimed the professor and Hilton together."

"Whom did he call?" continued the chief of police, in the same even tones.

"He called a number of Old Orange. I have forgotten exactly what number it was, sir."

"Was it 652 Old Orange?"

"I think it was, sir; but, of course, I can't be sure. We keep no record of numbers called, you know."

"Well, did he get his party, Miss Sherwood?"

"No, sir. He did not. That is a surprising thing, I think. He called up and spoke quickly in asking for the number, as if he were somewhat excited. Then when I got his number I could not get him to respond.

"You see, as soon as the Old Orange party answered 'Hello,' I called 'Hello' to the Ossington party. All I heard was a deafening crash, which almost burst my ear-drums, and after that I could get no answer and told the Old Orange party so. He grumbled at being called for nothing, and then rang off."

"How do you remember all this so well, Miss Sherwood? You must have answered many calls since then."

"Yes, sir; but I have a good memory. Besides, I had reason to remember this. You see, for some reason or other after I heard that crash through the 'phone and then couldn't get the party to an-

swer, the buzzer here kept buzzing, and I knew from that that he hadn't replaced the receiver on the hook. I kept trying to get him for the next ten minutes, for the signal kept ringing in my ears. At last I thought that he was playing a joke on me, and notified the manager.

"I think he sent somebody around to the party's office or house, whichever it is; but any way, the buzzer kept going for an hour or so after that, and finally I had to disconnect it to avoid being sent deaf or crazy."

"Thank you very much, Miss Sherwood. You are a very intelligent young lady."

As the three men were going out, the chief of police stopped a minute to ask the manager a question.

"Last Monday night you sent a man across the street to the Royalton bachelor apartments to find out what was the trouble with telephone 5591?"

"Yes, chief. I believe I did. The 'phone kept buzzing incessantly, according to Central, and we could get no call from the party, so we concluded the instrument must be out of order."

"Well, what did your messenger find when he went over there?"

"He couldn't find out anything. The janitor went up-stairs and knocked on the door of the room. 'The gentleman is out,' he told our man, 'so I can't let you in.' Of course, we couldn't break in without permission, so we temporarily disconnected the telephone."

"Well," said Professor Starling triumphantly, "what do you think now, chief? You heard the young lady say she heard a terrible crash. That must have been the pistol shot."

"I honestly believe so, too, professor. I now agree with your theory thoroughly."

"The only thing which puzzles me," admitted the professor, "is how the door came to be locked on the inside."

"That's easy," said the chief of police, smiling. "Any clever house-breaker can nip a key from the outside and turn it in the door. Burglars do that often to get into a house when the key has been left in the door, inside. Why could not this man reverse the order of things and turn the key after him to lock the door."

"Exactly, chief! Exactly! I am glad to see that you look at this thing in such a reasonable way," rejoined the professor.

"Well, what shall be our next move?" asked Morton, with the obedience of a child.

The chief of police had recognized that he had to deal with a mind superior to his own and was sensible enough to bow to it. In this respect the chief of police of Ossington was greatly superior to the chief of police of Old Orange.

"This is what I have been thinking the last few minutes," answered the professor. "Why did this old man have his will on the table at the time of his death, and why did he wish to call up his lawyer? Let us read the will carefully. I am more than inclined to believe that it might give us a clue to the identity of the assassin."

The three men went back to the apartments of the dead man.

The chief of police took the will and began to read it aloud.

It was not a long document. It was written on parchment and phrased in legal parlance. It described in detail the property of the dead man, and estimated his fortune at two million dollars.

Two hundred thousand dollars of this was settled on William Hilton ("son of my old friend").

"Lucky dog!" commented the professor, striking Billy cordially on the back.

But the clause of the will which strongly roused the interest of both the professor and Hilton ran as follows:

All of the remaining property I leave to my nephew and ward Arthur Stanton, on condition that he marry the daughter of my old friend Herbert Hilton.

I have set my heart on this match and sincerely hope that it will take place. Effie Hilton has signified her willingness to marry Arthur Stanton, and the opposition to my wishes can come therefore only from the said Arthur Stanton, who has thus far refused to give me any promise to marry the said Effie.

Now, therefore, be it understood that on the day of my death this will shall be read to the said Arthur Stanton.

If at the end of one year from the time

of my decease this marriage has not taken place, the remaining property shall then be disposed of as follows:

Five thousand dollars to my nephew Arthur Stanton, enough to keep him from immediate want and may he ever regret his disobedience; and the balance to my next of kin and second cousin Rudolph Perriam, provided the said Rudolph Perriam shall be willing to marry the said Effie Hilton and Effie Hilton shall be willing to marry the said Rudolph Perriam.

If Effie shall refuse to marry Rudolph Perriam, however, whom I personally do not much care for, then Effie, provided Arthur Stanton as aforesaid refuses to marry her, shall get all the remaining property save one hundred thousand dollars, which shall go to the said Rudolph Perriam. If, however, Rudolph Perriam refuses to marry Effie, then this last bequest shall also go to Effie.

"Rudolph Perriam!" exclaimed the professor in surprise. "Who is he, Hilton? I have never heard of him?"

"He is a second cousin of the dead man, as the will says. The old man never cared for him very much. I knew him slightly, and he was not a man of pleasing personality. I would not let Effie marry him for all of his relative's fortune.

"The last we saw of him was seven years ago, when he sailed for Paris. He was several years older than poor Arthur, and the two did not get along very well together. I never heard of him since he went abroad."

"Well, professor," broke in the chief of police, "you have heard the will. Now, who committed the murder? Rudolph Perriam?"

"Good God!" gasped Hilton. "It would have been to his interest to kill the old man, with such a will in his favor, wouldn't it? That is, provided Stanton refused to marry Effie and Rudolph knew about it."

The young fellow paused for a moment and then gave vent to a piercing cry:

"Professor," he fairly shrieked, "don't you see? If Stanton were dead, Perriam would get a chance to marry Effie and get all the money. Could it be that Perriam al o killed——"

The young man paused suddenly, for Professor Starling was looking at him with a gaze of profound sadness.

"My boy," he said gravely. "I know what you would say. That Perriam may have killed Stanton to prevent his marrying your sister. But you are all wrong? Can you bear bad news?—very bad news? It pains me deeply to have to tell you. Poor Arthur Stanton was murdered by your sister Effie."

"You lie!" cried Hilton beside himself, and struck the professor in the face.

The professor calmly wiped the blood from his nose.

"I forgive that blow; it does you credit under the circumstances," he said quietly. "But I deem it my duty to tell you. Hilton, so as to give your sister a chance to leave Old Orange before suspicion centers on her. It is certain that she killed poor Arthur. It may be, also, despite these evidences of a male visitor in this room, that she killed this old man. Remember, she would have benefited more by these two deaths than even Perriam. Don't strike me again. Let me explain."

And amid the sobs of the young man, the professor gave him in detail his deadly chain of circumstantial evidence which seemed to fasten the first crime on Effie Hilton.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A CHANGE OF MIND.

Effie Hilton was walking through High street, Old Orange, doing some shopping a day after her interview with Professor Starling, when she met Ormsby, who was about to pass with a salute.

"Mr. Ormsby," said the girl, "will you please wait a minute. I want to talk to you about something."

"Certainly," responded the sophomore politely, falling into step by her side. "Anything I can do for you, Miss Hilton? I shall be delighted, you know."

"You can, Mr. Ormsby. I want to ask your opinion about Bob—about Mr. Courtney. I want to ask if you really think that he committed the crime."

"I certainly do, without the shadow of a doubt."

"You are not prejudiced against poor Bob?"

"Not at all. I was always a good friend of his until I discovered that circumstances seemed to connect him with the murder of Stanton. Then, of course, I had no further use for him. It was a dastardly crime."

"And do you think that the jury will convict him of this murder?" asked Effie, with a shudder.

"I don't see that he has a ghost of a show of getting off. The evidence is black against him. If I were on that jury, I would not hesitate two minutes before bringing in a verdict of guilty."

"And is this opinion shared by the whole college?"

"Well, opinion in college is somewhat divided. The freshman class, to a man, think Courtney guilty. The sophomore class—his own class, you know—is split up over the question. One faction believes that Courtney never could have done such a thing, and believes implicitly in his innocence; the other faction reluctantly admits a belief in his guilt."

"And this half of the class which believes Courtney innocent—whom do they suspect, Mr. Ormsby."

"Well," replied the sophomore, with an embarrassed little laugh, "to tell you the truth, Miss Hilton, most of those fellows are inclined to suspect me; and your brother is among that number."

"You!" exclaimed Effie in astonishment.

"Yes, me! But I am not worrying very much about it, I assure you. I have an easy conscience, and that satisfies me. Of course, it is rather unpleasant to find yourself regarded with a considerable amount of suspicion by many of your former classmates. But then, you see, I am leaving Old Orange forever to-day, so what do I care."

"Leaving Old Orange, Mr. Ormsby? Why is that."

"Why, don't you know. The whole nine of us have been expelled for participating in the hazing of poor Stanton. You see, we had to wait in town until the coroner's jury exonerated us, but now we are all free to go, and you can imagine we do not relish the idea of staying here any longer than we can help, under the circumstances."

"What a shame!" declared Effie indignantly. "Do all the nine expelled sophomores leave to-day?"

"All except Courtney. You forget that he is one of the nine. I guess he will not be leaving just yet."

Effie shuddered again.

"Mr. Ormsby," she said, "will you take me to the prison. It isn't far from here, I believe. I want to see poor Bob in his cell. I must see him."

"I'll gladly escort you to the prison, Miss Hilton, but you will pardon me if I leave you at the door. Somehow, after the damaging evidence I had to give against Courtney at the inquest, I don't feel that it would be exactly in good taste to visit him in his cell. I don't think he would be very glad to see me, you know."

"As you wish," replied Effie. "I should prefer to be alone when I visit Bob, any way."

Ormsby escorted her to the jail and left her there.. A few minutes afterward Effie found herself in Courtney's gloomy cell.

"Gracious, Mr. Courtney," were her first words. "What a horrible place they keep you in!"

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"It isn't exactly a palace, I'll admit," he said, almost impatiently. "But prisoners can't be choosers."

"Bob," said Effie suddenly, "I have come here to tell you one thing, and that is that I do not believe you guilty of the crime with which they charge you."

"Thank you," replied Courtney, with just the faintest tinge of irony.

"And another thing, Bob," continued the girl. "I want to ask you what is the meaning of this sudden coldness toward me. What have I done to you that you should treat me so?"

"Let me rather ask, Miss Hilton," replied Courtney bitterly, "what is the meaning of this sudden warmth on your part toward me. Heaven knows I had good reason to believe that you did not care one atom for me a week ago. Why this sudden display of affection, published, too, in open court?

"Can it be that I have acquired a new interest in your eyes since I have become the villain of a murder story and the occupant of this commodious cell? Only last week you loved Stanton, and now, since I suppose you cannot be even for a few days without a beau, you have transferred your fickle affections to me. When, a few months from now, I am hanged, I suppose you will then turn to somebody else.

"Effie, my dear girl, please don't try your tricks on me. You were born without a heart. You are just a little flirt, and you know it. Why make all this display of affection for me now, when *I* know, and *you* know, that you don't mean a word of it."

There was bitterness in Courtney's tone, and the tears sprang to Effie's eyes.

"If you look at things that way, Mr. Courtney," she said sadly, "I suppose I can go no further. I came here to-day to put my reserve aside and tell you that I loved you. Of course, if you—if you think me a heartless flirt"—the girl stopped as though choking back a sob with great effort.

"Excuse me, Effie," said Courtney in a kinder tone. "I did not mean to be rude nor to hurt you. I am afraid this confinement here has roused the brute in me."

"But you don't believe that I love you!" cried Effie.

"No, Effie, I can't believe that. I wish to God I could," was the solemn reply.

"Do you believe that I know you to be innocent of this charge?"

"Yes, I believe that," he said in a peculiar tone.

When Effie had gone, after shaking his hand with a very dejected air, the prisoner said to himself:

"Good heavens! How false women are! What a clever actress that girl is, too."

When Effie reached home she found her brother waiting for her. His face was deathly white, his eyes wild and bloodshot, and he reeled like a drunken man.

"Good heavens, Billy, what is the matter?" cried the girl.

"Matter, Effie? Matter enough. Tell me quickly, and don't attempt to deceive me, are you or are you not guilty of the murder of Arthur Stanton?"

"What!" screamed the girl, her eyes flashing fire. "How dare you, my own brother, ask me a question like that?"

"Don't equivocate. Answer me that question, yes or no. Are you guilty of the murder of Arthur Stanton?" cried the frenzied Hilton, seizing her fiercely by the wrists.

"Let me go, Billy. How dare you? What does this drunken conduct mean? For shame," and Effie struggled to release her wrists from her brother's fierce grasp.

"I shall not let you go until you tell me the whole truth. Professor Starling told me everything. He has advised me to give you fair warning to leave the country before you are arrested. He told me how you killed Stanton, and how the knife was found in your room, and how Courtney stole the knife from your room to take suspicion away from you and place it on himself."

"What!" cried the girl. "Say that over again, Billy. What did Courtney do?"

"Courtney acted like the splendid fellow he is. Took the suspicion on himself to save you. But although you are my sister, I shall not save you if you are guilty. Tell me if you killed Stanton, and answer me directly."

Hilton's eyes were blazing like a tiger's. Effie, frightened at his fierceness, fell on her knees, her wrists still in his iron clutch.

"Billy! Billy!" she gasped. "Let me go. I am innocent."

"Innocent! Then how did the dagger come under your desk; tell me that?" cried her brother, releasing his hold on her wrists.

"I don't know. Please don't look so angry. You frighten me. I tell you I did not murder Arthur Stanton."

"Swear it!" cried the excited man.

"I swear it, Billy. God forgive you for suspecting your own sister."

"I am sorry, but I couldn't help it. Suspicion is strongly against you, Effie. If you deny that you did it, I suppose I will have to believe you, but for the

life of me I can't understand it. If the case ever gets to a jury, God help us, for I don't think that you stand a ghost of a chance of acquittal."

"And do you mean to tell me that Bob Courtney thinks I murdered Stanton?"

"He does. That is why he refuses to say a word to his lawyer and won't attempt to explain about that dagger. He is afraid of incriminating *you*."

"Oh, dear—oh, dear. Why didn't I know this before. No wonder poor Bob has been so cold and sarcastic toward me. And to think that he should have thought me capable of such a thing as that. That is more terrible than anything."

Two hours later, Professor Starling, walking hurriedly through High Street, Old Orange, met Professor Wilson and Chief Cottrell, both of them bearing on their faces evidences of great excitement.

"How are you, Wilson; how are you, chief," said Professor Starling affably. "Anything new to-day?"

"Yes, Starling. Something new and very important. You were right, after all, I am sorry to say. She has confessed."

"Confessed? Who has confessed?" asked the professor.

"Effie Hilton. Show him the letter, chief."

Cottrell handed the professor a letter.

The latter recognized the stationery and the faint odor of Jockey Club. It was a note from Effie Hilton, and it read:

CHIEF OF POLICE:

DEAR SIR—Please release Robert Courtney from prison. He is not guilty. He got the broken dagger from my room after the murder, and is assuming the blame to shield me. I am ready to give myself up any time you send a policeman around to the house for me, but please set Bob Courtney free immediately.

Yours respectfully,

EFFIE HILTON.

"What are you going to do now, chief?" asked Starling.

"I am going around to the house to see the girl. If she is telling the truth in that note, I am going to arrest her. Can't be too careful, you know, is my motto."

"Well, I can give you some more evidence against the girl, chief, as long as you have really made up your mind to act."

In as few words as possible the professor told his two surprised auditors every link of the chain of evidence he had forged against Effie."

"Good heavens, professor," exclaimed Cottrell excitedly, forgetting for the nonce his personal animosity toward Starling. "Have you that handkerchief in your possession?"

"I have."

"And this witness who overheard this quarrel. Can she be reached at any time?"

"She can."

"Then that settles it. We will go to the Hilton house at once."

"What for, chief, may I ask?"

"What for? We are going to arrest that girl, sir, before another hour has passed. This will be a great feather in my cap."

"I wouldn't make that arrest, chief, if I were you. I'd let the feather go for another time," remarked the professor quietly.

"You wouldn't? And why not, pray?"

"Because, as a matter of fact, you will be arresting an innocent person."

"An innocent person. You don't mean to say that you don't believe the girl guilty on that evidence and her confession besides?"

"I emphatically believe that she is not guilty."

"Then you have absolutely changed your mind since yesterday, Starling," broke in Professor Wilson.

"I know I have, Wilson. Important discoveries have been made since yesterday. We have discovered that on the same night young Stanton was murdered, his uncle and guardian was also murdered at Ossington, only a hundred miles from here. Both those murders were committed by the same hand, and that hand was not a woman's at all; it was a man's. The man who committed the two murders was Rudolph Perriam,

second cousin of old Stanton, and chief beneficiary of his will."

## CHAPTER XV.

### PROOFS.

To say that Chief Cottrell and Professor Wilson were astonished at Starling's announcement would be to put it very mildly.

"The uncle murdered, too!" gasped Cottrell. "No wonder we didn't hear from him at the inquest."

"Tell us all you know, Starling," begged Professor Wilson.

"I will. Briefly stated, it is just this. I went to Ossington last night because of information I had received that old Stanton had committed suicide.

"When I got there I found that there were strong evidences of murder instead of self-destruction. Even the police now agree with me in that respect, Mr. Cottrell, so there is no doubt about the matter.

"The old man was shot from the rear in his bachelor apartments while he was about to telephone to his lawyer. On the table we found a will drawn up by this lawyer, and bequeathing all the property of the old man, a matter of two million dollars, to one Rudolph Perriam, in the event of the latter agreeing to marry Effie Hilton; but with one important condition."

"And that condition was?" interposed Wilson eagerly.

"That Effie, instead of marrying Perriam, did not marry Arthur Stanton, who was to have first choice. In that event, nearly all the property was to go to Arthur."

"I see," broke in Wilson. "And if Arthur were killed, he, of course, could not marry Effie, and Perriam would get his chance, provided the will were not changed."

"Exactly. And by killing the old man at the same time as the young man the will could not be changed."

"Just so. That would seem to fasten the crime on Perriam. But wouldn't suspicion on those grounds, and considering the other evidence we have, point just as clearly to Effie?"

"That was my first thought, but I have been working hard on this thing in Ossington all day, and I have learned some important facts, which convince me that Perriam and not Effie was the assassin in both cases."

"What are these important clues?" asked Cottrell.

"First, that Perriam was seen in Old Orange at the time and hour of the murder of young Stanton."

"Good. What else?"

"Second, that he bought a cigar near the railway depot of a brand sold only by that store. The half of that cigar, with the label on, was found in the rooms of the old man in Ossington."

"Excellent. Any more reasons?"

