PRICE 15 CENTS

Stageland

OCTOBER 1912

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

"You will remember, Miss Melton," announced Joseph Rinaker, the lawyer, when he employed Miss Edith Melton as his stenographer, "that you are a part of the furniture in my office. I expect you to perform the function for which you are hired as perfectly and as unquestioningly as it performs the function for which it was bought." From "THE LURE OF THE LOOP," by Marian Bruntlett Powell, in the September issue of The Red Book Magazine.

Here is a story of "The Loop" district of Chicago that hits the bull's-eye if ever a story did. It is by the woman who wrote "Mabel and the Flabby Philanthropist," the story that caused the big stir last spring. Its chief characters are a fine young fellow from the corn-belt and a stenographer, who may be sized up by her "Be careful, I wear a poisoned belt pin," when the junior member of the firm tries to hug her. It's a story of business and of love; it has action in every line; it's a story people will discuss and remember.

Don't miss it.

In the same number you will find stories from the greatest list of short story writers in the world: Earl Derr Biggers, Harris Merton Lyon, James Oliver Curwood, Frederick R. Bechdolt, Lieut. Hugh Johnson, U. S. A., Hugh Stuart Fullerton, Roy L. McCardell, Ellis Parker Butler and eight others.

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

FOR SEPTEMBER **Price 15 Cents** **For Sale at All News Stands**

THE BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE

The Blue Book Magazine

For November

DID YOU ever think what the word "Magazine" means? "A storehouse; a treasury" is the way the dictionaries define the word. And that's just what the BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE means: a "storehouse, or treasury" of good stories. Take next month's issue, for example: it will start off with an especially fine novelette by Millard Lynch, entitled "The Lady o' the Lake"—a splendid piece of fiction that is sure to delight you by reason of its enthralling mystery, its vital, swift-moving adventure, and its graceful romance. Then there will be a second adventure of "Willie Bill" (see "The Cat Party" in this issue); another "Mystery of the Sea;" number six in the "Fiery Mills of Men" series; an additional "Diplomatic Free Lance" story; and the first of a new group of tales told by that fine old character, "Matt Bardeen, Master Diver." And besides these, there will be some twenty other stories of varied and vivid interest—a veritable "treasury" of true BLUE BOOK fiction.

CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER, 1912

TERMS: $1.50 a year in advance; 15 cents a number. Subscriptions are received by all newsdealers and booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publishers. Remittances must be made by Post-Office or Express Money Order, by Registered Letter, or by Postage Stamps of 2-cent denomination, and not by check or draft, because of the exchange charges against the latter. Foreign postage $1.00 additional. Canadian postage 50 cents.

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TRIXIE FRIGANZA, and CHARLES J. ROSS, as Nancy and Bill Sykes, burlesquing Oliver Twist, in "The Passing Show of 1912."
Photograph by White, New York.

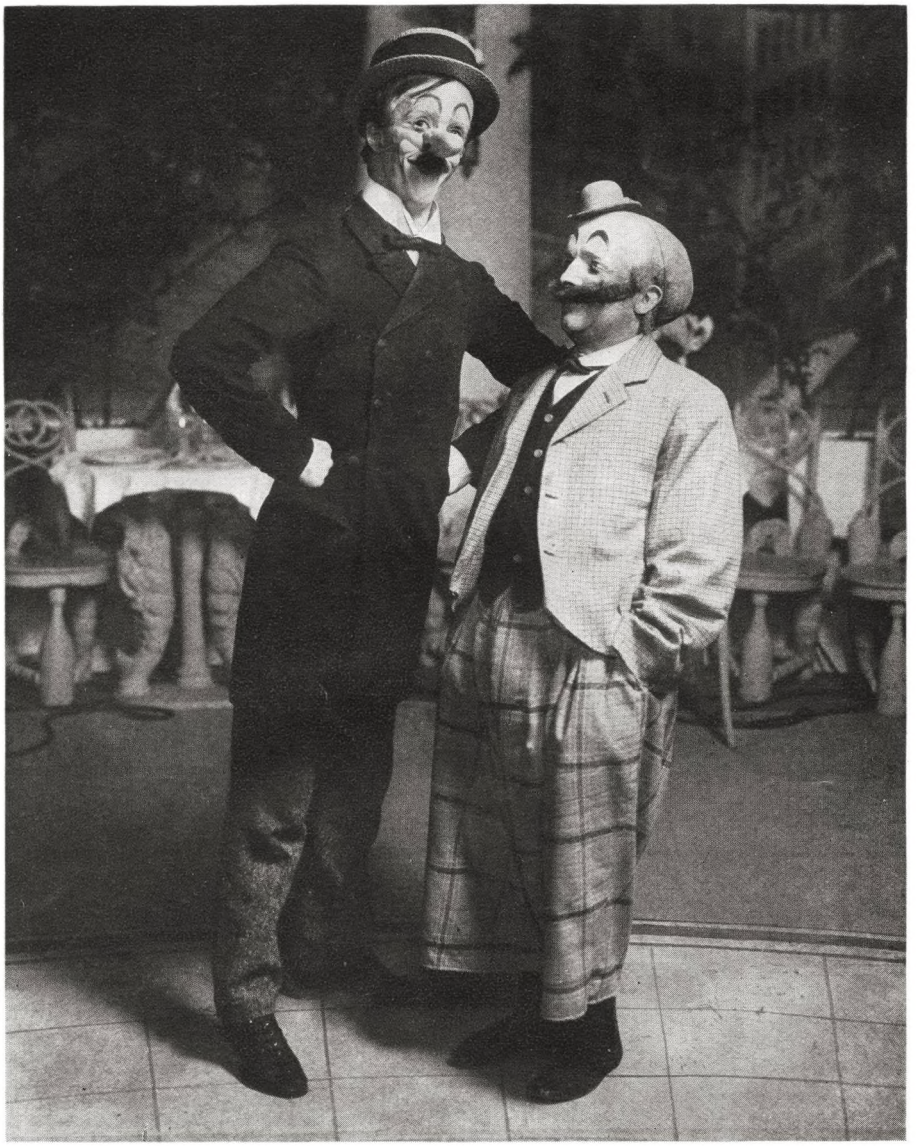
A group of the Chorus appearing in the New York Winter Garden.
Photograph by White, New York.

WILLIE and EUGENE HOWARD, as David Warfield and David Belasco, in "The Passing Show of 1912." *Photograph by White, New York.*

CLARENCE HARVEY, as Andrew Carnegie, and ANNA WHEATON
as The Quaker Girl, in "The Passing Show of 1912.
Photograph by White, New York.

ADELAIDE and HUGHES, in "The Passing Show of 1912."

TRIXIE FRIGANZA, HOWARD BROS., and ERNEST HARE, "The Metropolitan Squawklittle," in "The Passing Show of 1912."
Photograph by White, New York.



DANIEL MORRIS, as Mutt, and GEORGE MOON, as Jeff, in "The Passing Show of 1912." *Photograph by White, New York.*

Latest portraits of DUSTIN (*photograph by White, New York*) and WILLIAM (*photograph by Gould & Marsden, New York*) FARNUM, co-stars in "The Littlest Rebel."

"The Governor's Lady"

By Alice Bradley

Produced by William Elliott and David Belasco

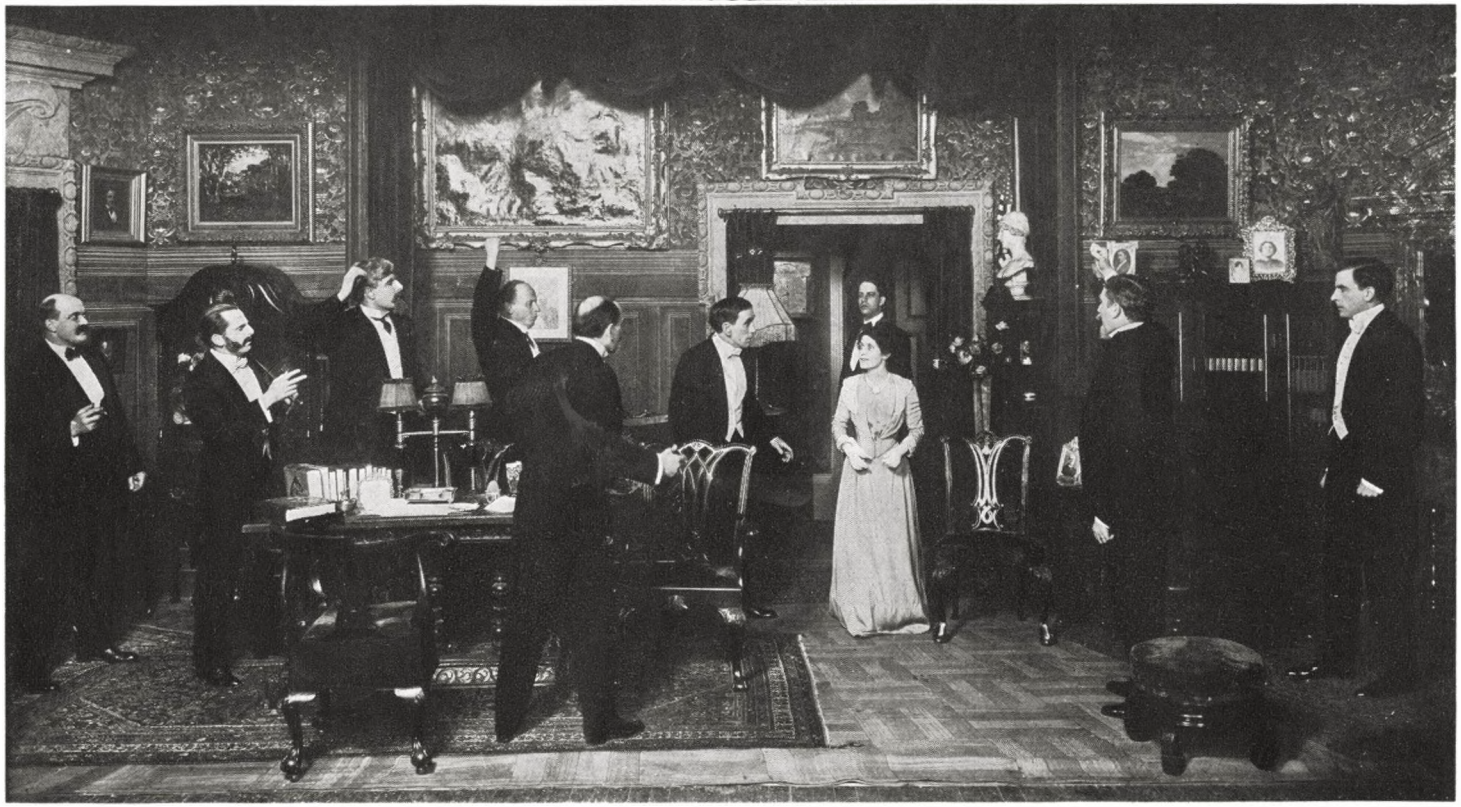
DANIEL S. SLADE, a former miner, becomes a multimillionaire almost overnight, concludes that his wife MARY, who toiled with him until fortune came, but who cares nothing for the pomp of their present life, has not kept pace with him. While he is being considered for Governor, he decides to divorce her, and marry KATHERIN STRICKLAND, the daughter of a State Senator who is eager for wealth and power. MRS. SLADE moves from the Slade mansion to the country cottage where she and her husband had lived before. KATHERINE calls on her there. SLADE interrupts the two women while MARY, with sweet but powerful simplicity, is showing KATHERINE just what she is doing. He tries for reconciliation with his wife, but she divorces him. SLADE becomes Governor, and after two years goes to New York, where MARY is living, to make a speech. MARY hears him, and they meet later in a restaurant, They discover they have always really loved each other, and agree to begin anew.

GLADYS HANSON, MILTON SILLS, and TERESA MAXWELL-CONOVER, in a scene from "The Governor's Lady." *Photograph by White, New York.*

Scene from "The Governor's Lady," showing EMMETT CORRIGAN and EMMA DUNN, in center. *Photograph by White, New York.*

EMMA DUNN, and EMMETT CORRIGAN, in "The Governor's Lady."
Photograph by White, New York.