"Yes. Third, just after the time the murder was committed in Old Orange, Perriam took the train for Ossington, and the station agent here recognized him. He saluted him, and Perriam, who had changed somewhat since he was last here, seven years ago, pretended that he did not know the old train agent, and that the latter must have made a mistake in thinking he knew him.

"A man answering his description got off the train at Ossington not two hours later.

"A tenant on the same floor as old man Stanton in the bachelor apartments at Ossington noticed a man answering Perriam's description knocking on the door of old man Stanton's apartment at about ten o'clock that night. The murder of the old man occurred at ten fifteen."

"Looks like a strong case," commented Wilson. "Anything else, professor."

"Yes. When the murderer left, he left behind him a glove, taking instead the glove of his victim, which did not mate with his own.

"At about ten-thirty a man answering Perriam's description, the same man who had been seen at the Ossington depot an hour previously, entered the station and took the through express to New York. While he was waiting on the platform for his train, the station agent at Ossington saw this man try to put on a pair of gloves, then disgustedly throw the gloves away, uttering an oath.

"The ticket agent afterward picked up the gloves and discovered that they were both for the same hand, and that that was the reason the man had discarded them. The ticket agent happened to have those gloves by him today. When we examined them we found that one of them was the mate of the one left by mistake in the room of the dead man, and bearing a Paris trademark."

"Good heavens! It certainly looks as if you have made out a clear case against Perriam, Starling. I congratulate you," said Professor Wilson enthusiastically.

"Yes," grunted Cottrell. "He has made out a good case against Perriam, so far as the murder in Ossington is concerned. The only reason he has to suspect Perriam of the crime in Old Orange is that he was seen here before he took the train to Ossington. Now, I am still inclined to suspect the girl of this crime here, no matter who killed the old man in Ossington."

"You will alter your opinion when I tell you of my last and most important clue," observed Professor Starling quietly.

"And that is?" asked the lawyer eagerly.

"I providentially ran across a man in Ossington to-day who came from New York last Monday.

"That man happened to be staying at our hotel in Ossington, and by a lucky stroke of fortune I chanced to be sitting next to him at the table today when he was telling a neighbor of a curious weapon he had seen.

"'This weapon was a dagger of glass, with a thin spear of glass for a blade, which you break off short in your victim's body,' the man was saying.

"'Pardon me,' I interrupted eagerly. 'Where did you see this curious dagger?'

"The man answered: 'I saw it coming from New York on the express last Monday. A man sitting opposite to me had it. He said that he always carried it with him as a weapon of defense. He handed it over to me, and I examined it carefully. It was a deadly weapon.'

"The man described the man in the car to me as best he could.

"According to the description he gave me, the man with the dagger was Perriam."

*(To be continued.)*

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# A MOUNTAIN MUTINY.

BY ELLIOT BALESTIER.

A tale of Tennessee, with a love affair in the background and a feud very much to the fore.

"THEN you think there is no hope for me, Marjorie?"

"I know there is none," replied the girl. "Besides, do you think it is fair or honorable, Jack, to press me so when you know I am engaged to another man?"

"But you are not really engaged, Marjorie. I know there was a boy-and-girl attachment between you and Phil Lavin, but your father would never allow such a thing as an engagement; besides, he's your cousin—and—oh, hang it, you *couldn't* marry him, any way."

"Indeed! May I ask why not?"

"Because—well, in the first place, he isn't good enough for you."

"Oh, and I presume *you* are?" said Marjorie dryly.

"No, I am not, either, but I should hate to see any girl I cared about marry *him*."

"Really?" answered the other, rising stiffly. "I thought you were a gentleman, Mr. Townsend. Is it the custom among such to seek to win a girl from the man to whom she is betrothed by insinuations against him behind his back, especially when that man is considered good enough to be found at your club?"

"Oh, I say, Marjorie, don't——"

"Listen to me, please. Philip Lavin and I were brought up together; his

mother died at his birth, and his father shortly after, and he lived at our home until he went North to college. I loved him then, and before he went away I promised to wait for him. He was dependent on my father and his own efforts, and he would not ask me to marry him until he was independent.

"That was eight years ago. While he was at college I saw him only during the summer vacations; while he was at the Tec. I saw him only a day or so at long intervals, for he spent his vacations working as an engineer's assistant, to gain practical experience. A week after we came North you sent him to the Townsend lands in Tennessee."

"I sent him? I had nothing to do with it, Marjorie. Listen——"

"He is there now," she continued, ignoring the interruption, "in that wild country, with the wilder mountaineers, working—for me. I have had ample time and opportunity to change my mind or forget him, but I loved him then, he has my promise, and if I do not marry him I shall certainly marry no one else. Good-morning."

"Marjorie, wait a minute; listen to me——"

But she was gone, and Jack sat staring miserably at the agitated portières through which she had swept without so much as a glance at him. He waited a few minutes, hoping she would return, then in a dogged sort of way he found his hat and coat and left the house, wandering slowly and aimlessly along the streets until the roar of the elevated over his head recalled his scattered senses.

"Jack Townsend," he exclaimed, squaring his shoulders, and walking rapidly toward the nearest station, "you are two things. First, you are an egregious ass, and, second, you are by way of being a confounded bounder. You to the tall timbers—I need excitement. I'll go down to the office and touch the governor for a hundred."

## II.

"It's extremely curious, gentlemen—*devlish* curious. I don't understand it at all."

Senator Lavin, President of the Tennessee Coal, Iron & Lumber Co., laid down the letter he had been reading, and surveyed his associates (Judge Cleyburn, Secretary and Treasurer, and the Hon. John A. Townsend, counsel of the company) with a puzzled and somewhat worried frown.

"There is not a man in Tennessee who would dare lay a hand on a Lavin—not one, sir. They all know me too well—and Colonel Jim's opinion of me."

"But they might not have known who he was," objected the judge. "They don't shoot strangers unless they know them to be revenue officers. Phil would simply have told them his name."

"But if they did not believe him?"

"Men do not lie in the mountains, sir," remarked the Senator.

"If it were any one but Phil, I might suspect he'd gone off on a spree somewhere, but that fellow is so dashed temperate."

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Townsend, "the fact remains that he's been missing ten days. Carter should have notified us at once, by the way. The question now is—what's to be done?"

"Precisely what I was thinking," interrupted a voice from the doorway. "What's to be done? I presume, as chief engineer and a director of this company, I may come in."

"Come in, Jack, come in," answered the Senator heartily. "You're just the one we want to see."

"What's the row?" asked Jack, dropping into a chair beside his father. "You all look as gloomy as if we had lost our character."

For answer the Senator tossed a letter across the table.

"Just read that," he said. "It's in your department."

"And read it aloud," added the judge.

Jack glanced from one to the other, and at the letter lying on the table before him.

He saw it was from Carter, the company's factor at Rogersville. "In his department" he was the chief engineer—in name, any way. Phil Lavin was at Rogersville.

He picked up the letter, and after studying it carefully for a moment, began to read slowly:

"THE HON. JOHN A. TOWNSEND:

"DEAR SIR—I am sorry to inform you that Mr. Philip Lavin, who has been making his headquarters with me, has been missing for a week to-day. He left here ten days ago, accompanied by two chain-men, to run the line over Lost Mountain. It was his intention to go entirely over, striking the railroad at Jonesboro, thence returning by train.

"Three days ago the two chain-men came back on foot. They had all started on horseback, intending to stay the night at Bush Miller's place, leave their horses there for him to send back, and push on over the mountains on foot in the morning. This they did. The second night they camped in a deserted hut far up the mountain. In the morning Mr. Lavin was gone.

"The chain-men, who are perfectly trustworthy and honest, declare that they saw no one after leaving Miller's shack, and that they heard nothing during the night. Mr. Lavin's surveying instruments and the shotgun, which, besides their revolvers, was their only firearm, were undisturbed.

"They waited for a while, supposing that he would return, but when an hour or more had passed they began a search —one staying at the shack, while the other hunted in every direction, shouting and firing his revolver. Late in the afternoon they gave it up and made the best of their way to Miller's, who loaned them horses to get home.

"Knowing that Mr. Lavin was too old a woodsman to lose his way, and more than ordinarily capable of taking care of himself, besides being rather sensitive of interference in his affairs, and also remembering your warnings as to secrecy, I have done nothing so far—and will await instructions from you.

"Yours respectfully,
"WM. MARTIN CARTER."

In the moment of silence that followed Jack did some very rapid thinking.

Marjorie had told him, and evidently believed, that *he* had sent Phil to Tennessee, and sent him knowing that two other engineers of the company had lost their lives there. It was untrue and unjust, but that she believed it made it almost a fact.

Besides, she loved Phil—his death would mean terrible unhappiness for her. On the other hand, time might soften—she might—no! The question must be decided with Marjorie left out.

What would he do then? Would he merely as Phil's friend——

"Well?" asked the judge.

Jack rose, pacing the room in short, quick strides.

"There are so many things that might have happened," he said at last. "We can eliminate the possibility of his being lost, and the Senator is equally sure no one would kill him. There are only three things left. He may have gone away himself, which is most improbable. He may have met with an accident and lain unconscious while the men searched, but it is scarcely probable that two experienced woodsmen, knowing the country well, should not have found trace of him in an all-day hunt."

"Unless some one else found him first," suggested Mr. Townsend.

"True. It seems to me that either Phil is lying, badly injured, at some mountaineer's cabin, or he has been made a prisoner and is held against his will."

"They wouldn't dare hold him," roared the Senator. "They wouldn't dare touch *my* nephew, not a man of them, sir."

"Except Colonel Jim," said Jack dryly.

"Colonel Jim! He owes his life to me, sir; he loves me like a brother. I tell you, sir, my kin are his kin. He'd shoot the man with his own hand who harmed them, sir."

"Very likely that is true," interrupted Mr. Townsend pacifically; "but the question is, what's to be done?"

"There is but one thing to be done," said Jack quietly. "We sent him to Tennessee; he is there on our business. Aside from the fact that he is our president's nephew, it is our duty to see that his safety is assured. As the Senator says, the matter is in my department. I shall make a personal investigation."

Late that night, Marjorie Lavin, weeping and praying, torn by conflicting

emotions, read and re-read the short note from the man who had gone amidst great dangers to find her lover; and Jack Townsend, could he have known her thoughts, would have carried a far higher head than he did as the express hurled him southward through the darkness.

III.

"Halt! You-all."

The voice was soft, and the last two words seemed almost apologetic, but there was no mistaking the intention of the long, lean individual who suddenly stepped into the path, for the blue barrel of the Winchester was held at a decidedly business-like angle.

Jack Townsend and his companion halted with a jerk.

"Halt!" repeated the stranger unnecessarily.

"'The dust-brown ranks stood fast,'" added Jack, his hands elevated skyward. "Well, my friend, we've halted; what can we do for you?"

The man looked them over for a moment with a pair of fishy blue eyes that were almost mask-like in their expressionlessness, then, apparently satisfied that they were harmless so far as weapons went, dropped the Winchester carelessly over his left arm and ordered them to precede him along a narrow path that led almost perpendicularly up the mountain.

"Oh, but I say, look here," began Jack. "What do you want with us? I'm only a poor harmless camera fiend seeking what I may devour, and this is a chap I hired to guide my faltering footsteps. We don't—oh, very well," he concluded, as the rifle swung apparently unintentionally to bear on him. "All roads lead to Rome, they say," and led the way briskly up the path, cheerfully whistling "The Man Behind the Gun."

For nearly two hours they followed the path, which was really only the rocky bed of some long-dried watercourse, now winding through dense underbrush, then pitching suddenly down some steep declivity into a swift-running brook, only to rise again higher and steeper and more rocky. But always it was up! up! up! the forest becoming denser and the scene wilder and more beautiful at every step.

Once Jack stopped short and turned with an exclamation to his guide, but the fishy blue eyes were watching him suspiciously and he quickly went on. But every sense was now alert, for off to the right he had seen a giant pine, and it bore the broad double blaze that Philip sometimes used as a temporary boundary mark. He had no doubt that they were going over the same ground that Philip had traveled two weeks before.

"Ever been up as high as this before?" he asked the guide carelessly, but the fellow's only answer was a grunt that might have been either "yes" or "no."

Twice more Townsend caught glimpses of the telltale blaze, and then without warning they suddenly emerged upon a small clearing. On the farther side, half buried in the underbrush, stood a tumble-down hut. From its appearance it might have been deserted for years, but two men, each with a Winchester across his knees, sat upon the doorstep.

Jack shot a questioning glance at his guide, and the man answered by an almost imperceptible nod. This, then, was the deserted shack from which Philip Lavin had disappeared. Townsend's spirits rose, and he advanced to the hut with a light step. The spirit of the chase was beginning to lay its hold upon him.

It was evident that they were expected, for a fire was burning in the wide chimney-place and preparations for supper were already under way, but if Jack had hoped to gain any information from his hosts he was disappointed. To all his advances they returned a blank stare, and with the exception of a short, whispered colloquy between his captor and the new men, they might all have been dumb.

Jack ate his supper, smoked a pipe or two, and finally, worn out by the long walk and the excitement of the day, stretched himself upon a pile of pine boughs and skins and slept. When he awoke, only the two strangers were in the hut; his guide and their captor of

the night before had disappeared. But, realizing the futility of asking questions, he made a valiant attempt to eat the breakfast prepared for him, and then, with one man leading and the other behind him, the weary march was resumed.

The path was of much the same character as the one he had already traveled, rugged and steep, and the surrounding forest wilder and even more primeval, but he looked in vain for the broad double blaze that had cheered him the day before.

At last, after two hours' walk, or rather scramble, the leader paused, and, waiting until Townsend came up, suddenly pinioned his arms to his sides while his companion deftly secured them; then, with a large and not overclean bandana, they bound his eyes. Jack protested fluently and vigorously, but the men were imperturbable, and at last, with his usual philosophy, he gave up gracefully and allowed himself to be led forward.

From this on the character of the path changed: it had been steep before, but now it seemed perpendicular. Half a dozen times they left Jack standing helpless and alone, and at first he thought himself deserted till he felt them grasp him from above and he was dragged bodily up the face of the rock.

At last, when Townsend felt his strength nearly exhausted, the men stopped, unbound his arms and removed the bandage.

They were standing on the edge of a considerable clearing, and in the middle loomed a rather large log-house and several smaller outbuildings. Two men, the ever-present Winchesters over their arms, paced slowly back and forth—the one before the door of the house and the other outside the stockade that surrounded it—and Jack caught a glimpse of another man, evidently another sentry, at the rear.

Their appearance was the signal for a small army of dogs to charge down upon them, baying and barking, but Jack's captors silenced them with a word and they contented themselves with growling and sniffling suspiciously at his leggings.

As they approached, he had time to notice the orderly air of the place, in such marked contrast to the slovenly appearance of most of the mountain homes he had seen. A man was working in a small garden and another was watering a horse near one of the smaller buildings, and in a window was a girl, and an uncommonly pretty one. But it was not the girl's beauty that was so surprising—many mountain girls are pretty when young, even in the calico bags that seem to constitute their entire wardrobe—but her dress, a neat, well-fitting white lawn, with a bunch of mountain flowers at her belt.

Jack nearly stopped in amazement, but at that moment there appeared in the doorway the most magnificent specimen of physical manhood that Townsend had ever seen. The man must have been nearly eighty, for his long hair and patriarchal beard were snow white. But there was no shrinking of the massive frame, no stoop of the square shoulders diminished by the fraction of an inch the six feet four of his height, and even at that distance Jack could feel the piercing keenness of the clear gray eyes that looked at him from beneath the broad, almost noble brow.

"There's only one man like that in this country," he exclaimed to himself. "If that isn't Colonel Jim Marston, I'm a Dutchman; and the girl is his granddaughter—I've heard of her. If Phil is up here—" and he finished the sentence with a low whistle.

Colonel Jim bowed courteously as Townsend approached.

"Who are you, sir, and what do you want here?"

He asked the question simply and in a tone that robbed the words of their abruptness.

"We see few strangers here, sir." The accent was distinctly Southern, but it was the accent of a refined and educated Southern gentleman, not of an ordinary mountaineer.

Townsend glanced at the camera slung over his shoulder, and thought of the plausible little fiction he had so carefully prepared, but somehow the words refused to be uttered. It did not seem right, and for the first time he

realized the full meaning of Senator Lavin's remark, "Men do not lie in the mountains, sir."

And, he added mentally, men certainly did not lie to Colonel Jim Marston. Jack took his courage in both hands.

"My name is John A. Townsend, Jr.," he said, meeting Colonel Jim's eyes squarely. "I am chief engineer of the Tennessee Coal, Iron & Lumber Company, for which my father is counsel. Two of our engineers have been killed in these mountains, one came back desperately wounded, and two have been frightened away by threatening letters. Two weeks ago, Mr. Philip Lavin, the nephew of the president of our company, disappeared. I am here, sir, to find him, or, if he be dead, to recover his body and see that his murderers are punished."

It was a bold stroke, and Townsend fully realized it. He was speaking to the practical king of the men to whose land the company claimed ownership—men to whom the shooting of an enemy meant no more than the killing of the rat that preyed on their stores, and who undoubtedly would regard him as rather more obnoxious than a revenue officer, their natural and legitimate foe. He was far from feeling the confidence that his bearing expressed. Colonel Jim's eyes, which had been drawn together in a rather ominous frown, lighted up somewhat, and his lips curved into something very like a smile as he extended his hand.

"I'm right pleased to make your acquaintance, sir," he said cordially, crushing Townsend's fingers in an iron grip. "Come into the house, sir."

The girl, who had been sitting at the window, arose as they entered, and the colonel took her by the hand with old-fashioned courtesy.

"Virginia," he said, "allow me to make you acquainted with our guest, Mr. Townsend, of New York. My granddaughter, sir — Miss Virginia Marston."

Townsend bowed gravely. He thought the girl seemed somewhat startled when his name was mentioned, but if so she quickly recovered herself, for she gave him her hand and a few low-voiced words of welcome in a most self-possessed manner, and after a moment excused herself gracefully and left the house.

As soon as they were alone, the colonel carefully closed the door, and, standing with his back to the huge open fireplace, regarded his guest with a countenance both quizzical and stern.

Jack waited patiently for him to speak.

"I am trying to decide, sir," he began at length, "whether I have youthful recklessness or dare-devil courage to thank for your presence here."

"If you ask me, sir," replied Jack, "I should suggest you thank the two gentlemen who came with me and another one who eloped with my guide last night."

A rather grim smile curved the old man's lips, but almost instantly faded.

"You have been frank with me, sir; I like frankness. I will be equally so with you. You are looking for Philip Lavin; you may consider your search ended, sir."

"You mean you know what has become of him?" cried Jack.

"He is here, sir."

"Here! Is he all right? How on earth did he get here?"

"He is well, sir. He came here by the same path you did."

"He is a prisoner, then?"

"For his own safety, sir, as you are."

Townsend walked to the window and looked out.

The trackless forest girdled him like prison walls; a hundred feet from the door the sentry leaned silently on his gun. Over those trees, a hundred miles or less, was civilization—railroads and telegraph, policemen and courts of law.