MILTON SILLS, and GLADYS HANSON, in a scene from "The Governor's Lady." *Photograph by White, New York.*



Ensemble, "The Governor's Lady." *Photograph by White, New York.*

HELEN LACKAYE, who will play the leading rôle in "Just Like John."
Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.

"The Charity Girl"

Libretto by Edward Peple; Music by Victor Hollander

ROSEMARY, a young woman of wealth desiring to uplift humanity, has gone into the East Side of New York with a band of followers to hold street meetings and use methods much like those of the Salvation Army to bring the denizens of the district to salvation. Since her efforts at her chosen style of philanthropy win only the disapproval of the young man with whom she is in love, ROSEMARY decides on another plan. She and her followers go to Atlantic City, where ROSEMARY experiments with being gay and pseudo-bad. This also fails to make the desired impression on her young man, so she tries being just a natural girl—and finds that the key to happiness. *(Produced by George W. Lederer.)*

The Taxicab number in "The Charity Girl."
Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.

RALPH HERZ, and FLORENCE MORRISON, in "The Charity Girl."
Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.

"THE FAWNS" in "The Charity Girl." *Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.*

RALPH HERZ, MARIE FLINN, ROLAND BOTTOMLEY, ANNABELLE WHITFORD, CLAUDE GILLINGWATER, FLORENCE MORRISON, HENRY FINK and BLOSSOM SEELEY, in "The Charity Girl." *Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.*

MARIE FLYNN, and Chorus, in the "Charity Girls" number in "The Charity Girl." *Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.*

MRS. A. H. WOODS, who will be seen in one of her husband's big productions the coming season. *Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.*

"The Divorce Question"

MR. EUGENE LOCKWOOD and his former wife, from whom he is divorced, meet unexpectedly, after years of separation, in the sacristy of the church of Father Jerome. Each has remarried and had children by the second marriage. While they are talking a tumult is heard outside, and a boy and a girl dash into the church to escape a mob. The boy, it develops, is a drug fiend. While under the influence, he has killed a man to rescue his sister from a life of shame. The priest learns that the young people are the children of the LOCKWOODS, who were intrusted to some poor and neglectful relatives at the time of the separation. The mob is dispersed, and the priest appeals to the mother and father to give the children a home. They refuse, each maintaining that it will ruin their social standing to do so. The girl dies heartbroken, and the boy goes to prison. *(Produced by Rowland and Clifford.)*

"The Divorce Question." Act I. BURNETTE RADCLIFFE, as Catharine Spalding; FRANK FRANCIS, as Harold Kicklebush; and CHARLES C. BURNHAM, as Patrick Skelly. *Photograph by Burke & Atwell, Chicago.*

"The Divorce Question." Act II. CHARLOTTE GRANVILLE, as Mrs. Roger Manners; VIRGINIA PEARSON, as Mamie; and EDWARD EMERY, as Herbert Lockwood. *Photograph by Burke & Atwell, Chicago.*

"The Divorce Question." Act III. BURNETTE RADCLIFFE, as Catharine Spalding; CHARLES C. BURNHAM, as Patrick Skelly; and FRANK FRANCIS, as Harold Kicklebush. *Photograph by Burke & Atwell, Chicago.*

"The Divorce Question." Act II. CHARLOTTE GRANVILLE, as Mrs. Roger Manners; FRANK LOSEE, as Father Jerome; WILLIAM MONG, as Dopie Doe; VIRGINIA PEARSON, as Mamie; and EDWARD EMERY, as Herbert Lockwood. *Photograph by Burke & Atwell, Chicago.*

"The Drums of Oude"

By Austin Strong

During the Sepoy rebellion, CAPTAIN HECTOR MAC GREGOR, commanding a company of Highlanders, was in charge of a garrison in Northern India. Anticipating an attack by the frenzied Sepoys, he summoned the Christians of the vicinity into the garrison. Among them was MRS. JACK CLAYTON, a widow, with whom CAPTAIN had been in love during his youth in England. They were parted by a misunderstanding. While the Highlanders fight to save the whites, the misunderstanding between the pair is straightened out and they are reconciled. *(Produced by David Belasco.)*

ELEANOR L'ESTELLE, JACK STANDING, and ED RADCLIFFE, in "The Drums of Oude." *Photograph by White, New York.*

ED RADCLIFFE, and ELEANOR L'ESTELLE, in "The Drums of Oude"
Photograph by White, New York.

JACK STANDING. and natives, in "The Drums of Oude."
Photograph by White, New York.

October 1912

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XV No. 6

Aladdin Jones, Mascot

A Complete Novelette

by

WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

Author of "THE LATE MR. EARLY," "A GIRL IN A MILLION," - - - - - - - etc.

THE TREASURE of the "Argonauts" is the basis of this absorbing narrative. Forty years ago, a band of successful Montana gold-miners pooled their wealth and set out to return in a scow, down the Missouri. They were massacred by Indians, and the gold-laden scow was sunk in mid-stream. The search for this treasure, the romance which develops between two of the searchers, and the perilous adventures they encounter unite to form a tale of exceptional interest.—The Editor.

I

ALADDIN INTRODUCES HIMSELF

McCARDLE, pushing his way through the roystering crowd, came presently to where the landlord stood leaning against the wall. The landlord was short, and thick, and wheezy—of a build and disposition that predisposed him in favor of his own comfort. When a chair was convenient he would be found sitting; when no chair was at hand he would lean, as now, against anything that would safely support him. There was a black clay pipe between his teeth and a benignant smile on his pudgy face. Such a tide of silver as was flowing into the till at Forty-Mile, that night, the old tavern had not known for many a month. Small wonder the landlord's frame of mind was cheerful.

McCardle dropped a tense hand on mine host's arm. "I've been robbed," he whispered in the landlord's ear.

The pleasant expression faded and

the pudgy face went blank. "Eh, what's that?" wheezed the landlord, fixing a vacant stare on the younger man's face.

"I say, Mr. Spangler," repeated McCardle, his voice still guarded, "that I have been robbed. Some one has relieved me of a wallet that I had in the breast pocket of my coat."

Lines of rebuke and irritation emphasized themselves in Spangler's flabby features.

"Say, now, you looky here, young feller," said he, "I'm a law-abidin' man and I keep a law-abidin' place. Even if this shack *is* forty mile from the nighest outpost of civilization, it's an honest shack and nobody can't say it aint run on the square. If you're accusin' me—"

"I'm not accusing you," interrupted McCardle. "I'm merely reporting what has happened so you can help me recover my property. The wallet was in my pocket fifteen minutes ago, and it isn't there now. It must have been taken by some one in the place. Of course the thief didn't stay in the room —he must have left as soon as he got what he wanted. How long have you been standing here by the door, Mr. Spangler?"

"More'n half an hour."

"Can you remember who has gone out within the last twenty minutes?"

"Nobody's gone out."

"In that case," and McCardle's clear blue eyes hardened, "the man who took my wallet is still in this room."

Darius Spangler was a man of slow wit. He seemed to take McCardle's complaint as a fling at the good name of Forty-Mile, and as an indirect slander against himself, who, perforce, stood sponsor for the tavern and for the character of its guests.

"Your name's McCardle, aint it?" he inquired choppily. "Wasn't it McCardle you put on the register?"

"Yes," nodded the other, "John McCardle."

"You got here jest before supper—not more'n three hours ago. Up to the time you rode in and registered I didn't know you from Adam. These other people," and he made a gesture that comprehended the two or three card tables and the bar, "I've knowed a long spell. You're a stranger, and you say you've lost something; and you accuse some one I know of bein' a thief. Now, McCardle, d'you reckon I'm going to line up my friends and search 'em jest because a stranger tells me his pocket's been picked?"

"I expect you," said McCardle sharply, "to do what's right."

"That's my long suit, pilgrim," gurgled Spangler, "but you aint doin' right by one person when you're doin' wrong by another. Savvy? How much money was there in that wallet?"

"No money at all, but—"

"Sufferin' centipedes!" grunted Spangler disgustedly, "then what you makin' a row about?"

"There was a valuable paper in the wallet," went on McCardle, "a paper that means a good deal to me and might mean a good deal to others. If it's now in this room, Mr. Spangler, I intend to have it back. If you'll help me, all right; if you wont, then I'll take the matter into my own hands."

The landlord fell back against the wall and measured his young guest with fresh interest. There was that in McCardle's voice that compelled attention.

The young man was upwards of twenty, brown-skinned, clear-eyed and straight as a hickory sapling. He had registered as hailing from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and his voice, his manner, and even the cut and quality of his clothes pronounced him Eastern.

"You're a tenderfoot, McCardle," said Spangler, "and I'd advise bearin' down on the soft pedal. If you accuse a man of stealin', and don't prove your p'int, there's consequences to be shouldered. Now, most of the boys here tonight belong to a couple of threshin' outfits. They was paid off at the nighest bonanza farm, and they're enjoyin' themselves this Saturday night, and they aint in no mood to stand interference. Ev'ry man jack of 'em's a husky. What show would you stand in such a crowd if you couldn't prove your p'int?"

"I'll take the consequences, Mr. Spangler," answered McCardle.

The landlord wagged his head forebodingly. "Now, for instance," said he, "what d'you want me to do?"

"Talk to them, tell them what's happened and ask them to submit to a search."

Spangler shivered at the mere thought of such an indignity. "It can't be done!" he declared; "they wouldn't stand for it."

"Then," and McCardle's voice grew tense and determined, "you put it up to me? You refuse to help?"

"I wont tangle up with no such game, 'specially when my side-pardner is a man I aint knowed more'n three hours. That's flat."

McCardle gave the landlord a disapproving up-and-down glance, turned on his heel and would have walked away, but just at that moment a bowed form straightened in a near-by chair, arose, stepped forward quickly and caught his arm.

"Don't be in a rush, McCardle!"

The young man turned and found himself face to face with another young man—a seedy, red-haired person with sparkling, good-humored eyes. To McCardle's look of inquiry the stranger returned a laugh.

"Our friend, the landlord," he remarked, "is shy a few chips this round. He claims to know everybody in the hang-out except you. Well, I haven't been on his visiting list for even three hours."

Spangler frowned at the red-haired youth. "If you've got his wallet," he growled, "hand it over."

"That's a funny poke, too. I'm no dip and I haven't got the leather, but I'm here to help McCardle find it. It's his game of muggins, see? And I'm going to help him win out in a way that wont stir up even the most sensitive of these husky buckaroos. But, Spangler, you're in on it. You've got to bear a hand. The glory of Forty-Mile is due for a few crimps if you don't bear a hand and give a shove forward to the cause of right and justice."

The landlord considered. "Who the blazes are you, anyway?" he inquired.

"Can that, for now," replied the other, airily. "Call me Reddy, friend, on account of my Syracuse hair. Why Syracuse? Because it's next to Auburn. Ha, ha. Don't shoot, Spangler, but tell me if you're with us."

"You're a funny little runt, Reddy," said the landlord. "What you goin' to do?"

"We'll turn the key on this bunch and guard the two windows: that is, you'll guard one window, Spangler, and McCardle will take care of the other. I will then proceed to pull off something that will be in the nature of a pleasant diversion."

Suspicion worked into the landlord's flabby face. "I've got to know more about this here diversion before I agree," he declared.

"There's a kettle on a tripod of sticks out back of the house," remarked Reddy.

"Soap kittle. After Mrs. Spangler got through makin' soap she didn't take it in."

"Well," proceeded Reddy, "I want that kettle. Now, tell me: is there a white rooster concealed in your chicken house?"

"Got a white Wyandotte," gurgled the wondering landlord.

"Good! Also bravo! That's just what we want for the rooster test."

"I haven't any time to fool away," spoke up McCardle impatiently, observing that they were being watched by several men in the room.

"Tut, tut!" reproved Reddy. "This is no josh, McCardle, but the real thing." He turned to the landlord. "Bring in the kettle, Spangler, and then get the white rooster and lock the door."

The landlord's curiosity was aroused. How were a soap kettle and a white Wyandotte rooster to locate McCardle's missing wallet? He left the room and presently returned puffing with the kettle.