Here—the primeval forest, primeval men; the only modern thing about them, he reflected, was their firearms.

He turned suddenly.

"Is there really no law in Tennessee, Colonel Marston?"

"There is law in Tennessee, Mr. Townsend—too much law—but in the mountains, sir, there is only justice."

Jack was silent, and the old man continued:

"More than two hundred years ago, sir, a king of England granted to a subject a tract of waste land in his new possessions, America—a tract, sir, of many millions of acres, in what is now Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. That is what you now call the Townsend Lands. That subject, sir, did not leave England, and when his grandchildren did the grant was almost forgotten and they settled in New England.

"But others did come, sir — hardy men from different counties; men who cleared the forests and cultivated the soil; men who mined the coal and iron they found beneath it; men who built towns and cities. My people are the descendants of these men, sir. That is their title to the land.

"You all say they are ignorant, lawless squatters. They *are* ignorant, sir; none of them ever heard of James II; most of them never heard of England or the War of Independence. They know their mountains and their wants; they live as their fathers and grandfathers lived and ask no more. There are cities and towns on your land, sir; they are yours by grant of James II. Why don't you take them, sir? There are coal and iron mines on your land, sir, worked by rich corporations; they are yours by grant of James II. Why don't you take them, sir? Why do do you come to my people here in the mountains?

"You offer them money for their land, sir. If it is yours, you should have it and rent besides. It is not your money my people want, but the homes of their fathers.

"I am an old man, sir, but rather than see this injustice done, I would kill you and Philip Lavin—yes, and Senator Vance Lavin himself, friend though he is. He saved my life at Gettysburg; he nursed me like a woman after Fredericksburg; I owe what I am to his father, for it was he who took me—a young ignorant mountain boy—and gave me an education. But not even for him would Jim Marston sacrifice his people."

The old man paused, his giant frame quivering with the intensity of his emotion, while Jack, awed and amazed, sat watching him with growing admiration.

Colonel Jim had put the matter in an entirely different light. He had come there to brave a lot of ignorant squatters and cut-throats, but he was beginning to realize that they regarded him and his eminently respectable associates in much the same light, and what was worse, he was bound to admit that they even had a fair share of justice on their side.

There was an evident accession of respect in his voice as he asked: "May I inquire, sir, your intention as regards Phil and myself?"

"Certainly, sir; I shall write to Senator Lavin to-night, explaining the situation as I see it, and I shall ask him, sir, to withdraw his claims to my people's lands.

"You have several thousand acres of rich coal and iron lands besides these of which you have undisputed possession. The loss of these would not be vital."

"Will you tell him that Phil and I are safe? They were all very much worried about Phil."

"Most certainly, sir," replied the colonel with emphasis.

"Then I am to understand that we are hostages."

"Yes, sir—hostages. I think, sir, you will find Philip at the stable over yonder, and remember, sir, I consider you as prisoners of war on parole."

"On parole, sir," replied Jack, gripping the hand extended to him.

## IV.

"JACK! Where in the name of all that's wonderful did you drop from?"

Phil Lavin dropped the halter of the horse he was leading, and, grasping Townsend's hand, held on to it as though he thought the other might disappear as unexpectedly as he had arrived.

"Oh! We heard from Carter that you had evaporated into thin air, so as I didn't have anything particular to do, I thought I would take a run down here and look you up."

"But how did you get to this hole in the ground?"

"By the simple process of keeping three feet ahead of a gun," replied Jack.

Philip swore softly.

"I suppose the folks were worried about me," he said, "and now that you are in the same boat there'll be the deuce to pay."

"They were a bit anxious about you, but Carter doesn't know I'm here, and they will not expect to hear from me for some time. Besides, the colonel sends a letter to your uncle to-night, demanding the withdrawal of the company's claims as the price of our release."

"But that is plain blackmail," exclaimed Phil angrily. "It's outlawry, holding us for ransom like any brigand of the Spanish mountains."

"Colonel Jim regards it as legitimate warfare. He considers us hostages—prisoners of war subject to exchange."

"Yes, Colonel Jim, confound him, considers us prisoners of war, and under the circumstances it is a very good thing to be considered, but the gang of slab-sided brigands that he calls his people call us something very different and are aching to treat us as such."

"As what?"

"Spies," replied Phil gravely.

Jack whistled softly.

"Can Colonel Jim hold the men?" he asked.

"He thinks he can. I am not so sure. Captain Hatfield has been growling a bit when Colonel Jim wasn't around. He is a son of old Anse Hatfield, you know—Devil Anse, of Hatfield-McCoy fame. He's always been jealous of the colonel's power, any way."

Jack linked his arm in Phil's, and they walked slowly toward the gate of the stockade that surrounded the house.

"Are there any bounds?" he asked. "Can we go out?"

"Oh, there are no bounds but your own common sense; you can go out if you like, but I shouldn't advise it."

"Why not?"

"Well, accidents will happen, you know," replied Phil grimly. "If one of Colonel Jim's people should mistake you for a bear I dare say he'd feel very sorry."

"Look here, Phil," said Townsend gravely, "something has got to be done; this position can't last."

"It can't. There's only one thing, Jack. We've got to get out of here."

"Yes, we have, but unfortunately there are two rather serious obstacles. In the first place we can neither of us fly, and in the second place we have given our parole."

"Parole! Do you think that we are bound to respect a parole given to a common blackmailer?"

"Colonel Jim is not a common blackmailer, Phil. He has accepted our word in good faith, and we are bound to keep it until he or circumstances release us. But that aside, if we succeeded in escaping from here it's nearly a two-days' trip to Rogersville."

"It's not," snapped Lavin. "Any of these men could get up here from Rogersville on foot in an afternoon, and they could go back in three or four hours—it's mostly sliding. With a horse you can do it in half the time. They brought us around in a circle to deceive us."

"Who told you that?" asked Jack eagerly.

Phil hesitated.

"Well, Virginia did, but she didn't appreciate what she was doing. Wait till I tie up this horse."

Jack sat on the edge of the log trough and pondered deeply, but look at the situation as he would, he saw little encouragement. The two or three plans he formed all ended in that insurmountable "if."

When Lavin returned he was still buried in thought.

"Well?" said Phil, after watching him for a moment.

"Anything but," replied Jack. "I've been thinking it over, old man, and I have evolved a plan, or rather a line of action. In the first place, the colonel's letter goes this afternoon. This is Tuesday. If, as you say, a man can reach Rogersville in a few hours, it should catch the night mail and be in New York some time Thursday. Giving them a day to collect their scattered senses, we would probably get the answer here Monday."

"And what then?"

"You know as well as I do what the answer will be. The directors will not

be blackmailed into giving up property worth several millions—certainly not—to save a couple of unimportant engineers a possible attack of lead poisoning.

"If they did, the stockholders would set up a howl of fraud and fake that would drive them to Canada.

"Undoubtedly," continued Jack, "but in the mean time something may turn up. Your uncle or my father may hit on something. In all probability, my father will advise doing what all corporations do when they are getting the worst of a fight — declare a truce and arbitrate. Even if the worst comes to the worst, and the answer is a flat refusal, it is unlikely that Colonel Jim will shoot us out of hand. He would be killing his power. My idea is to wait for the verdict, then, if conditions are unchanged, withdraw our paroles and put up the best scrap we can."

V.

THE days passed quietly and not unpleasantly, considering the circumstances, nothing occurring to remind the two young men of their unpleasant position until Friday afternoon, when Captain Hatfield, accompanied by two ruffianly looking mountaineers, came up and demanded to see Colonel Jim.

"Look-er here," they said gruffly as the old man came out. "We-all's right tired er waitin' round doin' nothin'. We-all want to know what you-all's goin' to do."

"I've explained that to you before, sir," replied the colonel with much patience.

"These gentlemen are prisoners of war, sir. I intend to exchange them for our land."

"What fo' you-all treat Yankee spies like near kin?" asked Hatfield doggedly.

"You-all look here," cried Colonel Jim, relapsing in his rage into a dialect almost as pronounced as the mountaineer's. "Ah treat guests in ma house as Ah please, sir."

"We-all say shoot 'em. We-all——"

"You-all git out chere," roared the colonel threateningly. "You pull trigger on ma guests an' you-all 'll answer to me, Captain Hatfield. You-all get out chere befo' I thro' you out, sir."

The men slunk away, muttering sullenly, while Colonel Jim, trembling with rage, strode into the house.

The next afternoon the messenger who had been sent to Rogersville returned with a letter. Colonel Jim read it with a pleased and somewhat triumphant smile.

"Your father, sir," he said to Townsend, "and your uncle, sir,"—with a bow to Phil—"are at Rogersville. They desire me to meet them there, sir, under a flag of truce, to discuss the situation. I shall leave directly. My nephew, Mr. Caspar Marston, will be in command. Your uncle, sir, also desires me to hand you this letter"—and he went out.

"Uncle Vance knows his man," remarked Phil, noticing that the letter was unsealed.

"Hi, Jack," he added, laughing excitedly, "Uncle Vance is It all right. Listen to this:

"DEAR PHIL:

"Townsend and I are here at Rogersville. We received Colonel Jim's letter Thursday P. M. and immediately chartered a special and came down. Of course it's impossible even to present Colonel Jim's proposition to the company. We are acting privately. If it comes to a fight, my boy, remember you are Fighting Phil's son, but I have no fear of either you or Jack. I wish it were possible to hold the colonel here, but I can't play tricks on Jim Marston.

"Your uncle,

"VANCE LAVIN."

The next afternoon dragged by slowly enough. Colonel Jim could scarcely return before morning, and in the mean time what was going on down there in Rogersville? They felt much as prisoners must feel after the jury which is to decide their fate goes out.

Night came on—a cloudless, perfect October night—and the full hunter's moon rose like a giant ball of red fire over the mountains.

The usual hour for retiring passed unnoticed. The air seemed charged with excitement; Jack felt it with a sensation of exhilaration as he paced restlessly around the room. Phil, however,

seemed moody and depressed as he sat by the fire talking in low tones to Virginia.

There was no other sound save the soft footsteps of the sentry, pacing patiently outside the door. Suddenly from far down the mountain came the crack of a rifle, another and a third; then all was silent. The footsteps of the sentry ceased.

Phil leaped to his feet and all stood listening intently. But no further shots came. Five minutes passed, and they heard the sharp challenge of the sentry outside the stockade. A moment later the door was thrown violently open, and a man, hatless and coatless, his face scratched and bleeding, staggered in. His right hand still grasped his rifle; his left was pressed to his side, the blood slowly oozing through his fingers.

He was the fishy-eyed man who had first captured Townsend. For a moment he stood swaying from side to side, blinded by the light of the fire and candles, then seeing Virginia he took a step toward her and gasped: "Captain Hatfield comin'—shoot Yanks."

The rifle slipped from his grasp and his knees bent under him. "Twenty—thirty," he added, and sank to the floor.

The three looked at one another in dismay, Virginia clinging to Phil's arm.

Caspar Marston, who had entered immediately behind the man and heard his message, sprang to his side.

"He's badly hurt," he said, "but may pull through."

He signaled to two of the men who had entered with him, and they carried the wounded man to a bunk, where they busied themselves over him.

Townsend began to speak, but Virginia interrupted him.

"Phil, Phil," she cried excitedly, "you must escape at once. They haven't surrounded the house yet. Get out the back window and over the stockade. You can get to Rogersville that way."

"But we don't know the way," objected Phil.

"Caspar will go with you; he'll show you. Hurry, Caspar, hurry!"

But Marston did not move.

"I can't go," he said quietly.

"Caspar! Why not? They won't hurt me. They dare not. You'll go, Caspar?"

"No," he replied shortly.

"Then I'll go myself if you're afraid."

"I'm right sorry, Virginia (he didn't look it), but you-all can't go, neither. We-all 'll fight for 'em, but they stay here"

For a moment the girl seemed stunned, then without a word she turned and went into her own room. By this time all the men had come in and gone quietly to work to prepare for the defense.

The heavy oaken door and loophole window-shutters were closed and barred, cartridges were laid out on the table, together with some extra rifles.

Jack noticed with satisfaction that the men worked like well-drilled soldiers. They were eight in all, including Marston, and Jack and Phil made ten. Caspar turned to them as soon as Virginia's door closed.

"If there's any of you-all who don't want to obey Colonel Jim's orders, you better say so right now, while there's time to get out."

There was no answer and he continued: "Fo' of you go up in the loft and take the loopholes on the fo' sides. Shoot every man that shows above the stockade."

The four men silently obeyed.

"Can you-all shoot?"

"I can shoot well enough," replied Lavin. "Mr. Townsend is a crack."

"Mr. Townsend, you guard the window to the left of the do'. Bill takes the right. Cal, you take the window in Colonel Jim's room. Mr. Lavin, you take the window in Virginia's room. I'll take the do' myself."

They took their places while Phil went to Virginia's door and knocked. There was no answer. He knocked again and called. Still no answer. With a sudden sense of calamity, he opened the door wide. The room was empty; Virginia was gone.

With a cry of dismay he rushed to the window; the shutter was closed, but unfastened, and he threw it open. Outside, the world was bathed in silver moonlight, bright as day. Three hun-

dred feet from the house rose the six-foot stockade, six hundred feet farther loomed the black forest that had swallowed her up.

Somewhere in its almost pathless depths, full of wild beasts and wilder men, the girl was wandering alone.

Phil was half out of the window when Marston seized him and dragged him back.

"You blamed fool!" he said as he barred the shutters. "You must be in a right big hurry to die."

"But she's gone!" cried Phil. "My God, she's out there alone!"

"Look here," said Marston, "she's either beyond cap's men by now or they've caught her—they-all won't hurt her if they have, but I don't believe they'll catch her, sir. By God," he added, his voice expressing both anxiety and admiration, "she's a Marston."

His confidence seemed to relieve Phil, who quickly pulled himself together, and, picking up his rifle, took up his position, while Marston returned to the door and with his face close to the loophole stood calmly waiting. They were not kept long in suspense. Within ten minutes one of the men in the loft, who from their higher position could see over the stockade to the forest beyond, came to the trap and called softly:

"Here they come."

"Don't you-all shoot till I do," answered Caspar.

The head and shoulders of a man rose slowly above the gate and peared cautiously around.

The enemy were probably somewhat surprised at the absence of the outside guard.

"Halloo, thar!" called Marston in a loud voice.

The man dropped as if shot. If they had thought the attack a surprise, they were undeceived now, and with finger on trigger Jack waited the rush he felt sure would follow. Instead, the hail was returned.

"Halloo, thar!"

"What you-all want chere?" demanded Marston.

"We-all want to see Colonel Jim," replied the voice.

"That's a lie, Captain Hatfield," answered Caspar coolly. "You-all know mighty well Colonel Jim ain't chere. You-all wouldn't be here if he was."

Half of Hatfield's body rose suddenly above the stockade.

"Look here, Caspar Marston, we-all ain't for troublin' you-all. We-all want them thar Yanks. Thar's twenty-eight of us here. We-all 'll get 'em sure."

Jack cast a rapid glance at Marston. His answer was of considerable moment just then.

It was terse and to the point, though the tone was mildly conversational.

"I'm goin' to shoot in ten seconds, cap."

Hatfield dropped back quickly and then the rush came.

Half a dozen of the men attacked the stout gate, while the rest hurled themselves upon the stockade, scrambling over as best they might.

Marston's rifle cracked and the rest followed, firing as fast as they could work the pumps of their guns. Four or five men plunged backward from the stockade and the rest retreated. Two men only reached the ground inside, and they fell before they had taken a dozen steps.

It was a recklessly daring charge, but they paid for it with three men badly wounded, while half a dozen had received slight wounds.

"They won't try that again," said Jack grimly.

But they did. Twice within the next two hours the rush was repeated—once from the rear and again from all four sides at once, but each time the defenders succeeded in beating them back with more or less loss.

Some of the men had crossed the stockade behind the outbuildings, and, gaining these, fired shot after shot into the house in the hope of reaching a loophole and the man behind it, but the angle at which they were forced to shoot was so great that little damage was done.

Their main object, however, was to get near enough to the house to fire it, but the moon was beginning to pale in the gray dawn before they succeeded, then a bullet fired from behind the stockade entered the loophole at one

end of the loft, felling the man behind it, and before his companions could drag him away several of Hatfield's men had gained the shadow of the house.

In a moment a dozen blazing pine knots were thrown upon the roof, and the light shingles caught like tow. Instantly a deathlike silence fell, broken only by the crackling of the flames.

Within five minutes the men were forced from the loft and a suffocating smoke began to fill the lower part of the house.

It was a matter of minutes when they would have to make a rush for it. Marston collected his men before the door, placing Lavin and Townsend in the midst of them.

"Mr. Marston," said Jack gravely, "you have stood by us bravely. It is us they want. If you will open the door we will go out. They will probably then allow you to escape."

"I am in command chere, sir," replied Marston quietly. "You-all will obey my orders, sir," and he began to unbar the door.

Philip found Jack's hand in the semi-darkness and pressed it.

"I feel responsible for you, Jack," he whispered. "It was on my account you came here. I am very sorry."

Townsend smiled rather wearily.

"I suppose I may as well tell you the truth, old man," he replied. "It was not so much on your account as Marjorie's that I came."

"Marjorie! Jack, you—love her?"

"Yes," answered Townsend simply.

For a moment Lavin was silent, but he retained the other's hand.

"I am glad," he said softly. "I—you know—— Well, it doesn't matter much now, any way."

"Get ready!" commanded Marston.

The next minute they were in the open, dashing for the gate. But the bullets they had expected to greet them did not come, and they stopped as suddenly as they had rushed out. They saw Hatfield's men rushing from their various shelters and fleeing wildly toward the gate, only to turn back and huddle panic-stricken about their leader. They saw Captain Hatfield himself glaring this way and that like a trapped bear, looking for some means of escape, and they saw, too, armed men, led by Colonel Jim and Senator Lavin, swarming over the stockade from all directions.

With a loud cheer, Jack and Phil started toward them, waving their rifles, but Captain Hatfield did not intend to be cheated entirely of his prey. With a snarling oath he raised his rifle and fired just as a bullet from Colonel Jim's Winchester crashed through his arm.

His aim was spoiled, but not entirely, for the ball struck Townsend in the leg, sending him headlong to the ground, while Phil dropped beside him much as if he had been shot also. There were two agonized shrieks from the gateway, a swish of skirts, and two girls, hatless and somewhat disheveled, rushed toward them. One, without a word, threw herself into Phil's arms, laughing and crying as she clung to him. The other flung herself down beside the wounded man, beseeching him as he loved her to speak to her.

"Marjorie, Marjorie," whispered Townsend, a great light of joy in his eye. "Is it true, dear?"

"Oh, yes, yes! But you——?"

"But Phil?" said Jack. "You told me——"

"I told you I loved him eight years ago—that I had promised—— Oh, never mind that, Jack; you are hurt. Where is it?"