"I reckon I'm a fool," he remarked as he started after the rooster, "but I'm going to see this through."

A few minutes later he arrived with the fluttering fowl, locked the door and put the key in his pocket, and then took his stand by one of the two windows.

Reddy's preparations did not commend themselves to McCardle. To his matter-of-fact mind the proceedings seemed nonsensical and a mere waste of time.

"While all this is going on, Reddy,"

he demurred, "the thief will have a chance to hide the wallet, or to get away with it."

Reddy leaned forward and whispered: "Believe me, this is no sucker play. And now tell me, haven't you ever heard of Aladdin Jones, Mascot?"

McCardle shook his head.

"What does fame amount to, anyway?" murmured Reddy, disconsolately. "Well, I'm Aladdin Jones, and I want to show you I'm ace high by recovering that wallet. You can't turn the trick with a line-up and a search. This gang wouldn't stand for that. We've got to use diplomacy, and spell it t-a-c-t. Now you mosey to that other window and hang on to your faith in me with both hands."

Less because he believed in Aladdin's "diplomacy" than because he realized the hopelessness of a line-up and man to man search, McCardle turned and walked to the window. From that point he waited and watched.

The office of the Forty-Mile tavern was also the sample room. It was long, low ceiled, and the bar was at one end and the desk at the other. Chairs and card tables were scattered between the bar and the desk. There were fifteen or twenty men in the place, most of them flannel-shirted Dakotans with trousers tucked in their boot-tops. Little by little the attention of all in the big room had been attracted by Spangler. Aladdin Jones and McCardle. The interest was general from the time the landlord had entered with the fluttering rooster, had secured the door and had waddled away to lean against a window sill.

Jones mounted the chair in which he had been sitting and lifted one hand to focus all eyes upon himself.

"Gentlemen," he called, in a loud voice, "a painful duty devolves upon me, but I'm the original red-headed wonder when it comes to taking a fall out of any duty, no matter how painful. A friend of mine has been touched for his pocketbook. It happened right here in this room, and not more than half an hour ago. No one has left the place in that time." Aladdin paused and rubbed his chin. "You know the answer to that just as well as I do," he went on. "Some one who is now within range of my dulcet tones is guilty—"

A threatening murmur came from the rear of the crowd. The murmur swelled to a roar as it reached the front ranks.

"You makin' us out to be thieves?" yelled a man in a Mexican hat.

Aladdin fluttered one hand reassuringly. "You've got your bet down on the wrong number!" he yelled, in order to make himself heard above the clamor. "In about two minutes I'm going to work a hocus pocus with the soap kettle and the rooster. Keep your eyes on the professor!"

The last was a useless admonition. Every thresherman in the place was favoring Aladdin with the closest scrutiny, and their looks were far from pleasant. The man in the bell-crowned Mexican hat seemed more belligerent than any of the others.

He was not a Mexican, at least not so far as McCardle could determine. The fellow was big and broad, of middle age and with a face tanned to a coppery hue. His flannel shirt was open at the throat, disclosing a superb depth of chest, and his sleeves were rolled up above his elbows, displaying massive, hairy arms such as Vulcan might have envied. His eyes were clear and sharp and his features clean-cut, and yet the face had a lawless cast that shattered confidence.

Pushing his way close to Aladdin's improvised rostrum, this man paused to look up into Aladdin's face and shake a fist threateningly.

"We're honest to a man," he shouted, "and we wont stand for it to have a two-by-twice runt of your caliber call us robbers. Eh, boys?" he finished, whirling around.

An approving roar answered the appeal.

"Right you are, Hungerford!" said one. "Pull him off'n that chair, Nate!" cried another. "Let's run him out o' camp, fellers!" suggested a third.

McCardle, from his post by the window, watched this growing hostility with uneasiness. He himself would have been the storm center of the tumult had not the red-haired stranger thrust him aside.

Aladdin Jones, however, was not in the least intimidated by the angry clamor that surrounded him. With a keen insight into human nature, he went straight at the task of exciting the crowd's curiosity—for curiosity dams the streams of action; and for his own safety, and for the success of his plan regarding the wallet, it was necessary for him to transform that crowd into a passive and interested gathering.

"Gentlemen," he whooped, flourishing his arms, "before you give me the gaff let me have a chance to make good! I'm not accusing all of you, but only one of you. There's a thief in this room! All of you are square except one, and you can't afford to let one throw suspicion over the whole crowd. The door is locked and the windows are guarded. Neither the landlord nor the man who lost the wallet can be accused; for that reason, they have been posted at the windows.

"Now, listen! That kettle"—and he pointed dramatically to the humble utensil—"is going to be placed in the center of the room; the white Wyandotte rooster is going to be put under it; you are all to form in line, with me at your head; the light will be turned out; then, to the tune of 'John Brown's Body,' we'll march around the kettle; each man will touch the bottom of the kettle as he passes it—understand?—*and when the thief touches the kettle the rooster will crow.* It's a—"

The roar of anger had died while Aladdin was talking, but now there was another roar—a roar of derision. It welled up from every part of the room, and the thin voice of the youth on the chair was completely submerged.

Aladdin grinned. He knew he was winning his point. Human nature everywhere is veneered with superstition. Aladdin had scratched this veneer, and the big threshermen were scoffing to hide their weakness.

The derisive yells faded little by little into silence. There was not much hostility now. A jesting spirit had been aroused, and the brawny threshers bantered each other boyishly, and threw jeers at the youth on the chair.

"Think I'm a four-flusher, eh," cried Aladdin. "You don't think the rooster will crow when the thief touches the kettle? Why, men, this test is thousands of years old and has come down to us from the ancient Egyptians. The fact that you never heard of it before doesn't prove that it wont work. Shall we try it?"

"Go ahead with your hocus pocus, young feller," encouraged the barkeeper, coming around the end of the bar and wiping his beer-stained fingers on his apron. "This here's as good as a show. Line up there," he added, facing the crowd.

Hooting and chaffing, the men began to arrange themselves in an orderly row down one side of the room. Card table and chairs were pushed back against the wall to make room for operations.

Then, very impressively and with the air of some high priest performing a pagan rite, Aladdin Jones descended from his perch, carried the kettle to the center of the room and at once took the fowl from the landlord and turned the kettle over it.

"Friend," observed Aladdin to the barkeeper, "I'm going to put you in charge of the light. Turn it out when I tell you to, and when I give the word set it going again."

"That's me," answered the barkeeper, grinning widely.

The room was illuminated with a large tin lamp that swung from the center of the ceiling. The accommodating barkeeper pulled a chair under the lamp, mounted it and stood waiting for the word from Aladdin.

"Let 'er go!" said Aladdin, placing himself at the head of the column.

"I'm in on this," said the barkeeper, as the flame dwindled under his twisting fingers; "I'll bring up the rear of the percession."

McCardle, leaning against the window, found himself wondering; was there more to Aladdin Jones than he had surmised? Here, undoubtedly, was a very foolish performance, but there might be a grain of rare wisdom at the bottom of it.

Thick darkness settled over the room. As the black gloom fell, silence fell with it. Only the heavy breathing

of the men could be heard, and the lumbering feet of the barkeeper as he descended from the chair and took his place at the rear of the line.

"Are you all ready?" inquired Aladdin in a sepulchral voice.

"Ready!" came the answer.

"We'll file around the kettle from left to right, and each of you will touch the kettle with his right hand. Lay the hand flat down on the kettle and give the rooster a chance. Now, then!"

The line got in motion and Aladdin began singing the John Brown song. Other voices joined in with his. McCardle heard the steps advance, heard a *thump, thump* as hands slapped the kettle, and then heard the steps recede. The white Wyandotte under the kettle had made no sound. Here and there a jeering laugh came from the gloom.

"Did each one of you touch the kettle?" demanded the voice of Aladdin Jones.

A chorus of affirmatives was the answer.

"I can't understand this," went on Aladdin, in a perplexed tone. "We'll try it again, if you don't mind. From left to right, understand, and be sure and touch the kettle with your right hand."

The marching and the singing were resumed. Again they ceased, and still the white Wyandotte had given no sound. Everybody was jeering now.

"Light!" ordered Aladdin.

The barkeeper could be heard leaving his place, mounting a chair and scratching a match. Presently the lamp was shedding its full radiance and a half circle of derisive faces was revealed. Aladdin was standing in front of the men.

"Did **you** all touch the kettle?" he asked.

"We did!" came the unanimous shout.

"Hold up your right hands!"

Every right hand was raised, and every right hand held a smear of black from the kettle's bottom—that is, *every right hand but one.*

"Look at that man!" cried Aladdin, leveling a finger at the fellow in the Mexican hat. "Look at him! There is no black on his hand! He was afraid to touch the kettle! Why was he afraid? Because he has McCardle's wallet in his pocket. Search him and see."

As in a dream, McCardle watched while half a dozen men, led by the barkeeper, hurled themselves upon the struggling Hungerford and wrested a long pocketbook from his coat.

"Is that your wallet, McCardle?" demanded Aladdin, turning upon the young man by the window.

"Yes," replied McCardle, coming forward.

With an oath Hungerford tore himself clear of the hands that held him.

"Stop him!" wheezed Spangler. "Don't let him get away!"

Hungerford had picked up a chair. He swept it in a vicious circle around him, then hurled it at the lamp. There followed a crash as the lamp, thrown from its bracket, struck the floor. Fortunately, its flame was extinguished as it fell.

Bedlam reigned in the big room. There were yells of anger, a scraping of hurried feet, then another crash of breaking glass.

"The window!" shouted Aladdin, his voice rising high above the hubbub; "he's made a get-away by the window!"

"I've unlocked the door," bellowed Spangler. "Go after him, you huskies!"

There followed a rush for the door, and Forty-Mile tavern emptied itself into the night.

II

A BREAK IN THE RUN OF LUCK

McCardle, believing that he had no further interest in Hungerford, did not join in the man's pursuit. He was borne out of the tavern, however, by the rush of the crowd. Standing close to the brink of the bluff on which the tavern was built, he watched the dim forms of the pursuers as they hurried past and faded into the deeper shadows of the starlit night.

It was a matter of justice that spurred on the threshers—and also that desire for excitement which, in a new country, is always lying close to the surface of public affairs.

When the last man had vanished, McCardle thrust the wallet into the breast of his coat and looked below him, where the tide of the Missouri washed the foot of the bluff on its sluggish journey toward the Mississippi. While he stood there, readjusting himself to the normal events of life, a hand touched his shoulder and a laughing voice murmured in his ear:

"We put one over that time, eh? Now what do you think of your Uncle Al as a mascot?"

It was Aladdin Jones, of course. He was as little interested in Hungerford's fate, now that the wallet had been recovered, as was McCardle.

"Mascot?" echoed McCardle, clasping Aladdin's hand heartily. "Why, Jones, it wasn't a case of mascot, or luck, but of doing an immensely clever thing and getting results. You're a wonder, and no mistake. I'm obliged to you."

"Any little thing like that a friend of mine is welcome to. We can't get together, though, on what you consider a mascot."

"Isn't a mascot a luck producer?"

"Not a producer, McCardle, but a luck *bringer*. Do you rise to the difference? There's luck, ready made, scattered all around and only waiting to be grabbed. I've developed the knack of grabbing it—for others. I have my limitations, you see, and can't grab any for myself. That's where the mascot part comes in. A little head-work's the charm. And I'm the red-headed charmer that helps his fellow men—and make a bobble of it every time I try to help myself. It's awful, but it's true." He paused a moment. "I'm out of a job just now," he finished, "and if you want a mascot, suppose we trot in double harness?"

"I'd like first rate to have you for a partner, Aladdin," laughed McCardle, "but a mascot is a luxury I can't afford."

"Take on a luck bringer," advised Aladdin, "and I'll wise you up that you can afford it, all right. If a mascot can't pay for his board and keep a dozen times over, he's a false alarm. Try me; that's all I ask. If you fall in with the plan, pass me a five-spot so I can drop into the tavern and get a hand-out and a place to pound my ear. I'm in a starving condition, McCardle, and if a mascot is to work successfully he must do it on a full stomach."