"Only a scratch on the leg," answered Jack, gently drawing her to him. "Nothing can hurt me now, dear."

## VI.

LATER, after the wounded had been attended to by the doctor who had accompanied them from Rogersville, Jack asked the question that had been puzzling him for some time.

"But will you kindly explain things? How did Marjorie get here. Who are all these men. Elucidate, please!"

"It's very simple," replied Senator Lavin. "As to Marjorie, I brought her to Rogersville with us because she refused absolutely to be left at home. How she got up here, she or Virginia will have to explain. I don't know."

"We couldn't stay there, you know.

The suspense was too terrible. After you left, Virginia got horses somewhere and we followed you. We weren't two hundred yards behind you all the way."

"As to the men," continued the senator, smiling, "as Colonel Jim had declared war, I felt it my duty to be prepared for emergencies, and among the many men we employ in different places it was not hard to find thirty or more who would have no objection to a little adventure of this kind if they were well paid.

"For the rest, Colonel Jim met us, and we had about agreed to disagree when Virginia arrived with the news that you were besieged by Captain Hatfield's gang. I collected my men and we came here on the double quick. That is all, my boy."

Colonel Jim stood looking gloomily at the smoking ruins of his home. His strong old face was pale and somewhat drawn, but there was no abatement of the proud carriage of his mighty shoulders, no tremor in his quiet voice as he addressed Senator Lavin.

"The victory is yours, sir," he said.

"The fortunes of war, Colonel," replied the senator heartily. "It is through no fault of yours, sir, that we are here."

"I did my best for my people, sir," continued the Colonel, more to himself than to the senator. "I reckon I would have saved them their land, but they disobeyed me, sir; they were against me, and they have paid the price. They sold their birthright for a mess of pottage."

He glanced sadly toward the building he had just left.

"Not quite that, sir," answered Lavin gently. "They shall have their homes and the land they cultivate. We will agree not to interfere in any way with their business or pleasures. We are not revenue officers, nor would we assist such.

"Horton," he called to the leader of his men, "release all the prisoners and give them their guns. Let them take their wounded with them. I am sure I should not recognize any of them if I met them again. I do not think you would, either, Horton."

"I thank you, sir," said the colonel quite simply.

"There is one other thing of which I wish to speak," continued the senator. "I have the honor, sir, to ask for my nephew the hand of your granddaughter."

"I appreciate the honor you do me, sir," replied the colonel. "I can think of no greater happiness for myself than to see my granddaughter the wife of General Philip Lavin's grandson. But it is a question, sir, for her to decide herself."

"I think she has decided already," laughed the senator, glancing toward Virginia, who stood clinging to Phil's arm, blushing rosily.

"While we are on the subject, sir," said Phil, "I want to ask you if you will not make your home with us in New York. Your house here is destroyed, and I should not like to take Virginia from you so entirely."

"I thank you, sir," replied the colonel, "but I am an old man. It has been many years since I have seen the great cities of the East. I shall be mighty pleased to visit you, sir, but my life is among the hills and my people need me. I shall come to see you, sir, but my home"— he swept his arm over the still-smoking ruins—"my home, sir, is here."

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## WILD FLOWERS.

YE field flowers! the gardens eclipse you, 'tis true,
Yet, wildings of nature, I dote upon you;
For ye waft me to Summer of old,
When the earth teemed around me with fairy delight,
And when daisies and buttercups gladden'd my sight,
Like treasures of silver and gold.

# The Peculiar Cruise of the Tortoise.

BY RALPH T. YATES.

The man who meant to lower the transatlantic record five days at a clip, and the fugitive from justice who aided him in the feat.

"THAT was the queerest case that I ever came my way," said the sergeant of police.

"Must have been a good one," quoth I, reaching for my note-book.

"You probably know something about it, yourself," went on the sergeant, tipping back his chair to a somewhat dangerous angle, and looking me over speculatively. "How long have you been reporting?"

"About twelve years."

The sergeant nodded.

"Well, do you remember the furore that was created some ten years ago over the fact of a man crossing from New York to Liverpool, alone in his own boat, in twenty-four hours' time?"

"Sure I do," said I. "I was reporting on the *News* at that time, and I recollect looking into the matter pretty thoroughly. It was a curious affair, taken all together, including the murder of the old captain before he had made known the secret of his boat's construction. That was a big loss to the cause of rapid transit."

"Then he *was* murdered?" the sergeant observed.

"Why, surely you remember if you recall the case at all!" I exclaimed. "He arrived at Liverpool on time, pocketed a big wager, and entered into negotiations with an English syndicate relative to the disposal of his invention; then he was murdered, probably for the sake of the money."

"Did they catch the assassin?" asked the sergeant, still smiling.

"I believe not," I answered reflectively. "I'm not even sure that they found the captain's body; but there was no question about the murder, for he disappeared completely, and no sane man would be fool enough to run away from a cool million or so and all sorts of fame into the bargain."

"You seem pretty well posted in the matter," observed the sergeant dryly, "but I think that I will refresh your memory upon a few important facts connected with it."

Taking down a dusty volume of records, he extracted therefrom a packet of paper and a newspaper clipping. The packet he placed on one side, but the clipping he spread out before us upon the desk.

It was a bit of newspaper, two columns in width, the topmost half occupied by a rather crude cut of a curiously shaped vessel, somewhat resembling a dolphin in contour, the upper fin being represented by a small pilot-house, and the tail by a very queer-looking propeller.

A row of small bull's-eyes along the sides, and several larger ones in the pilot-house, served for lighting and observation. Beneath the illustration was the following descriptive article:

## BOAT EXPECTED TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

Captain Carlos Weldt, a native of Belgium, but now a resident of New York City, hopes to have his novel craft, the Tortoise, ready for launching within a short time.

The strange little ship, now all but finished, lies housed close to the East River water-front, and is certainly a new departure in naval architecture.

The boat, as far as contour is concerned, is not unlike a fish, but Captain Weldt thinks that she will prove fleeter than any fish that ever wore fins. His ambition is to cross the Atlantic in twenty-four hours, and he says that experiments made with a model of the vessel warrant his belief that it can be done.

The Tortoise is composed entirely of metal and much resembles the whaleback type, except that her lines are finer

and her keel deeper. The boat will cut through the waves, not ride them. The pilot-house, the only portion which will be above water when she is under way, is a dome-like superstructure somewhat forward.

She is sixty-five feet long, with a beam of six feet three inches, and from the top of her pilot-house to her keel she measures fifteen feet. She will draw about five feet of water when at the surface.

Her motive power is unexplained; but her speed will be extraordinary, owing largely to the peculiar construction of her propeller, just put in place.

The name of the little vessel belies the speed which the captain accords her; but when questioned as to his reason for selecting so inappropriate an appellation, his only response was a whimsical laugh and the assertion that he could choose whatever name best pleased him, he supposed.

The captain, who has been a deep-water sailor all his life, says that he will start from New York for Liverpool, unaccompanied, as soon as possible, and if the water is moderately smooth, hopes to make the passage in from twenty to twenty-four hours. If he succeeds his fortune is certainly made, for a number of financiers are watching the proceedings with immense interest, and there are whispers of some very large wagers upon the result, in one of which Captain Weldt himself figures.

The sergeant read the article aloud, slowly and distinctly, and then, settling comfortably back in his chair, he began his story.

"About the time this clipping appeared in the papers, the bureau got word from Chicago to look up a fellow called Red Coursey, who was wanted there for a half-dozen different offenses, the wind-up being that he had shot his partner in crime in a quarrel over the division of some spoil.

"He was supposed to have fled to New York, and they sent his photograph, and described him as a middle-aged man of desperate character and dangerous to tackle, though by no means a tough in appearance.

"I was on the detective force at that time, and as there was a good reward offered, I made up my mind to go after it, and applied for the job. Well, as I had been doing pretty fair work for some time back, they put the matter into my hands, and I set out with all confidence that the prize was as good as in my pocket already.

"The fellow had about twenty-four hours the start of me, and it took a little while for me to get on the trail; but eventually I did get on to it, and followed him like a hound. He knew that some one was after him, and he led me a devious way, doubling and twisting for all the world like a fox. But 'twas no good; I was on the scent and hung to it until it led me down to the docks along the East River. There it got away from me, and, try as I would, I could not pick it up again; and it was while I was nosing about after Red Coursey that I ran across this thing"—laying his finger upon the newspaper cut.

"You see, it was this way: One morning I had traced him to a rough, shanty-sort of a structure close down to the water, and I thought I had him sure, for I was only half an hour behind him. I got a careful grip on my revolver before I knocked at the door.

"It was opened by a grizzled, sunburned man with all the ear-marks of a sailor, and whose face wore a grim and taciturn expression.

"'What do you want?' he inquired impatiently, through a rather narrow aperture between the door and the jamb.

"I took him in with a comprehensive glance, noting that in height and weight he tallied pretty closely with the description of my man.

"'Well, it might be you,' I replied tersely. 'I think I'll just step in and we'll talk it over,' and I attempted to cross the threshold.

"'Then I think you'll not!' he retorted savagely, barring the way. 'What are you? A spy sent down here to steal my secret?'

"'Yes, it's secrets I'm after,' I answered coolly; 'and I shouldn't wonder if you're the man I want, in spite of your manufactured sunburn and your clean shave.'

"His face became almost apoplectic, and he stuttered and stammered in a terrible rage.

"'Now look here,' said I, showing my star, 'these heroics are of no use at all. I have a half-dozen men within call'—

which I had not—'and if you're the man I want, you're caught all right enough, and if you're not, the sooner I find it out the better all around; so just let me step inside and we'll settle the thing there.'

"Still sputtering and fuming, but cowed at the sight of my star, he stood aside and allowed me to enter. Then, for the first time, I saw this thing"—placing his finger once more upon the illustration.

"I did not at once recognize it, and when I came up against the great object in that dim light I thought I 'had 'em' sure. It was a good minute before I remembered vaguely this newspaper article and guessed who and what I had run on to.

"My visions of reward began to take rapid flight. The work-shop seemed to be empty but for the boat, and the man asserted strenuously that no one but himself had been inside the place for more than a week. I was disappointed and irritated, and the man was the only person near enough to take it out on, so I pitched into him on general principles.

"I suppose my language was not exactly chaste and elegant, but it was forceful, all right. The old duffer stood by and looked after his end of the conversation manfully, and his words were fully as expressive as mine. In fact, he was so exaggeratedly irate that my suspicions were once more aroused and I stopped short and looked him over critically.

"'H'm,' said I at last, 'I'm not so sure that you're not my man, after all. You seem to answer to his description in the main. I guess I'll take you along, any way, just for luck.'

"Well, sir, the old fellow went quite to pieces at that, and all but got down on his knees to me. Said that to leave that precious boat of his meant utter ruin, for there were people prowling about constantly trying to learn the secret of its construction. He entreated frantically that I should not take him away, begging only for a chance to call some one to prove his identity.

"I actually felt sorry for the old fellow. I didn't really believe him to be my man, so I went to the door with him, keeping my revolver handy in case he should make a break for liberty.

"He shouted in a trembling voice to half a dozen foundry men who were passing near, and they approached, touching their caps to him familiarly, though not exactly in a friendly manner; and then looked from one to the other of us inquiringly, for we both must have exhibited a certain amount of excitement.

"'Boys,' said I, 'do you know this man?'

"'Sure,' spoke up one of the fellows. 'It's Captain Weldt, who's building that freak boat in there. Guess we'd ought to know you by this time, cap, though you ain't what you might call a sociable chap, eh?'

"The captain merely grunted, and my flying visions of reward grew dimmer and more dim in the distance.

"'How long have you known him?' I inquired of the spokesman.

"'It must be nigh on to a year, ain't it, boys?' The boys nodded assent. 'He's been working here about that long, and getting stuff at the foundry. Why, what's the matter with him? Ain't been doing nothing serious, has he?'

"'No, I guess not,' I answered sullenly. Then: 'You're perfectly sure that this is Captain Weldt, are you?' I asked desperately.

"The fellows joined in a boisterous laugh, and even the captain smiled grimly.

"'Well, I guess yes!' grinned the workman. 'Unless I'm losing my eyesight it is. Couldn't fool me in broad daylight like this. I don't know what you're after, mister, but you can't prove that this isn't Captain Weldt, not by me nor none of the boys; but if you want to take a bet on his getting across to Liverpool in that freak craft of his, I'm willing to put up something'—and he tapped his forehead significantly, with a side glance at the captain.

"Then he and his grinning companions tramped off, leaving me to stare after them discomfited.

"The captain stood beside me, but said never a word, and at last I turned to him.

"'Well, captain,' I said, swallowing

my disappointment as well as I could, 'I'm sorry for the trouble I've put you to, and I ask your pardon. Business is business, you know, and I had to follow up the clue.'

"'That's all right,' said the captain almost genially, so great was his relief, 'though you might have done me a deal of harm if those fellows hadn't happened along to identify me. And now I must get to work. Good-day'—and he put his hand upon the door.

"'One moment, captain,' I rejoined. 'I suppose you realize that this means a great deal to me; and I think it will be necessary for me to search this building before I go. I can't afford to leave a single stone unturned. The man might have concealed himself within unknown to you.' This last I added in extenuation of my demand.

"'Impossible!' he grumbled. 'Well, I suppose if you must, you must,' and most ungraciously he led the way back into the work-shop.

"There was very little to examine; for the boat, supported by a low scaffolding and lying diagonally, occupied nearly the entire space of the one room of which the building consisted.

"A large shelf against the wall answered the purpose of table and work-bench, and a bunk in one corner did duty as a bed. Tools were scattered all about, and a rusty little stove served for cooking, while an up-ended box in another corner passed for a pantry.

"The arrangements were exceedingly simple. A glance about and a bit of poking under the bunk satisfied me that there was no one concealed in the room; but as I turned to go, and cast a last curious glance at the bizarre craft, an idea struck me.

"'Captain,' I said, 'I guess you'll have to show me the inside of that boat.'

"'The inside of the boat!' he gasped, his face turning fairly gray. 'Why, man, do you know what you're asking? The secret of that boat is worth a million dollars. More. No human eye but mine has ever seen its interior. I cannot let you. Surely you will understand; you will not insist,' he pleaded.

"I wavered for a moment. I half liked the old fellow, in spite of his surly ways and their quick changes to passion or entreaty; and I could see the sense of his reasoning; but I was bound to be thorough in my search.

"'Well, now, see here, captain,' I rejoined, 'I don't know one blamed thing about machinery. I can scarcely tell the difference between a dynamo and a locomotive or a fly-wheel and a cog, so a glance into that interior isn't going to give anything away. You see, I've simply got to satisfy myself in this matter or keep a watch on the place as long as you are here.'

"He yielded unwillingly enough, and, ascending a small ladder, loosened a close-fitting hatch in the upper surface of the strange craft. Allowing it to slide inward and downward, he stepped through the opening thus disclosed and motioned me to follow.

"I did so, to find myself within a cigar-shaped chamber, dimly lighted by the bull's-eye in the sides and in the tower, as well as by the open hatch. The interior was not entirely completed, and was almost bare.

"The floor was concave, following the contour of the keel. Somewhat forward of the center stood a metal ladder, bolted to the floor and ascending to the platform of the tower, or pilot-house, where a plain, uncushioned oak board served as a seat. Before this were three bars or levers.

"Below the ladder, still farther forward, stood an upright metal cylinder some three and a half feet in diameter and fastened securely to the floor. Its top reached to within a few inches of the observation platform, and was connected with it by the three levers which passed out through the metal cap riveted to the head of the cylinder.

"In one side of the cylinder was a large bull's-eye, permitting a view of the interior, filled with shining, polished wheels and bars, which were as a Chinese puzzle to my inexperienced eye. Forward of this point was a bare and empty space, following the lines of the boat.

"I turned toward the opposite end, noting a steel rod which ran from the cylinder back to the propeller, or rather, through the base of a circular metal door some two feet across and hinged at the top, which cut off the stern of the

vessel at the point where it reached that diameter.

"I had taken one step toward this door when the captain laid a trembling hand upon my arm. All of the ill-humor, all of the surliness, had gone out of his face, and in their place was only earnest pleading and intense anxiety. He looked for the moment an old, old man.

"'You will not open that door?' he asked pitifully.

"I shook off his hand.

"'Why not?' I replied impatiently. I was tired of his hindrances.

"'Because that hides the secret of my invention,' he said simply, pointing a wavering finger at the closed door.

"'But,' I cried irritably, 'haven't I told you that I understand absolutely nothing of machinery?'

"Slowly and sorrowfully he extended the key.

"'That makes no difference,' he said brokenly. 'A little child could understand it, for it is one of the simplest facts of nature, which I, and I alone, have utilized for a wonderful purpose. I have studied and worked upon it for years, confiding it to no man, until I could lay by enough to build this boat, which was to have made my fame and fortune. Here, take the key. The secret will be no longer mine; the work is ruined; and just when it lacked but a few weeks of completion; for, with its nature known to even one, who would purchase it from me?'

"He still held toward me the key in a gnarled and shaking hand.

"I turned away abruptly.

"'Oh, let it go,' I said gruffly. 'I'm satisfied.'

"His face brightened instantly, and his form straightened itself once more.

"'Thank you,' he said simply.

"I climbed briskly up the inner ladder and down the outer one, bade him a somewhat testy good-by, and left him.

"I walked once around outside of the shanty to be sure that it afforded no further place of concealment, and then plodded ill-humoredly back to headquarters.

"However, in spite of what I had said to the old man, I was not satisfied. I went over my ground again and again, and every time my trail led straight to the door of Captain Weldt's shanty, and my man had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him.

"He could scarcely have drowned himself, for he was not at all the sort of a man to do that.

"Well, I haunted the place, of course, not again venturing within, but seeing the captain frequently and passing the time of day with him, always finding him surly and morose as at the beginning of my first visit.

"I distrusted the man, and finally I determined to search the building once more, and this time in the absence of its tenant. So one day, when I had seen him set out upon one of his infrequent trips to market, whence I had followed him again and again, I watched until he was out of sight, and then took my way to a neighboring saloon where a locksmith had loitered for lo! these many days, waiting for the opportune moment.

"From there we hurried to the weird work-shop by the river, my man waiting in the shelter of a building while I went to see if the way was clear.

"As a precautionary measure, I knocked briskly upon the door, which, to my intense surprise, was opened immediately by Captain Weldt himself.

"He seemed as astonished as I.

"'What, you again!' he exclaimed testily. 'Well, what is it now? Do you think I am harboring any more jail-birds?' with a grim attempt at humor.

"I was so completely taken aback to find him returned so much sooner than usual that I had absolutely no excuse ready, but stuttered and stammered unmercifully while he stood staring at me in ill-tempered surprise.

"At last I found my voice and told him the first thing that popped into my head, which was that I was still looking for the felon and could trace him nowhere beyond that immediate vicinity, and was positive that he must be lurking in the neighborhood.