"That's right, too, and here's a fiver, whether we trot in double harness or not."

McCardle drew from his pocket a roll of bills, lit a match, selected a banknote from the roll and handed it to his companion.

"I'm obliged to you, friend," said Aladdin. "I came to you in your hour of need and now you have generously reciprocated. But don't let this end it," he begged. "Don't pass up a good thing when it gets right in your way and clamors for recognition. Listen: if you don't feel like putting me on your payroll, why, just stand good for my eats and sleeps, and such other little perquisites as you feel inclined to give out of the largess of good fortune I bring to you. How's that?"

McCardle, as a matter of fact, felt that he owed Aladdin much more than five dollars for the service just rendered. By his wits the red-haired youth had helped McCardle surmount a very difficult situation, and the Easterner was grateful. If his own wishes alone were considered he would have been inclined to meet these friendly advances more than half way; but he was not in North Dakota entirely upon his own affairs, and he could not risk the interest of another by any entangling alliances.

"I'll think about it, Aladdin," said he.

"You're not hep to my abilities," returned the other sadly. "I haven't convinced you that I'm ace-high as a mascot."

"Others are concerned in the business that brings me to this part of the country. While I feel under obligations to you for helping me, Aladdin, and while I should like personally to have you for a partner, yet I've got to consider—some one else. I was told not to let anyone help me—not only that, but I was told to look with suspicion upon anyone who offered his services. For you, of course, I can feel no such thing as suspicion, but I am in duty

bound to keep to the letter of my instructions."

Aladdin fell silent for a space. "It's important business that brings you here?" he inquired finally.

"Very important," answered McCardle.

"When I was young," said Jones, "and had no voice at all in the matter, my doting parents labeled me Albert Adden Jones—after two grandfathers, Albert Todgers, on my mother's side, and Adden Jones, on my father's. Fate was already at work. Al Adden Jones. Rise to that? 'Aladdin' was but a step, and I took it as soon as I was old enough to realize my possibilities. The Slaves of the Lamp, McCardle, are my humble servants. They wont work for me but I can make them work for you."

Had not McCardle been deeply impressed wth Aladdin's cleverness he would have laughed at his occult pretensions.

"This is the twentieth century, Aladdin," said he soberly, "and the world hasn't much time for those old fairy tales."

"Because why?" inquired Aladdin. "Because that old double-X brand of dope is coming true. I can read your horoscope like print, McCardle,"—his voice grew tensely earnest—"and you take it from me: If you don't keep Aladdin Jones within arm's reach of you from now on you're going to get double-crossed good and plenty."

"I'll have to take my chances on that. My instructions leave me no choice."

"You'll be sorry," declared the red-headed youth gruesomely. "Things will begin to go wrong with you as soon as we separate. I'll try to be within hailing distance, though, and if you get into more trouble than you can handle, just flag me. Now I'm off for the Forty-Mile kitchen to rout out the Chink cook and sidetrack a grubstake. Remember, McCardle," he finished impressively, "Aladdin Jones, Mascot, is your friend. All he's waiting for is the high sign to come ahead. *Adios,* for this once."

Aladdin disappeared toward the rear of the tavern. McCardle watched with puzzled eyes until his slim figure had faded into the dark shadow of the building.

"He's an odd stick," thought the Easterner, "and he seems to take himself pretty seriously in spite of his foolishness. I wish, with all my heart, I hadn't promised Crawley to see this through alone. I'm sure Jones is straight goods, and that he could be of considerable help. But,"—here he made an emphatic gesture as he started toward the tavern—"I'm pledged to go it alone."

A light had appeared in the open door of the tavern bar-room and office. Passing into the building, McCardle found that the barkeeper had lighted another lamp and was scraping up the fragments of the one that had been broken. He was the only person in the room.

"Haven't the fellers had any luck chasin' Hungerford?" he asked as McCardle came through the door.

"No one has come back to report," said McCardle.

"He's a bad egg, that feller. He came within one of burnin' up this shack of Spangler's. If the lamp hadn't gone out when it fell, they'd all of 'em be fightin' fire instead of chasin' a trouble-maker. Say!"

The barkeeper straightened up and drew a sleeve across his forehead.

"Well?" returned McCardle.

"That Red Head is a good ways from bein' bughouse. He worked the slickest dodge here I ever seen in my life. Where'd he come from?"

"Give it up."

The admiration that beamed in the barkeeper's face gave way to blank astonishment. "I thought he said you and him was friends?" he observed.

"We are."

"And you don't know where he came from?"

"No. If you'll show me where to sleep I guess I'll go to bed."

The barkeeper, on his way to the desk at the other end of the room, stepped aside to look through the door in the direction taken by Hungerford's pursuers.

"Nate Hungerford's a bad pill," he muttered, leaving the door and passing on with a gloomy shake of the head.

From a shelf behind the desk he took a tin candlestick with a half-burned candle.

"Does Hungerford live around here?" asked McCardle.

"I don't reckon he lives anywhere, Nate don't," was the answer, as a match was applied to the candle wick. "He rolled in here from Montana, and they do say he got out of Montana becus it was too hot to hold him. But I dunno. Where's that Reddy feller? I'd like to get better acquainted with him."

"You'll have the chance, no doubt. He's to put up here for the night."

The barkeeper, candle in hand, led McCardle through a door and on into a wing of the sprawling, one-story building. He left him finally in a six-by-ten room with a board bunk for a bed, an empty crackerbox for a washstand and one broken chair. McCardle had been long enough in North Dakota to learn that it was best not to be too fastidious about his accommodations. And, anyhow, he was in no mood to be critical, for a thirty-mile horseback ride had left him dog-tired.

Disrobing quickly, he locked his door, thrust the wallet and a small six-shooter under his pillow, fell into bed and was soon asleep. He awoke with the clamor of a bell dinning in his ears —awoke to find that it was broad day and that night had passed with the swiftness of magic. He bounded from his bed and stepped to the window. Over the top of the bluff he caught a glimpse of the yellow tide of the Missouri, and of the low, farther shore, dim in the early morning.