"I added that I wished to ask him, the captain, to keep an eye out for the fellow, and that if he could help me to lay hands on the man I would divide the reward with him.

"The stroke was a bold one, but it was the only excuse for my presence

that I could rake up on the spur of the moment. I suspected the captain, in a way, though of just what I could not have told to save my neck. I thought it possible that the mention of a reward might open his mouth.

"He snarled some and asserted that he was no man-hunter; but the allusion to money had apparently touched him, and he ended by promising to keep a lookout and to communicate with me in case anything turned up.

"I departed, feeling that I had not done such a bad bit of work after all, called my assistant, told him that the job was off, and went home.

"For the next three months I saw considerable of Captain Weldt, running in upon him now and then, ostensibly to ask if he had any news, but really just to look about for myself, until at length my distrust wore away, for I became absolutely certain that there was no other human being about the place.

"Indeed, I grew to half like the grim, taciturn man whose life was so completely wrapped up in his work, about which he would never talk for fear of dropping some hint of that marvelous secret.

"He told me, however, that he was having negotiations with an English syndicate which would buy his invention at his own price when he should have accomplished his wonderful trip. He never said *if* he accomplished it, for he seemed absolutely certain of success.

"He also told me that a wager of fifty thousand dollars had been placed against a much smaller sum put up by himself—in fact, all that he had in the world—but that it was as surely his as if it were already in his hands, for it was deposited in an English bank, to be paid over immediately upon his arrival at Liverpool if within the time limit.

"The completion of the boat was delayed somewhat because of the late arrival of some necessary bit of machinery, and he fretted and fumed a great deal, for it kept him with idle hands for weeks after the time when he had hoped to be in England.

"At last, however, after a number of postponements, the day of the test trip dawned, and sunrise found the Tortoise already in the water. The docks were soon crowded with curiosity seekers, reporters and people interested in the financial aspect of the experiment, all on tiptoe with excitement.

"Captain Weldt was even more surly and taciturn than usual. He exchanged a few terse words with business men representing both American and British concerns, and denied himself sedulously to reporters, as was his wont. He bade me farewell in a tone which was really almost friendly, and then composedly boarded his fish-like craft.

"Promptly at twelve o'clock he let go the ropes and closed the steel slide with a snap. There was a little swish of water, a dropping below the surface of all but the pilot-house, and in a few moments the queer vessel had disappeared from view.

"Well, thus ended my connection with Captain Weldt and the Tortoise, and, incidentally, my search for Red Coursey.

"After the boat was gone, I inspected the premises carefully, but could find no trace of him, nor did I expect to, for I had long given up all idea that Captain Weldt was deceiving me. Reluctantly I came to the conclusion that the man must have drowned himself.

"As for the captain, you know the rest of the story; how the brave little boat arrived at Liverpool almost forty-five minutes ahead of time, and tied up at the wharf while the people cheered and went almost wild over the simple, grim, elderly man who had crossed the Atlantic in twenty-three hours and fifteen minutes. They wanted to dine him and wine him; but no, after storing his boat and drawing the fifty thousand dollars of the wager, he went straight to London, to a quiet little hotel, and there received half a hundred people who wanted to bargain for the wonderful invention.

"The English syndicate before mentioned made by far the largest bid, but required that before the enormous sum was paid over their own experts should examine the mechanism and report as to whether it was applicable to large boats and could be utilized for the company's purposes.

"At this the captain demurred, say-

ing in his blunt way that when once they knew the mechanical construction they would not need to buy the secret from him.

"After a week or so, however, a compromise was effected by which one-third of the price offered was to be paid over to him as an earnest, upon his positive assurance that the appliance was, so far as he could judge, adapted to their uses, the remainder of the amount to be rendered upon the favorable report of their experts.

"The third alone was a princely sum, and was paid to him in Bank of England notes, which he insisted upon placing in a belt around his waist, explaining that he had carried every dollar that he had ever possessed in his life therein.

"Warnings of the danger of such a proceeding failed to have the slightest effect upon him, and he left the rooms of the syndicate at four o'clock of an afternoon and—never was seen again."

"Yes, that was the way of it," I agreed. "I remember perfectly. Experts examined the boat after a time, but could make nothing whatever out of it without the inventor to explain its workings. They could make the thing go, but not above the most ordinary speed. They admitted, however, that it contained a certain mechanism which they could not comprehend and for which they could find no use.

"There was a great search for him, I remember, but to no purpose, of course. The man was a fool to carry around a lot of money like that, especially when the newspapers were full of his every move and action, even to the fact that he already wore the fifty thousand dollars upon his person. Well, somebody got a big haul, that's all."

"Yes," assented the sergeant dryly, "somebody did.

"Now, my boy," he continued, taking up the little packet of paper; "this bit of a manuscript was handed to me a year or more after the date of these occurrences by the captain of a certain sailing vessel, which we will call the Eaglet, just returned from a South American cruise. The man was a plain, honest-spoken sort of fellow, and after turning the packet over to me he proceeded to tell me how it came into his possession.

"It seems that at about the date of the Tortoise's departure upon her famous voyage, the Eaglet set sail for Rio de Janeiro. Well, on toward morning of the third day out, the captain, who was on watch, was startled to observe a great flash of light appear for an instant about half a mile to starboard. This was followed immediately by the sound of a terrific explosion and a tremendous disturbance of the water in a direction where he had seen no previous sign of light. The explosion served to waken all on board, but none could arrive at any plausible solution of the phenomenon.

"However, as daylight began to dawn, there was sighted, at no great distance, what appeared to be the form of a man clinging to a bit of wreckage and gesticulating frantically. The sailing-vessel hove to, put out a boat, and in a few minutes had the shipwrecked one aboard.

"The man was very much exhausted and in a state of excitement bordering upon insanity, but otherwise seemed in good condition. He appeared to be of about fifty years of age and well built, and after recovering in a measure from what had evidently been an appalling shock, he proved to be possessed of a fair education and considerable sea-knowledge.

"Curiously enough, he refused absolutely to give any account of himself or to tell how he came into such a predicament, or explain the cause of the extraordinary explosion, if, indeed, he knew.

"Upon learning the ship's destination, he requested the privilege of working his passage to the port in view, and, this being accorded him, he demonstrated himself to be an excellent workman and a pleasant and agreeable companion to the captain, as well as a prime favorite among the crew.

"On the last day before the landing at Rio de Janeiro, he approached the captain with this packet, sealed and addressed to me, requesting that, upon that gentleman's return to the United States he would give it into my hands personally and tell me how he came by it.

"This the captain agreed to do,

though expressing regret for the length of time which must elapse before its delivery. However, the man asserted this to be no disadvantage, as he preferred that some months should pass before the thing reached my hands, and, in fact, had for this very reason chosen such a mode of transmission."

Hereupon the sergeant unfolded the packet of closely written sheets and proceeded to read from the manuscript.

There was no preface or apology. The thing began at once as follows:

"Since you are about the most decent fellow for a detective that it has ever been my lot to run across, I've taken a notion to relieve your mind upon a few points which I fancy have kept you guessing for many a long month. It can do me no harm now for you to know the truth about the affair, for by the time this reaches you it will be a rather difficult matter to lay a hand upon the writer, and I doubt if you would do it if you could, when you learn what I have passed through.

"To tell the truth, I grew to liking you first rate, and I'd have been glad to help you toward getting that reward if I could have done it without putting my own head into the noose, but under the circumstances I couldn't see my way clear even when you offered to divide the bounty with me.

"Do you know, there was something really humorous in your coolly requesting me to help catch myself and offering to give me half of the prize money! However, I appreciated your good intent, while I had my little laugh over it.

"Well, here goes for the facts in the case.

"My name is Red Coursey, or, at least, that's the one by which I am most frequently known; and as for my past—never mind that. It has no direct bearing upon the matter in hand, so I will only go back to the time last fall when I struck New York, making a great play to keep out of the hands of the authorities, for it was hanging business that time.

"Well, sir, I hadn't been in town long when I discovered that you were on my track, and I led you a pretty chase you will acknowledge. Nevertheless, you kept gaining on me, and when I reached that infernal shanty of Captain Weldt, you were hot on the scent and I was as good as run to earth.

"I thought the shanty might be empty, and I tried the door cautiously, only to find it locked. Seemingly the only thing remaining for me to do was to end it all by a dive from the docks.

"However, the sound of the latch had reached the ear of the occupant, and he came quickly to the door to see who might be spying upon him. Say, right then was when I literally stood 'between the devil and the deep sea,' though I didn't know it.

"I was desperate when the old man opened the door, and his grim, forbidding aspect did not serve to lessen my apprehension, but this was my one chance. I saw at a glance that he was a seafaring man, and as I had been one myself, a long time back, I saluted him as 'Captain' and blurted out the truth.

"'Captain, I'm in trouble,' I said. 'I'm a criminal in the sight of the law, and they've got me run down. I've been a sailor myself. Can you lend me a hand?'

"His little, sharp gray eyes looked me over critically from top to toe. 'Step in here,' he said gruffly; and I tell you it didn't take me long to accept the invitation.

"'What's your height?' he asked bruskly.

"'Five feet eight,' I answered in wonder.

"'Weight?'

"I told him.

"'H'm—h'm,' he said, looking me over again. 'I guess you'll do.'

"'I hope so, captain,' said I, smiling in spite of myself.

"'How close are they on your track?' he asked.

"'Liable to get here any minute.'

"Just then I looked around and my eyes lighted on that 'devil's own boat.' 'Twas my first sight of it, and I tell you it made me jump, it had such a weird, uncouth look in that dim light.

"However, almost immediately I remembered seeing a cut and a description of the thing in a paper a few days before, and I turned to the old man.

"'So you are Captain Weldt, are you?' I remarked. 'Well, is this thing

likely to make a go?' pointing to the black leviathan.

"'Yes, sir, it *will* make a go!' he exclaimed savagely, and then: 'Well, if you want me to get you out of this, come along.'

"He hurried up the ladder at the side of the fish-like monster, and then down into the interior, I following close at his heels, though, I confess, with some misgivings.

"Once within the oval chamber, he turned upon me, impaling me with those sharp gray eyes.

"'Now, here,' he said grimly, 'suppose I do hide you this time, what are you going to do then?'

"'The Lord only knows,' I admitted weakly.

"'Well, listen. If I get you out of this scrape whole, and promise to deliver you safe and sound outside of the State line within six or eight months, will you, in return, do for me what I require?'

"'What's the nature of it, captain?' I inquired, for I don't much like a blind bargain.

"'There's no time to explain now,' he said hurriedly; 'but it is absolutely safe. The law might possibly be able to touch you for it, in a way; but, as I look at it, you and the law are not particularly friendly as it is,' with a nasty sneer. 'Come, do you want to take the job or get out?'

"'I'll take it,' I said desperately.

"'Very well.'

"He stepped quickly to the circular steel door which cut off the stern of the boat, and opened it, disclosing an aperture sufficiently large to accommodate my body along with the propeller-shaft.

"I crept in, he closed the door with a snap, locked it, and I heard him climb out of the boat and set about his work once more.

"Very shortly thereafter you arrived, and perhaps you can guess with what anxiety I listened to your conversation with the old man, and how I held my breath when you approached the door of my hiding-place. You would not have taken me without an exceedingly rough tussle, though, in any event.

"However, the captain was a consummate actor, as you will acknowledge, and, though my blood ran cold at the prospect of his arrest upon suspicion of being myself, and leaving me locked in my metallic prison for days, or perhaps for weeks, you at last took your departure. In the course of time I was liberated, and the captain disclosed to me his plans and the nature of the work which I had agreed to perform.

"His story was briefly this: He had, in some manner, conceived the idea embodied in his boat, and for years had saved every possible cent in order to be able to work it out and put it to the test which he felt absolutely certain would prove its worth and bring him fame and wealth.

"When he had begun work, it was not long before people learned of his project, and while many scoffed, others began to investigate and to negotiate for the device in case it should prove a success. So certain was he of its infallibility, that he laid as a wager the last thousand dollars he had in the world against the fifty thousand of a wealthy scoffer.

"And then came the terrible discovery that his calculations contained a flaw. A bit of friction upon which he had not counted upset the entire theory. He realized, with growing horror, that his cherished idea was absolutely worthless. The glorious bubble had collapsed.

"Who can know what the man suffered? All but penniless, and his only prospect that of becoming an object of ridicule as soon as his failure became known! Why, even I can feel a twinge of pity for him, and see mitigating circumstances in his future course, in all but one particular; but that was so cold-blooded, so fiendish——

"Well, he brooded over his trouble until by degrees a new plan formed in his brain, introduced by the memory of an old fable; and when I came, a sailor and desperate, it seemed as if I were Heaven-sent—or devil-devised.

"His scheme was upon these lines: I was to be placed in charge of the boat and left to personate him; while he, himself, would go to England, taking what money I had, which was no small

amount, and build another similar boat in some out-of-the-way corner of the sea-coast.

"At an appointed time I was to set forth from New York with the Tortoise, and twenty-four hours later *he* was to arrive at Liverpool, also upon a Tortoise. Here I noted the pertinence of the name.

"The plan was simple enough and allowed for my escape, as well as for him to pocket the fifty-thousand-dollar wager and as much more as possible in the way of earnests for the device, and then drop out of sight.

"I was not at all averse to the idea. Indeed, it seemed to me decidedly brilliant, and we at once began preparations.

"We were of nearly identical height and build, and really carried considerable resemblance when my mustache was sacrificed; I had shed my beard when I left Chicago in haste. My hair was already dyed, and was easily brought to the same shade as the captain's; and when I was clad in a suit of his clothes, we were as likely a pair of Dromios as one would care to see.

"As soon as I had assumed his garb, I set myself to learn his ways of speech and action, and, having always been a fair mimic and somewhat used to disguises, I soon learned to make a very good imitation of the captain, in spite of the fact that he was some ten years my senior.

"As the time for his departure for England drew near, he insisted that I memorize, point by point, the plan in progress, in order to obviate any possible mistake. He had let me into every phase of the business part of it, so that I knew every man interested and could talk sensibly upon every aspect of the case which might arise.

"The only point with which I was not acquainted was the motive power of the boat, and this he kept rigidly to himself, saying that it was not necessary for me to know. His argument was that if I was interested I might be tempted to meddle after he was gone, and, being no machinist, might disarrange something which I could not remedy, and thus ruin the entire scheme.

"This motive power is still a mystery to me. Whether it involved any new principles I cannot tell, but I feel sure that electricity was the basis of it. Be that as it may, it required but the movement of a lever to put it in motion, and that months after he had left me, and upon this impetus it was capable of running for several days at good speed, with no further attention from me beyond the mere steering.

"As I have said, I know nothing about mechanics, but I am of the opinion that the captain had really made a valuable discovery, which he lost sight of in his disappointment at not being able to accomplish that upon which he had set his heart.

"When the English boat should be ready for launching, the captain was to cable to me the day for starting, and I was to notify the press and those interested. I was to launch the boat at night by means of a prepared tackle and with the aid of a few picked men; this, in order to avoid a crowd and all chance of a consequent accident.

"The departure was to be made at noon. The newspaper telegrams would inform him as to whether the start had been a success, and then would come his turn to act.

"One point alone I did not approve, and that was the disposition which he had planned for the 'edition' of the Tortoise of which I was in charge. However, as I could suggest no more satisfactory arrangement, I was forced to submit.

"Obviously it would not do to abandon the boat and take the risk of its drifting ashore or being picked up before the captain had brought English matters to a climax, and no more could I take the chances of landing with it anywhere. It must, manifestly, be done away with in some manner.

"The directions given me by the grim old captain were as follows: With the motive power, as I have said, I was to have nothing whatever to do, and plainly I could not if I would, for it was entirely enclosed in the metal cylinder with the one bull's-eye, the cylinder bolted to the floor and covered by a riveted cap at the top. There were but two out-

lets, one being for the propeller-shaft which revolved within a tube running along the keel and entering the base of the steel door behind which I had so safely hidden.

"This was now securely locked and the key in the captain's possession. The only other outlet to the cylinder was the narrow aperture in the metal cap, through which passed the levers commanding the steering apparatus, these being manipulated from the pilot-house.

"You see, he had left absolutely nothing for my hand excepting the mere directing of the boat's course: and as for that, he had given me a chart, marked by himself, according to which I was to steer until midnight of the fourth day out, when, he affirmed, I would be in an unfrequented situation, not too far from the coast.

"Here I was to disembark by means of a canoe which formed my only cargo, and row ashore, leaving the boat to its fate. However, he requested that I remain within sight of the sea until four o'clock in the morning, at which hour the Tortoise would, by means of some ingenious time arrangement, blow herself to smithereens. Then I was free to go my way.

"The steering apparatus was carefully explained to me, the methods of starting and stopping, and the process of dropping almost entirely beneath the surface of the water, which was the normal position of the boat when under way. I was made to practise the handling of the levers for hours at a time under his direct supervision, he standing below and giving orders through an improvised tube, while he closely watched the action of the propeller. If my hands failed to bring about the correct movement, the tube grew pretty warm, though the words were only whispered, because of the chance that you might be prowling about.

"At last the day for his departure arrived. He had packed and sent before him every tool and plan, and had exacted from me a faithful promise that I would not handle the boat in any manner whatsoever until the day of the test.

"'For,' said he, 'any meddling upon your part might, and probably would, result in a disarrangement which would be fatal to the entire project.'

"I promised willingly, and with a terse farewell he left me.

"He had not been gone from the building fifteen minutes when you appeared at the door, and perhaps I wasn't startled when I saw you. What you had in mind that day I cannot guess, unless you had seen the captain go out and were intending to do a little investigating in his absence.

"However that may be, you yourself were so badly frightened, for some reason, that I had an opportunity to get my own wits into working order before you were in condition to take much notice of my anxiety.

"Well, you know how the next six months passed; how we saw considerable of each other, though you never suspected that the bit of machinery for which I was waiting so impatiently was merely a fabrication to explain the fact that I was doing no work and yet was delaying my departure.

"Eventually we grew quite friendly, though you will never know the struggle I was forced to wage constantly in order to keep myself in hand and preserve my surly mien, instead of responding to your geniality. And you never for an instant guessed that the testy old fellow whom you grew to half like was not the same taciturn old codger whom you had met upon that first visit to the shanty.

"I wonder if Captain Weldt ever thought of the possibility that I might not be true to my trust. He must have, for he was a far-seeing man, and he knew me to be, in a way, a desperado; but he was too wise to suggest such an idea, thinking it more politic to trust to such remnants of honor as might still be mine.

"Now that I was safe in my disguise, he was gone, and you were hoodwinked, I might easily have escaped; but there must be some good left in me, for I could not do it. He trusted me, and I could not play him false.

"I laugh now as I think of it. There is something vastly ludicrous in that little triumph of my conscience in the light of what followed.

"And then, in the course of time, came the message from over the sea—the 'necessary bit of machinery' which enabled me to set forth upon my voyage.

"The launching was accomplished in safety, and next came the embarkation upon the momentous trip. I have not yet forgotten the cordial grasp of your hand at the last. Perhaps that is why I am writing now.

"The first afternoon and night were most uneventful, the weather being fine and the little boat behaving beautifully. I steered according to the captain's chart, and ran away from every vessel which appeared, and as nothing but my tiny pilot-house was visible above water there was no difficulty in keeping out of sight.

"Then something happened, or, rather, it happened gradually.

"On the morning of the second day out I had grown tired of sitting in the pilot-house, and, finding the course straight, and without a craft in sight, I set the steering apparatus and climbed down into the body of the boat to get a bite to eat and stretch my legs.

"While idly munching my ship's biscuit, I happened to pause before the bull's-eye in the steel cylinder containing the machinery. Hitherto I had paid little attention to it, but to-day I was weary and bored and anything was of interest.

"I gazed with some curiosity at the shining bars and wheels with their steady, monotonous movement, accompanied by a soft whir and buzzing sound. Then I fell to examining the works more minutely, speculating as to the function of each separate part, and wishing that I were better posted along this line, if only for the sake of the bit of entertainment which this little failure of a boat might afford me now.

"Presently my attention was attracted to a small metal vise, supported upon a slender arm and holding, as in a pair of pincers, an end of copper wire which came from where I could not see. There was such a sort of human grip about the tiny finger-like nippers that it half amused me.

"It alone, among all of these busy members, seemed stationary, and I could not help wondering as to its mission in the mechanical economy before me.

"I soon returned to my lookout; but during the afternoon I descended again for a bit of change, and, passing the cylinder, I glanced in once more, noting with some surprise that the arm supporting the tiny vise had slightly changed its relative position.

"'Not a drone, after all,' I muttered.

"Toward evening I looked in again, simply by way of amusement, and saw that the change of position was still more marked. The arm seemed to be gradually reaching out toward the side of the cylinder, but with such deliberation that no movement could be detected by the eye.

"I wondered more and more as to what part this sluggish bit of steel and copper played among its whirling, vibrating companions, and, for want of a better subject, pondered much upon it during the long and solitary night, half-wishing that I were not too old to study mechanics, since I found a taste of them so interesting.

"On the morning of the third day I approached the cylinder quite eagerly. It seemed to me almost a little friend in my loneliness, for it had afforded me a healthy subject to occupy my thoughts.

"I found that the tiny object had made fine progress in the night, and now appeared to be pointing steadily at some wished-for goal.

"My eyes carelessly followed the direction of its path, vaguely wondering whether it would simply retreat again when it had reached the wall of the cylinder. However, as my eyes pursued the line upon which the diminutive carriage was moving, they came in contact with, not the interior circumference of the cylinder, but with a second cylinder or tube composed of glass and packed with some fuzzy material which I failed to recognize.

"This tube was attached to the inside of the steel cylinder, its base being some four and a half feet from the floor. Evidently the little fingers, with their burden, would pass very close beneath the lower end of the tube, which appeared to be sealed at the bottom,

though through the cork there projected another bit of copper wire.

"I studied the curious device for some minutes before the idea of its nature and mission dawned upon me, sending a thrill to my very finger-tips and causing my scalp to pucker and creep absurdly.

"Here, without doubt, was the apparatus by which the Tortoise was to be annihilated. Those little skeleton fingers were carrying the end of a line of copper wire which, at such time as was planned, would come in contact with the wire projecting from the tube which, it was patent, contained an explosive, presumably guncotton.

"I stood with my hands in my pockets, gazing curiously. There was something positively uncanny about this tiny, relentless hand holding the key to such mighty power within its Liliputian grasp.

"I returned shortly to my lookout, but my mind kept reverting to that steadfast little creation down below, drawing closer and ever closer to its own annihilation, and itself bearing the spark which was to bring the end.

"Then I began calculating as to how many hours it had still to run. It was now twelve, noon, of the third day out, and the captain had said that at four o'clock on the morning of the fifth the Tortoise would give up the ghost. Forty-eight hours had already passed, and forty more remained before the two bits of copper wire would come in contact; but——

"I paused and wrinkled my brow. I had made a mistake in my reckoning, for surely the slender arm had traveled farther during only the past twenty-four hours than the distance which now remained separating it from the explosive.

"I went over the figures once more. Since I had embarked at noon, then noon of the second day would be twenty-four hours; and noon of the third, the present time, would be forty-eight; and to four in the morning of the fifth would certainly be forty more; and yet how near the wire was approaching!

"I sprang down the ladder to the bull's-eye. Yes, there could be no mistake; the distance traveled since yesterday morning was more than twice as great as that remaining to be traversed.

"I stared in horror. Could the captain have made a blunder, or—— And then suddenly the whole diabolical plot thrust itself upon me in all of its atrocity.

"I fairly reeled. The fiendish instrument was set to bring about the explosion at least twenty-four hours in advance of the time of which the captain had advised me. He had planned to annihilate me as well as his useless boat. 'Dead men tell no tales!'

"It might require some months to close his English deal, and he feared me, though I had trusted him. I had furnished the money for the new boat, and I had scorned to escape when the way was open because I believed that he trusted me, and now——

"'Well, what matter?' I said aloud, turning away, but my heart was bitter. I had discovered his machinations in time and was in no danger, but I was disappointed, hurt beyond words.

"I had believed him to be a swindler through force of circumstances, as was I, and not a cold-blooded murderer, which I was *not*, whatever I might have done in the heat of passion.

"I had plenty of time now that I knew what to expect, and so I set about provisioning my canoe and making ready to disembark before darkness should fall. This done, I took a glance at the weird little fingers with their fell burden, drawing so near to their fate; so near, indeed, as to make me feel nervous and ill at ease.

"I hesitated to leave the boat at once, for the sea appeared to be absolutely deserted, and there was no land in sight in any direction; and, besides, there was more of a swell than I cared to trust my canoe to weather, unless it were unquestionably necessary. We were making good headway, and I preferred to remain aboard as long as it seemed wise, in the hope of sighting land, or at least some vessel.

"However, the afternoon wore away anxiously and uneventfully. All was a dead level of sea and sky, without a sign of surf or sail to break the monotony.

"At eight o'clock the near approach

of copper wire to copper wire caused me so much uneasiness that I decided to disembark immediately at any cost, land or no land. Accordingly I set the lever controlling the mechanism for bringing the boat to the surface, and going below, I dragged my canoe to a convenient point beneath the sliding hatch and waited until I should see a gleam of stars through the port-holes.

"Presently I grew tired of waiting and went above, to find that we were still swirling through the water with only the pilot-house atop of the waves, there having been not the slightest change in the position of the boat with regard to draft.

"I was surprised. I had previously had no occasion to make use of this particular lever, for the captain had made me promise that I would keep the boat strictly below the surface in order to avoid detection. Now a deadly fear beset me and I grasped the lever frantically, throwing it this way and that, and watching breathlessly for the results.

"My efforts were absolutely without effect. The Tortoise kept on the even tenor of her way, paying no more heed to my endeavors than if the metal bar were merely hung upon a pivot.

"At last I sank back, exhausted. Here was the reason that I had been forbidden to practise with the apparatus after the captain's departure. The bar had been partially disconnected, so that the boat would not respond after that one first movement when starting.

"Oh, the diabolical subtlety of the man! Here was I, a close prisoner in this hellish boat, with no possible chance of escape, for to open the hatch while the Tortoise was under water was obviously impossible; and all the time those terrible metal fingers were drawing nearer and nearer to their fate—and mine.

"I went below and stared at them with a kind of horrible fascination, and then a thought came to me. Possibly if I brought the boat to a standstill the movement of that stealthy hand might stop also.

"I climbed the ladder once more and grasped the third lever. The ease with which it answered to my touch aroused misgivings which were soon verified, for, as in the case of the other, the action brought forth no response from the machinery.

"At first I hoped, tremulously, that it was merely the acquired momentum which continued to carry us along at such rapid headway. But the hope died out, as a few moments proved that there was not the slightest perceptible lessening of speed, and the steady hum and whir of the machinery below told me that the old man had attended to every particular with devilish ingenuity.

"No captive in the deepest dungeon was ever more terribly a prisoner than was I in this rapidly moving metal boat, which, in a few hours at most, would be blown to nothingness, and myself with it.

"I sat for a long time with my face bowed upon my hands and my heart going out in hatred to that fiend who, for his own selfish ends, had done this thing.

"Perhaps he had argued that the law, from which he had temporarily rescued me, would do as much for me, were I within its clutches—but what was hanging to such torture as this? To the watching of that uncanny hand, drawing nearer and ever nearer?

"My God, if I deserved hanging, what did not this man deserve!

"At length I rose to my feet and clambered weakly down the ladder to the floor, to stand in front of the cylinder and stare dumbly at that grotesque little messenger of death, moving with such relentless deliberation. If I could but get to it, to stop it or destroy it!

"I began a frantic effort to dislodge the bull's-eye, which was embedded in the metal; but my only tool was a pocket-knife, and with that I could not make the slightest impression upon the framework. The captain had left me nothing.

"Oh, I could see how carefully it was all planned! What tremendous chances he had taken with regard to accident to the boat which would require the use of the disconnected levers; but with regard to *me*, every possible emergency was prepared for, every avenue of escape effectually cut off.

"Perhaps it is as well that the bull's-eye withstood my assault, for, since I knew nothing of electricity, I should probably have met my fate then and there had I succeeded in reaching the machinery.

"There seemed no possible chance for me; the door leading to the propeller was closed and locked, so that I might not interfere with that, and the shaft revolved within a tube, and hence was beyond my reach, though I do not know that access to either piece of mechanism would have been of any advantage to me.

"The port-holes in the sides of the vessel were below the water, and were too small in any event to admit of the passage of a man's body. Those in the pilot-house might possibly allow me to squeeze through if the terribly thick glass could be in any way removed, for they did not open, the only ventilation being afforded by a number of very small apertures in the dome of the steering space.

"I examined all four of these port-holes, and then began to work feverishly upon one of them with my pocket-knife —but to no purpose, for it was too firmly embedded in the metal, as was the one below, to permit me to make the slightest headway.

"Then I grew desperate, frantic! I tried to shatter the glass with my hands, with my feet; I struggled and wrestled with the levers, striving to tear them loose from their fastenings to use as cudgels—but it was all unavailing, wasted effort.

"I consumed hours in this manner, striving and contending, and then rushing to the cylinder to take note of the terrible, resistless, onward movement of that dreadful bit of wire.

"My canoe paddles were shattered to fragments upon the glass of the port-holes, and I strained and tore at the metal ladder in a mad endeavor to loosen it that I might use it for a battering-ram; but I only cut and bruised my hands.

"It was of no use: I was absolutely helpless.

"I paced back and forth in that swiftly-flying prison, alternately raving and praying, cursing the demon who had placed me in this dreadful plight, groveling upon the floor in a sudden access of terror, or throwing myself bodily upon the cylinder and tearing at the glass with my nails in a frenzy to get at that horrible, implacable skeleton hand which drew ever nearer and nearer to the tiny point of wire which meant annihilation.

"After one of these paroxysms I fell upon the floor, exhausted, and I believe that I must have swooned for a time, for when consciousness returned I sprang to my feet to find that less than a fourth of an inch lay between the two ends of wire.

"When I saw this I screamed out in agony and for a time thereafter I was a madman. I vaguely remember dashing up the ladder, grasping the narrow oak shelf which served as a seat, and by sheer force of a madman's strength tearing it from its fastenings, though I had worked ineffectually for hours before in an effort to loosen it.

"I remember wielding it as a sledge again and again, smiting one of those solid plates of glass. I remember, as in a dream, seeing the glass shiver into a thousand fragments, with a report like that of a cannon it seemed to me.

"Then there is a vague impression of pushing the board through the orifice, of clinging to it by one of its braces, of struggling through a narrow opening where the sharp corners of glass tore their way through my clothing to my flesh; then a great swirling of water and the almost unconscious gripping of the board, the gradual diminishing of the rush and turmoil of the sea about me, and then, suddenly, without warning, a tremendous glare of light, a terrific detonation, a violent upheaval of water.

"I was stunned, overwhelmed, but mechanically I clung to my bit of board, and gradually quiet and silence once more returned, unbroken save for the soft lapping of the waves close to my ears.

"By degrees clear consciousness came back to me, and I realized that I was afloat upon the broad Atlantic, with naught between me and drowning but a narrow bit of oaken board

"Well, drowning was better than that other—and I shuddered. I could at least cling until weary, and then——

"However, I presently made out a light at no great distance, which instilled a breath of hope into my despair, and when at last day dawned I saw a ship quite near at hand. I managed to attract the attention of the crew, and I wonder now if men will ever again look quite so like gods to me as did my rescuers.

"The captain of the Eaglet will have told you the remainder of my tale, and as for me, I am not yet sure as to my future course in life. I should like it to be straight from now on, but if ever Captain Weldt or any of his kin cross my path—well, I wouldn't begrudge a hanging, that's all."

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# KENNEDY'S CALL.

BY GORDON BLANCHARD.

A railroad story of the dislodged boulder that turned a locomotive into a wild-cat and made the opportunity for a hero to step in.

"I SEE Ed. Kennedy's dead," said my friend Grant, the conductor.

"Is he?" I answered, and for no special reason, for I did not know Kennedy from Adam.

"Yes; died at Red Cloud yesterday. You knew him, didn't you? No? Why, that's funny. I thought everybody knew Kennedy, operator at Medicine Bend. Come, you must remember him."

I shook my head. Another long pause, and then Grant broke in again:

"Say, Bob, did you ever hear the story of how Kennedy started?"

I was ignorant of that fact, too.

"Well, I'll tell you.

"A long time ago, long before the Sioux outbreak in '82, Kennedy was an operator on the Union Pacific. He forgot one day, and two trains came together near Madison. There was an awful wreck—a score of unfortunate people were killed and as many more injured.

"Kennedy was to blame, and when they found him, he had gone mad. He was sent to some institution in the East, and in four years they turned him out, as they said, cured. He remembered little of the past—something terrible had happened, he knew not what. Well, he worked a little there in the East, but he couldn't get along. Some mate of his suggested that he strike West. He did odd jobs here and there—worked in a brickyard one day, and loafed the next. Rode on passenger trains when he had money, or else jumped freights when he was broke.

"It was in the winter of '89, I think, that Kennedy came into headquarters. Calahan was boss then, and the 'shanty' was at Waterloo 'stead of at Medicine Bend, as it is now. It was just after the big strike, and Calahan was in need of men.

"It was Christmas night, and the thermometer keeping pretty well down. A whole lot of them were sitting around the red-hot stove in the 'shanty'—all old-timers, too. There was old Ross, Jim Bailey (you remember him, don't you: big, tall feller, with a scar on his cheek?—got it in the battle of Wounded Knee, they said), and 'Old Man' Moore, 'Shorty' Becket, and a number of others.

"Most of 'em are dead now, poor fellows. They were all good and true veterans to the Midland Pacific.

"Kennedy wandered into the office. I suppose he saw the lights and the stove there, and feeling kind of despondent, thought he'd try his hand at railroading. About the first thing that Calahan asked him, when he found he wanted a job, was if he could handle a key.

"'I could once,' said Kennedy, 'but I can't now.'

"They had forgotten about the Union Pacific wreck; for the West was comparatively young then, and things

of one day were quickly forgotten and pushed aside by the crowding events of the next.

"Calahan was the most kind-hearted man that ever lived. He took pity on Kennedy and gave him a job on a local passenger running from Red Cloud to Iron Mountain. Kennedy felt better then, and he said it was the first bit of good luck he'd ever had.

"Well, things went on all right for about two weeks, then word came to Calahan about Kennedy. It seemed that one day some proud citizen of Red Cloud asked Kennedy where the ice-water was, and Kennedy showed him the fire-pail. Calahan couldn't stand for that, so he gave Kennedy a job on a freight west of Tomahawk.

"As it had been a hard winter, so in turn it was to be a bad spring. In the latter part of April there had been an awful rain-storm — regular deluge. Washouts were frequent; but the things they feared the most on the Mountain Division were the landslides. Several times the track had been buried, but no serious accidents had occurred.

"This particular night, through freight No. 31, running west, had just pulled out of Tomahawk, with Kennedy braking on the head end. It was a typical April night—a light rain fell, and the wind, a trifle chilly, made one seek the cheery stove of the caboose rather than the wet tops of the box-cars. 'Thirty-One' had its orders to meet No. 2, the Eastbound Limited, at Big Horn, on the other side of the Horse Back.

"It's a heavy up-grade from Tomahawk to Bear Dance and then a long down-grade through Big Horn and Jackson. 'Thirty-One' stopped for water at Bear Dance, and as she pulled out, Kennedy climbed up on the forward box-car. Old Johnson was holding the throttle, and as she struck the down-grade he let her have it, for they were a few minutes late.

"Kennedy had started back over the tops of the cars for the caboose, when all at once there came a piercing shriek from the whistle—a wild call for brakes. Kennedy turned. Not fifty feet ahead a tremendous boulder was projecting over the track.

"With a deafening crash, the locomotive struck; the headlight, stack, dome and bell were swept off as if they had been paper. Old Johnson was caught in the flying wreck, and, with his fireman, was crushed between the cab and the tender. There were a dozen coal cars behind the engine, and these were low enough to escape the slide.

"As the boulder passed through the cab, it caught the throttle and pushed it wide open. With a jump that almost pulled the train from the track, the mogul shot ahead like a race-horse under the whip.

"At the first crash, Kennedy threw himself face downward upon the top of the box-car. With another deafening roar, the boulder tore the tops from the cars as they passed underneath. Kennedy, caught in the wreck of his car, was dragged along the top.

"Something struck his head—he felt everything grow white—then black; a sense of being torn apart, and then one of falling, seized him. He had luckily been thrown from the top of the car to the side of the rails.

"Car after car was wrecked, and finally as the little caboose came underneath the slide, it, too, was caught and thrown, turning over and over, down to the rocks below. They never found the poor devils who went to death in their little car.

"On rushed the freight, wild now, for no human hand could stop it——

"Yes, one—Kennedy.

"When he came to his senses again, he felt something cold upon his forehead. He looked up; it was raining. Things seemed clearer to him now; he tried to rise. With an awful pain he fell back upon the ties. '"Thirty-One" will go through Big Horn without stopping, and when she strikes "Two" she won't leave a thing on the track,' he muttered. 'If I could only tell the operator at Bear Dance to hold "Two" at Jackson, they can get her side-tracked before "Thirty-One" goes through.'

"With this in his mind, he started toward the station, a good quarter of a mile away. Step by step he crawled,

marking each foot of the way with blood. When they found it next day, they said his trail was like that of a wounded grizzly.

"On and on he crawled—his teeth set, hardly able to lift his head on account of the terrible pain in his side. At last he came in sight of the station. It was dark. And then, to his horror, he remembered that there was no night operator at Bear Dance.

"Creeping across the platform and dragging his useless leg after him, he fell against the window. The glass cracked and he was thrown heavily upon the table.

"By rare chance, his hand dropped near the telegraph key and he gripped it with his broken and bleeding fingers.

"Pounding with a fierce determination, he sent the 'D. C.,' the despatcher's call, thrilling over the wire. It brought the operator at Big Horn to his feet with a jump. The agent at Jackson leaned earnestly over the table as the message of death clicked on his instrument.

"'D. C.—D. C.,' rang the sounder. 'Hold No. 2 at Jackson. No. 31 broke loose west of Bear Dance, and running wil——'

"In the mean time, 'Thirty-One' went pounding over the rails at a sixty-mile clip. The topless cars rocked and battered together, and the cries of the terrified animals in the cattle cars were terrible to hear, as they huddled closer together, not knowing what it all meant. The smoke poured from the hole in the boiler which once had been the stack; the whistle, left open by the crash, was screaming like some weird and frightened animal.

"This was the ghost train that tore through Big Horn a few minutes after Kennedy's call. The operator at Jackson, hatless and coatless, picked up a red lantern and went running down the track in the direction of No. 2. Out of the west came the glare of her headlight and the long wail of her whistle.

"Reaching the siding, the operator threw open the switch, waited impatiently till No. 2 had slowly drawn in, and closed it after her.

"What was the matter with this man, the passengers asked—a man trembling, barely able to stand; his hair wet, and blowing in the wind; his face like that of a ghost? Suddenly the ground began to shake, the deafening cry of a whistle rent the air—a roar—a shudder, and then everything was still.

"About a hundred feet beyond the siding at Jackson the road makes a quick and short turn to the right. On one hand the steep, high sides of the mountain; on the other the end of the Wild Horse Canyon, a drop of nearly five hundred feet to the depths below.

"When the wild freight went by the siding at Jackson, little did the people know then how near to death they had passed that night. The train crew and the operator, stumbling after the freight, hardly understood what it all meant.

"For a second the wild train paused at the curve; then, as if determined, plunged over the cliff, poised a minute in the air, and went tumbling and crashing to the rocks below. It was an awful sight; it sickened the hearts of those brave men who saw it.

"Slowly they turned back, and, wondering, asked who had sent the message. The operator could not tell. Clarke, the day man, could not have sent it, for he lived a mile or so from the station at Bear Dance. No; they were certain some one of the freight must have survived that awful wreck.

"Who was it? Brady, the conductor, perhaps; but little did they think it was Kennedy.

"Slowly the limited proceeded on her way to Big Horn. On every side were bits of wreckage—tops of cars, freight, pieces of coal, timbers, logs; and here and there a prostrate animal from the wrecked cattle cars.

"The operator at Big Horn knew of nothing except the wild passing of that death train. On No. 2 went, past the scene of the slide which had finally been dislodged and, carried by the wreck of the last few cars, was tossed over the side of the mountain. At last the Bear Dance siding was reached, and No. 2 stopped.

"The crew, followed by a number of

passengers, came up to the station, where they discovered Kennedy. Half lying through the smashed-in window, his fingers still clutching the key, they found him, hardly breathing. No one knew him at first, so mangled was he, till Ed. Cameron picked him up gently and carried him to the train. Then they saw who it was.

"What a mess that station was in—filled with broken glass and drenched with the rain that had come in through the open window, but, worst of all, the table soaked with the very life blood of Kennedy!

"They made a kind of hospital for him in the sleeper and laid him there; and, as luck would have it, there was a doctor on board. Kennedy opened his eyes for a moment and tried to get up. With a gentle touch the doctor pushed him back.

"'You must keep very quiet,' he said.

"Kennedy mumbled something. The doctor bent his head.

"'Was No. 2 saved?'

"'Yes, my man; you are on board her now.'

"A smile came over Kennedy's face, and that was all; but it meant everything.

"All the way to the Bend the train was one of sorrow. They thought him dead.

"Men stood near him and praised him; women sat there and cried over him; and the doctor, faithful to the end, watched over him. When they were whistling for the yards at the Bend, Kennedy was seen to stir. The doctor bent earnestly over him and a smile came over his face. 'He's living,' he said.

"Well, I don't know as there's much more to tell. Kennedy was sent to the hospital at the Bend, and in three months he was out again.

"The doctors explained it this way. When Kennedy went mad so long ago, everything seemed to have left him—all knowledge of how to telegraph or to do anything.

"As I said, previous to the wreck he knew nothing of his past. The crack he got on his head cleared his brain and gave him back his old memory. He remembered the use of the key, and a lucky thing it was, for nothing else would have saved No. 2 in God's world."

---

## 'TWAS EVER THUS.

Down the winding pathway,
In a garden old,
Tripped a dainty maiden;
But her heart was cold.

Came a prince to woo her,
Said he loved her true;
Maiden said he didn't,
So he ceased to woo.

Came a perfumed noble,
And, dropping on one knee,
Said his love was deeper
Than the deepest sea.

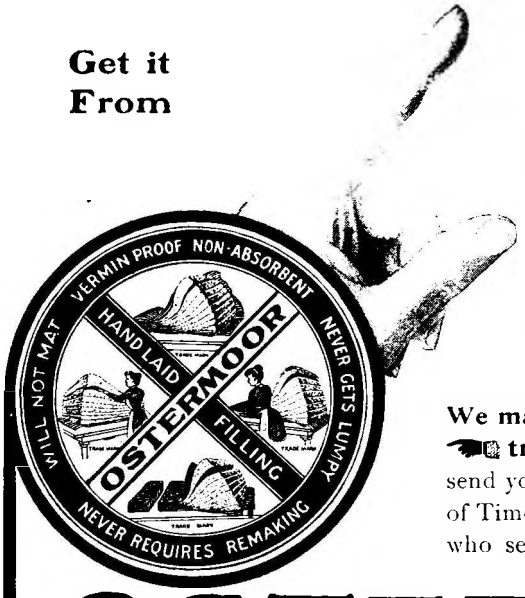
But the dainty maiden
Said his love was dead;
And the perfumed noble
Believed just what she said.

Came a dashing stranger,
Took her off by force,
Said he'd make her love him—
And she did, of course!

*Katherine E. Smith.*

# The Ostermoor Dealer

**Get it From**




No argument is needed now on the Ostermoor Mattress. It has the largest sale of any mattress in the world. Its popularity is due to its cleanliness and sleep-inducing qualities—not to its low price. To protect the public from worthless substitutes, exclusive agencies are being established with high-grade merchants in every town and city—so far about 2,000 local firms sell the "Ostermoor." Our name and trade-mark label are *sewn* on the end so that you cannot be deceived.

**We make no mattress that does not bear this trade-mark.** Send us your name and we will send you our handsome 136-page book, "The Test of Time," and the name of the dealer in your place who sells the genuine

# OSTERMOOR MATTRESS $15.

WHERE WE HAVE NO AGENT WE SELL BY MAIL UNDER THIS GUARANTEE:

*Sleep on it Thirty Nights*, and if it is not even all you have *hoped for*, if you don't believe it to be the equal in cleanliness, durability and comfort of any $50. hair mattress ever made, you can get your money back by return mail—"no questions asked." Mattress sent by express, prepaid, same day check is received. To learn the Ostermoor story, send for our

## Beautiful 136-page Book, FREE

| Regular Sizes and Prices | |
|---|---|
| 2 feet 6 inches wide, 25 lbs | $8.35 |
| 3 feet wide, 30 lbs. | 10.00 |
| 3 feet 6 inches wide, 35 lbs. | 11.70 |
| 4 feet wide 40 lbs. | 13.35 |
| 4 feet 6 inches wide, 45 lbs. | 15.00 |
| All 6 feet 3 inches long. | |
| Express Charges Prepaid. | |
| In two parts, 50 cents extra. Special sizes at special prices. | |

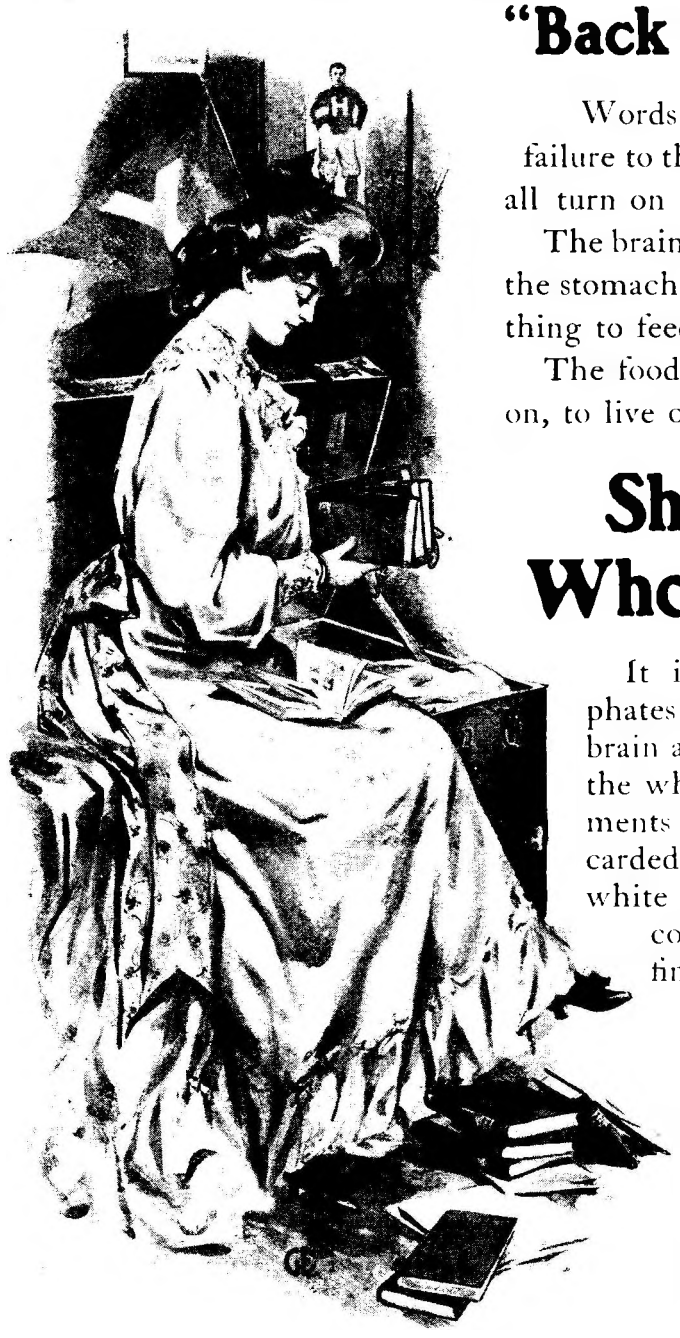
It is a handsome, beautifully illustrated volume, entitled "The Test of Time"—136 pages of interesting information and valuable suggestions for the sake of comfort, health and success—with over 200 fine illustrations. Write for it now while it is in mind.

**Look Out!** Dealers who are not our exclusive agents are trying to sell the "just-as-good" kind. Ask to see the name "OSTERMOOR" and our trade-mark label sewn on the end. Show them you can't and won't be fooled.


**or From**

## Ostermoor & Co., 110 ELIZABETH STREET New York

Canadian Agency: The Ideal Bedding Co., Ltd., Montreal.



# "Back to School"

Words that mean success or failure to thousands—and it may all turn on the question of food.

The brain is nourished through the stomach—it must have something to feed upon besides books.

The food to think on, to grow on, to live on, is

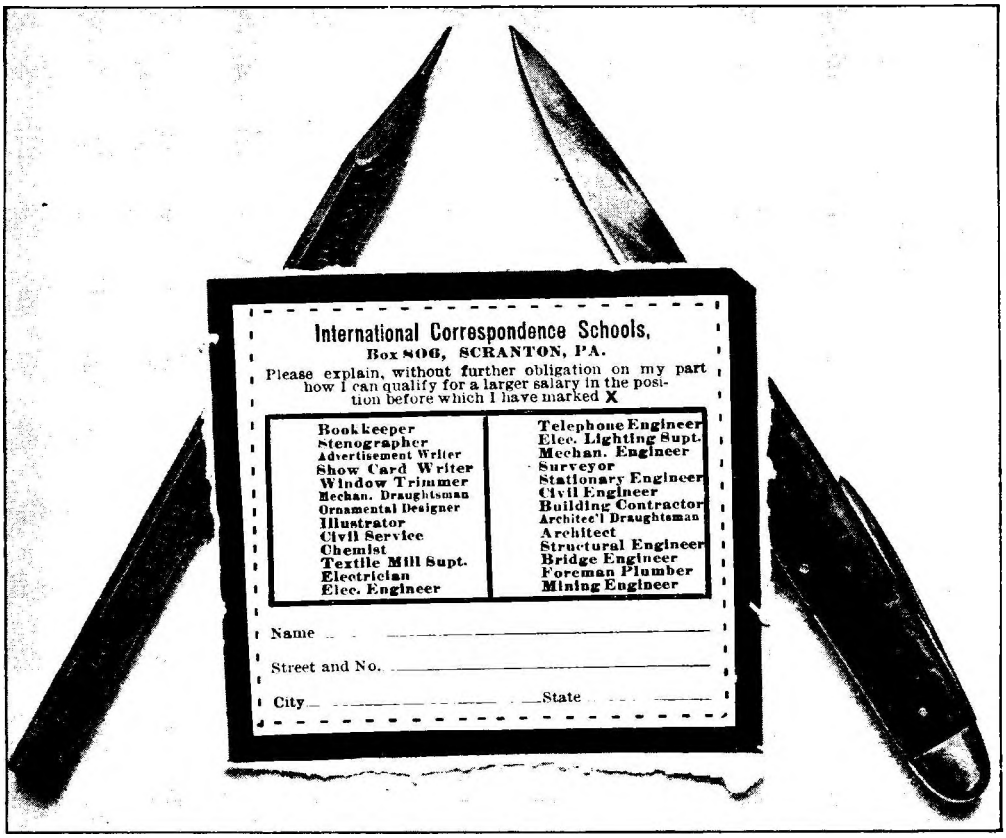
# Shredded Whole Wheat

It is rich in the phosphates and the nitrates, the brain and muscle-makers of the whole wheat grain, elements that are largely discarded in the making of white flour. It is steam-cooked and drawn into fine shreds so that the stomach may easily assimilate it.

## It's All in the Shreds

**Shredded Wheat is not "treated" or "flavored" with anything—it is the whole wheat and nothing but the wheat—the cleanest and purest cereal food made. It is made in two forms—BISCUIT and TRISCUIT. The BISCUIT is delicious for breakfast with hot or cold milk or cream or for any other meal in combination with fruits or vegetables. TRISCUIT is the shredded whole wheat cracker which takes the place of white flour bread; delicious as a toast with butter or with cheese or preserves. "THE VITAL QUESTION COOK BOOK" is sent free.**

**THE NATURAL FOOD COMPANY, Niagara Falls, N.Y.**




# Tools of Fortune

Every man is the architect of his own fortune, the only tools required to make the plans being a pencil and a knife. A pencil to indicate the CHOICE OF A CAREER on the famous I.C.S. coupon; a knife with which the coupon may be cut out for mailing.

Go where you will, you find in high positions men who have risen from the ranks solely by the help of the I.C.S.; men who were earning but a dollar a day; men with wives and children depending upon them; men with no education, but the ability to read and write.

Go where you will, you find these men to-day as Foremen, Superintendents, Managers, Engineers, Contractors, Owners. Their success reads like romance; and yet it is all readily understood once you know how EASY the I. C. S. makes the way.

Work at what you may, live where you will, choose what occupation you like, the I. C. S. can qualify you for it, by mail, in your spare time. It costs nothing to fill in, cut out and mail the coupon, asking how You can qualify for the position before which you mark X.


NO MANLY boy wants to depend on his parents for everything—and he needn't, either. Hundreds of boys all over the country are earning from $2.00 to $15.00 a week, selling

## *The Saturday Evening Post*

Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. YOU CAN DO IT—JUST TRY. Write now for our free outfit; it includes our great little book, "Boys Who Make Money," which tells how the other boys succeed—and ten copies of THE POST *free*. You sell these for 5c a copy, which gives you 50c capital to buy a fresh supply at wholesale price. After that the profit is yours. If you really want to earn money there is no easier or more pleasant way.

**$250** IN EXTRA CASH PRIZES Each Month to Boys Who Do Good Work

A part of this month's prize money reserved for those who start this month.

THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, 3333 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

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# *A pleasing line*

of Mid-summer Attractions in

# DIAMONDS

placed right in your hands, for examination, comparison, selection—no expense or obligation if not suited—no embarrassing "red tape." That's the Marshall method. ¶ Style, quality, grade, price—to suit every taste—any pocketbook. Guaranteed weight, value and accurate description with each diamond offered.

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All Cash
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THESE THREE DIAMONDS (any style, 14 kt. hand made mounting) are our "F" grade—top quality—finer than most jewelers carry. Crystal pure blue-white color, flawless, ideal shape, correct depth, skillful cut,—gems of unusual brilliancy.

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$29.36

OUR CHARGE ACCOUNT method is a pleasant, sensible way of saving money. ¶ No better investment today than a good diamond. Heavy demand, limited supply and absolute control by the "diamond kings" keeps values strong. Values advancing—no prospect of lower prices.

SPECIAL NOTICE to Old Customers: Any diamond over ¼ carat bought of us before March 1st, 1903, is exchangeable at 20% increased value. 10% advance on stones bought following twelve months.

$150.
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Write for free booklet "How to Buy a Diamond" and "Marshall's Monthly."

Geo. E. Marshall, Inc., 97 State St., Chicago

W. S. Hyde, Jr, Pres't. A. S. True, Sec'y.

Reference: First National Bank, Chicago.

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# "Griffon" STROP-AIDE

**Insure Your Razor for 25c and Yourself a Good Shave**


**Sharpens the Dullest Razor,** makes a poor razor good — good razors better, and self-shaving a positive luxury. Cools the steel. Performs priceless and necessary service. Costs 25c. Sent direct on receipt of price, or to be had on demand wherever cutlery is sold.

Firm of A. L. SILBERSTEIN, Makers of "Griffon" Cutlery, 454-455 Broadway, New York.

# TO FLESHY PEOPLE

I know you want to reduce your weight, but probably you think it impossible or are afraid the remedy is worse than the disease.

Now, let me tell you that not only can the obesity be reduced in a short time, but your face, form and complexion will be improved, and in health you will be wonderfully benefited. **I am a regular practising physician, having made a specialty of this subject.** Here is what I will do for you: First, I send you a blank to fill out; when it comes, I forward a five weeks' treatment.

You make no radical change in your food, but eat as much and as often as you please. No bandages or tight lacing. No harmful drugs or sickening pills. My treatment is given successfully by mail, in your own home. You will lose from **3 to 5 pounds weekly,** according to age and condition of

body. At the end of five weeks you are to report to me and I will send further treatment if necessary.

When you have reduced your flesh to the desired weight, you can retain it. **You will not become stout again.** Your face and figure will be well shaped, your skin will be clear and handsome, you will feel years younger. Ailments of the heart and other vital organs will be cured. Double chin, heavy abdomen, flabby cheeks and other disagreeable evidences of obesity are remedied speedily. All patients receive my **personal attention,** whether being treated by mail or in person. All correspondence answered by me personally. Treatment for either sex. Distance makes no difference. **Satisfaction guaranteed.**

Send for my new book on **"Obesity;** Its **Cause** and **Cure"** —it will convince you. Address

**UNITED STATES MEDICAL DISPENSARY,** Department 68, 20 East 22nd St., New York

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## HAIR ON FACE NECK AND ARMS

INSTANTLY REMOVED WITHOUT INJURY TO THE MOST DELICATE SKIN

IN COMPOUNDING, an incomplete mixture was accidentally spilled on the back of the hand, and on washing afterward it was discovered that the hair was completely removed. We named the new discovery MODENE. It is absolutely harmless, but works sure results. Apply for a few minutes and the hair disappears as if by magic. **It Cannot Fail.** If the growth be light, one application will remove it; the heavy growth, such as the beard or growth on moles, may require two or more applications, and without slightest injury or unpleasant feeling when applied or ever afterward.

*Modene supersedes electrolysis.*

**Used by people of refinement, and recommended by all who have tested its merits.**

Modene sent by mail, in safety mailing-cases (securely sealed), on receipt of **$1.00** per bottle. Send money by letter, with your full address written plainly. Postage-stamps taken.

LOCAL AND GENERAL AGENTS WANTED.

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*Every Bottle Guaranteed.*

☞ We Offer **$1,000** for Failure or the Slightest Injury.

# DRUG CRAVE

**FOLLOW OUR INSTRUCTIONS**
**TAKE HOME TREATMENT**
**CONTINUE YOUR WORK**
**BE CURED ABSOLUTELY**

WE regard it as needless to comment on the drug addiction. The unfortunate users themselves know its dread side far too well. Our desire is to encourage, restore confidence and **cure.** That we can cure, and cure forever, the craving for morphine, cocaine and opium, and build up the system to health and strength, our several associated physicians have demonstrated in extensive private practice for many years. Cases from the first to the last stages have been treated with but one result—permanent cure. The remedy soothes the craving, expels from the system each day a portion of the baneful drug, and supplies by its tonic properties a healthful stimulation in place of the fictitious support formerly supplied.

We accept only those patients who are absolutely truthful in their statements to us, strictly follow our instructions and promptly fulfil their just obligations. Each case will be diagnosed and treated individually by one of our associate physicians who will keep in close correspondence with it.

If any patient finds treatment unsatisfactory at the end of two weeks, we will cheerfully refund the money he or she has paid us.

**WE OFFER FREE A TRIAL SAMPLE**

Our letters and remedies sent without any outside marks. Privacy is complete.

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**Address D. C. C. 100 Hartford Building**
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## THAT BUNION CAN BE CURED

## BE YOUR OWN CHIROPODIST

IF you suffer from a bunion, we want to cure it for you. No matter how much pain or torture you suffer, we can remove it. Our wonderful **Anti-Bunion Plasters** cure the oldest, hardest, and most painful bunions—and nothing else will. Don't allow yourself to be persuaded that bunions are incurable just because everything else has failed. Nor allow yourself to neglect the bunions, for they are a dangerous growth, sometimes affecting the entire foot, necessitating the removal of the diseased member. You can cure them yourself, at home, without cutting, without pain, in fact without the slightest inconvenience.

Send 2c. stamp for our handsome 20-page illustrated booklet on "How to Have Easy, Healthy, Shapely Feet." It treats of the hygiene of the feet, the cause and cure of bunions, the prevention and removal of corns, ingrowing toe nails, and other kinds of foot troubles, their causes and how best to avoid them. It is an invaluable guide to show you how to restore your feet to a natural, healthy condition and how to keep them so. **Don't go through life with hideous, unsightly, tormenting feet,** but send for this booklet at once.


**FOOT REMEDY CO., 1351 S. LAWNDALE AVE., CHICAGO**

## Great Suit Offer

Cut this notice out and mail to us and **if we have no agent in your town** we will send you **FREE**, by return mail, postpaid, **a big assortment of cloth samples**, fashion figures, cloth tape measure, order blanks, etc., and we will name you prices on men's fine clothing that will be so much lower than you ever heard of that it will surprise you; terms, conditions and privileges that will astonish you: **a free trial offer on a suit for your own use** that will make you wonder.

**WE WANT A GOOD AGENT IN YOUR TOWN.**

He can make $1,200.00 to $1,800.00 per year. If you write us before we get an agent there **you will get a wonderful offer.** As soon as we get an agent in your town he will get a profit on every dollar we sell in his territory. We then turn all our business over to him. That's why our agents make so much money.

If you want a suit for yourself, answer quick before we get an agent there, and you will then get all our great inducements, or if you would like to be our agent tell us all about yourself. Address,

**AMERICAN WOOLEN MILLS CO., CHICAGO, ILL.**


## BUSTER BROWN

We will send for a **TWO-CENT POSTAGE STAMP** to any address in the United States a sample of Buster Brown Scarf Pin or Ladies' Stick Pin, gold plated and enameled. Pin is over two inches long. Sample by mail **TWO CENTS.** Address

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**NO STOVE LIKE IT!**

**Consumes 395 Barrels of Air to one gallon of Kerosene.** Penny fuel, burns like gas, hottest fire, won't explode, saves work and fuel bills. No coal, wood, dirt, ashes—no wick, no valves, easy operated, handsome, durable. **Grand cooker, baker,** quick work, cool kitchens. **13000 Harrison Wickless, Valveless Oil-Gas** and **Air Burners sold 1 month. AGENTS WANTED—$40 Weekly. Greatest MONEY MAKER.** Guaranteed, all sizes, sent anywhere, **$3 up. Write, FREE proposition, 30 day trial offer.**

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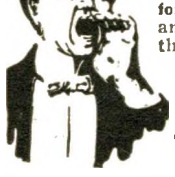
## DON'T SHOUT!



## "The Morley"

makes low sounds and whispers plainly heard. A miniature **Telephone for the Ear**—invisible, easily adjusted, and entirely comfortable. Over fifty thousand sold, giving instant relief from deafness and head noises.

**THERE ARE BUT FEW CASES OF DEAFNESS THAT CANNOT BE BENEFITED.**

Write for booklet and testimonials.

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## No More Gray Hairs

***DeLacy's French Hair Tonic is not a dye,*** therefore is ***Perfectly Harmless.*** It ***Restores Gray Hair*** in any color of hair, moustache or whiskers ***back to the color it was before it turned gray. Stops hair falling instantly*** and ***cures dandruff permanently.*** Easily applied; is not sticky or greasy, will not stain or injure. ***Your Money Back if it Fails.*** $1. by druggists, or sent to any part of the United States, express prepaid.

***DeLACY CHEMICAL COMPANY,***

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Write for FREE package of DE LACY'S FRENCH SHAMPOO.

The most elegant **SHAMPOO** in the world.


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Catalog free. Fortune for Agents.

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*Price $7.50 less trade discount of 33⅓% or* **$5 net**

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2nd The school boy with his shining morning face.

# HORLICK'S MALTED MILK

FOR

## Shakespeare's Seven Ages

is a complete pure food, which builds up the brain, bones and muscles, and promotes healthy growth of the entire system. All of Nature's mineral phosphates are retained. Helpful in meeting the strains put upon the growing child of school age. Also as a table drink, far superior to tea, coffee and cocoa, for the whole family.

Pure milk and the extracts of selected malted grains. A delicious food-drink is ready in a moment by simply stirring the powder in water. In Lunch Tablet form also, a healthful confection for children, recommended by physicians. Excellent as a lunch at recess.

A sample, vest pocket lunch case, also booklet, giving valuable recipes, sent if requested. At all druggists.

ASK FOR HORLICK'S; others are imitations.

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ONE PIECE COLLAR BUTTON

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## Rolled Plate Buttons

retain luster for years—have a layer of gold rolled on—not a mere wash like other plated buttons. Cost a trifle more but *never break* nor look cheap.

Sold by leading jewelers and haberdashers. Booklet on request.

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ROUGH ON RATS TRADE MARK — DON'T DIE IN THE HOUSE

## Unbeatable RAT Exterminator

Though originally designed for Rats and Mice, experience has demonstrated it the most effective of all exterminators of

## Roaches, Ants and Bed Bugs

and it is the only thing at all effective against the large Black Cockroach or Beetle. **15c, 25c.**

Fools the Rats, Mice and Bugs, but never disappoints or fools the buyer. Always does the work and does it right.

We make also **ROUGH ON FLEAS, 25c.**

**E. S. WELLS, Chemist, Jersey City, N. J., U.S.A.**

## Rough on Corns

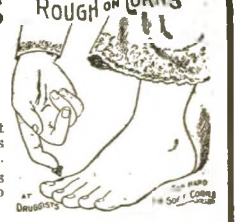
LIQUID.....25c

SALVE.....15c

For Hard or Soft Corns.

Cures without making the feet sore. Relieves pain and soreness the instant applied. The Standard.

Three Rough on Corn Plasters with each Bottle of Liquid and two with every Box of the Salve.




**Rough on Bunions**—We claim it is the only cure. The remedy, with two of our Bunion Plasters, **35c.**

Eight Rough on Corn or Three Rough on Bunion Plasters, which stick and stay where you put them, best made, supplied separately in envelopes, **10c.** All at druggists or by mail.

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# Gillette Safety Razor

**NO STROPPING. NO HONING.**

JUST because your old-time razor makes shaving a nightmare, or because you have the barber habit, do not feel incredulous when you see things and hear things—from strangers and from friends—that seem "too good" to believe about the Gillette Safety Razor. While you are thinking it over, now, in just one brief minute's time, there are hundreds of shaving men like yourself using a Gillette and experiencing that delightful sensation of being quickly, safely and comfortably shaved.

For a comparison: The old-time razor, forged blade always requiring stropping—honing, or the barber habit, both unsatisfactory—annoying, both expensive.

The Gillette way—triple silver-plated razor made like a watch, 12 thin, flexible, highly tempered and keen double-edged blades—each blade with two edges that require **no honing** and **no stropping.**

Each blade will shave you from **20 to 40 times** and **every shave will bring you comfort** and **pleasure.**

You practically have

## 400 Shaves Without Stropping

at less than 1 cent a shave. **Over 200,000 now in use.** Every one sold makes a friend for life.

$5.00 complete in an attractive, compact, velvet-lined case.

ASK YOUR DEALER for the Gillette Safety Razor. *Accept no substitute.* He can procure it for you. Write for our interesting booklet, which explains our thirty-day free trial offer. Most dealers make this offer; if yours does not, we will.


**GILLETTE SALES COMPANY**

**1154 Times Bldg., 42d St. and Broadway, New York**

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MONEY BACK ON REQUEST | REGALS BY MAIL | ALL WEIGHTS | REGALS BY MAIL | 93 STORES | REGALS BY MAIL | QUARTER SIZES | REGALS BY MAIL | TANNERY TO CONSUMER | REGALS BY MAIL | NO RISK | REGALS BY MAIL | FOR MEN AND WOMEN | REGALS BY MAIL

NO difference where you live—and never mind how hard you may be to fit—we can supply you with perfect-fitting shoes of distinct, correct and timely style without the slightest trouble or risk on your part.

The stock of 75,000 pairs of fresh new shoes always ready on the Regal Mail-Order shelves includes a full range of **Quarter Sizes** and eight widths in the model that *you* will select.

Every preference is provided for—every latest style and shape of model, every weight and kind of leather; shoes especially adapted for outdoors and for indoors, for city and country, for business, dress and semi-dress. And our method of giving our mail-order customers the special personal service of an expert shoe salesman who has been fitting shoes by mail for many years, virtually brings this greatest shoe store in the world right to your door.

75 styles to choose from by mail or in the 93 Regal stores—high-cut and Oxford, lace, button and blucher, men's and women's, in eleven kinds of leather—and a book that tells all about it for the asking.

**Send postal for the Regal Style Book**

**Book "M" for Men. Book "Y" for Women. Book "S," Special Spanish Translation.**

Regal shoes are delivered, carriage prepaid, anywhere in the United States or Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaiian and Philippine Islands; also Germany, Japan, Norway, Belgium and all points covered by the Parcels Post System, on receipt of **$3.75** per pair. (The extra 25 cents is for delivery.)

## "PICCADILLY"

Stylish without being extreme. This plain lace Oxford is just the shoe for a conservative dresser. One of the successes of the season.

**Style 4 G2**—As illustrated, Oxford, plain lace style, made of Black King Calf leather, medium-trimmed sole.

**Style 4 G4**—As illustrated, except blucher cut, made of Russet King Calf leather.

**Style 4 G1**—As illustrated, except made of Imported Patent leather.

**Style 4 G3**—As illustrated, except made of Black King Kid leather.

**Samples of leathers on request**

## REGAL SHOE CO., Inc.,

**MAIL-ORDER DEPARTMENTS:**

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**MAIL-ORDER SUB-STATIONS:**

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618 Olive St., St. Louis, Mo. 631 Canal St., New Orleans, La. 6 Whitehall St., Atlanta, Ga.

**93 stores in principal cities. The largest retail shoe business in the world.**

# REGAL

## THE SHOE THAT PROVES

GOODYEAR WELT

JAMES MEANS' SHOE

TRADE MARK

# THE JAMES MEANS SHOE FOR MEN

The Above Trade-mark is in its 28th Year

**Retail Prices, $2.50 and $3.00**

SPECIAL STYLES EXTRA

**OUR MOTTO.**— Constant Vigilance is the Price of Quality. Our shoes will demonstrate to you what this vigilance can accomplish.

The James Means Shoe for men is sold by leading retailers throughout the United States.

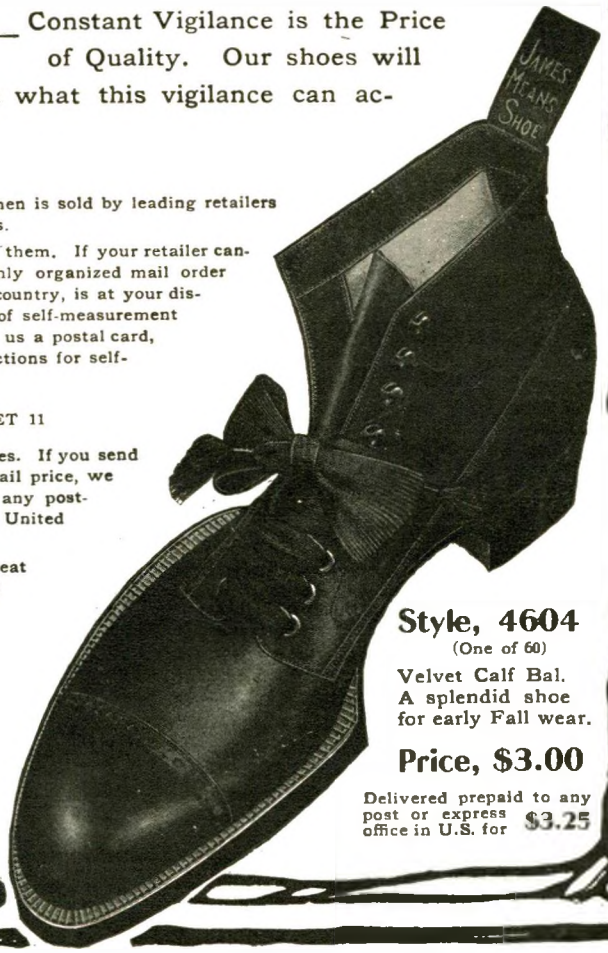
We prefer to have you buy of them. If your retailer cannot supply you, our thoroughly organized mail order department, the oldest in the country, is at your disposal. Our precision system of self-measurement insures accuracy of fit. Drop us a postal card, and we will send you instructions for self-measurement.

ASK FOR BOOKLET 11

It illustrates our various styles. If you send us 25 cents more than the retail price, we will prepay the carriage to any post-office or express office in the United States.

We make these goods in great variety. Many styles carried in stock at factory.

**Charles A. Eaton Company** Makers
BROCKTON
Mass.

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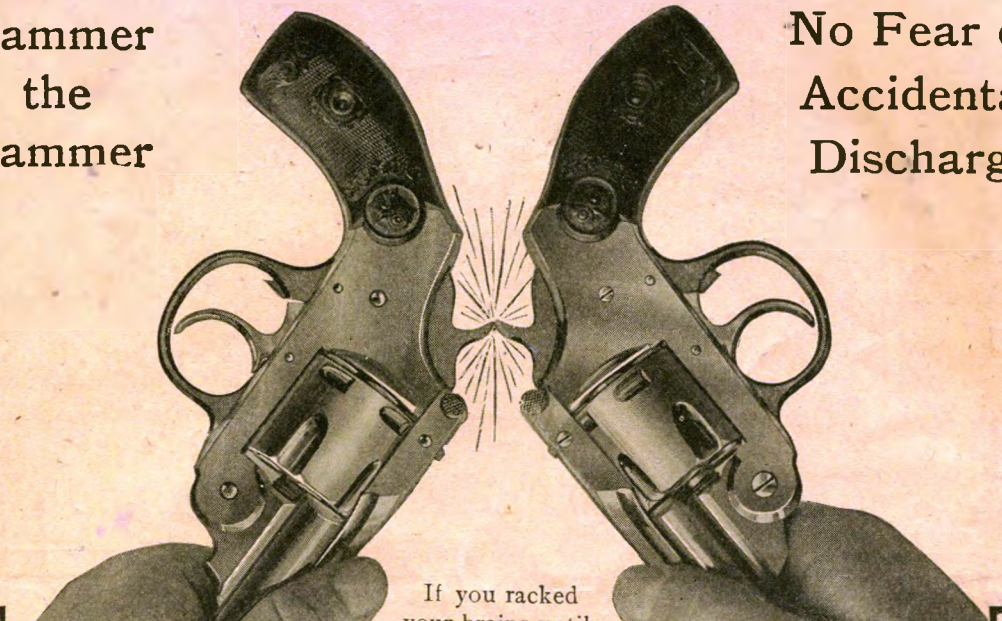

If you racked your brains until doomsday, you could not devise a way to make the hammer of an Iver Johnson Revolver come in contact with the firing pin unless you pulled the trigger all the way back, because when there is no pressure on the trigger of an

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## Safety Automatic Revolver

there's no connection between the revolver hammer and the firing pin. On the other hand, when pressure is applied to the trigger, and it is pulled all the way back, a discharge surely follows.

### This is Not True of Any Other Revolver Ever Made

Pressure on the trigger raises the safety lever, which receives the hammer's blow and transmits it to the firing pin. Simple, yet safe.

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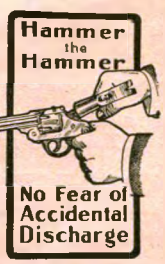

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