"This isn't such a bad country, after all," he thought, thrusting his head into the outer air and rinsing his lungs with the crisp ozone.

After splashing around in the tin washbasin, he got into his clothes; and after he was clad, he pulled the wallet and revolver from under his pillow. The weapon he thrust into his hip-pocket, and he was about to place the wallet in the breast of his coat when, under a sudden impulse, he paused, opened the long leather flaps and drew out a folded paper.

The moment his eyes fell on the paper, alarm struck through his face. The original paper, the paper that had been entrusted to his care, was yellow, and old, and soiled. This was new and fresh, this document which he now discovered in the wallet. In consternation he dropped the long pocketbook and, with trembling fingers, opened out the paper. It was blank!

For a space he stood staring; and then, with glassy eyes, he staggered back against the wall, the paper fluttering from his nerveless fingers.

"Fooled!" The word came in a whisper from his tense lips. "Hungerford changed the papers," he went on dazedly, "and then bolted with the one he wanted. No wonder he was in such a rush to get away. I—I opened the wallet in the dark, after the lamp was smashed—and when I felt this other paper with my fingers I was sure I had recovered my property. Now—now—"

McCardle drew his hand across his face. The movement seemed to free him from the spell cast over him by his unsettling discovery. With a jump he gained the door, unlocked it and threw it open. A moment later he burst into the big room at the end of the hall. Some one got up from a chair and stepped in front of him.

"Hello, McCardle!" called a voice. "I've been waiting for you. From the looks of you I should say you'd copped out a piece of hard luck since we parted. I warned you, didn't I? What's gone wrong?"

McCardle told him.

"Never mind," said Aladdin soothingly. "Hook up with me and you'll get that paper back again. It's a cinch."

"Was Hungerford captured last night?" queried McCardle hopelessly.

"No. The landlord says he took to the river in a skiff and faded in the direction of the farther bank. Hungerford had help. A man who limped as he walked was waiting for him on the river bank with the skiff. It was so dark that—"

"A man with a limp?" gulped McCardle.

"That's the way I get it," said Aladdin. "Are you wise to that duck?"

"I'm sure I am. When Hungerford stole that paper, Aladdin, he wasn't working for himself. He was only a

tool. I'm in for it now, and no mistake."

McCardle sank gloomily into a chair.

III

THE TENT ON THE ISLAND

"Chirk up, McCardle," urged Aladdin. "I'll sign on with you, and we'll show Hungerford and this dub with the game leg just how much freight you can haul in a pinch. Luck turned on you, last night, because you turned on me; now come back to uncle, and the past will be wiped out and forgiven."

"Hungerford works with a threshing gang?" inquired McCardle, mustering all his courage and determination in the face of disaster.

"He did work with a threshing gang up to yesterday," answered Aladdin, "but he took his time and was his own boss when he flocked in here with the others last night."

"He went across the river with Perry?"

"If Perry's the man who ambles with a hitch, then it's the general supposition that they struck for the farther shore of the Big Muddy. But general suppositions and guesses of the mob never make much of a hit with me. If you're willing to take my little hand in yours, it's dollars to chalk-marks I can lead you to a place where prospects are a heap brighter than across the river."

"What place is that?"

"Do we hook up, or don't we?" returned Aladdin. "Board and keep, for mine, with any gratuities you may consider me entitled to after the other side takes the count. What's the word, McCardle?"

Jones was resourceful—McCardle had had abundant proof of that. In his present straits the Easterner felt the need of a companion on whom he could depend. "Make no friends; keep mum; depend on yourself," Crawley had said. Then he had added with a scowl: "If you slop over, and fall down on this business, McCardle, you'll lose a fortune—and maybe your scalp along with it." Should McCardle turn his back on his instructions and accept the proffered assistance of Aladdin Jones? He had decided this in the negative, the evening before—but that was when he believed his property had been recovered, and that only clear sailing lay between him and his prospective goal; now the situation was vastly different, and he concluded that he had everything to gain and very little to lose by taking up with Aladdin.

He put out his hand. "It's a go, Aladdin!" said he.

"That's where you're one-two-seven, old fel!" approved Aladdin. "We're the original sure-thing couple, us two, and by hunting in pairs we're going to bag your quarry with ground to spare."

"You've got some sort of a clue?" asked McCardle.

"I have; but don't bother me with any interrogation points. Your cue is to drop in behind and follow my lead and grab off the good things as I hustle you past 'em. First off, we'll sit in at the chuck-table and warehouse our first square of the day. I don't think we'll get back before night, so we'd better take our noon rations along."

"But where are we going?" insisted McCardle.

"To find what belongs to you. When you trust a mascot, McCardle, you don't bother him with questions." The notes of a gong broke stridently through the morning air. "Breakfast!" cried Aladdin. "Go to it!"

A crowd of men, looking rather bedraggled and out of sorts after a night of dissipation and excitement, crowded up to the tables in the dining-room. Aladdin was received by every man with marks of silent but profound respect. The stares directed at McCardle were mainly curious.

"Well, you got it back, huh?" wheezed the landlord.

The Easterner was about to reply that it was only an insignificant part of the stolen property that had been recovered when he caught a warning gleam of Aladdin's eye. He nodded.

"Your red-headed friend's a progidy," averred Spangler. "That rooster trick's the slickest thing I ever seen."

"Progidies are born and not made," grinned Aladdin, "—same as poets."

The landlord grunted and waddled on. The breakfast talk concerned Hungerford, principally. It was wonderful how many of those threshermen had always suspected him of being no better than he ought to be, when, on the preceding evening, they had come so near resenting Aladdin's talk with rought treatment.

"Who was that Limpin' Jimmy that was waitin' with the skiff?" inquired some one. "The night was so dark I couldn't see his face, but it's a cinch he was in cahoots with Hungerford."

No one in the room, barring McCardle, seemed to have any knowledge of the man with the limp—and McCardle had nothing to say. What he knew he was keeping to himself.

"Jones and I are going on a little excursion," said McCardle to the landlord, immediately after breakfast, "and we may not be back in time for dinner, so—"

"No use, McCardle," cut in Spangler choppily. "You couldn't catch that feller in a hundred years."

"What do we want of Hungerford?" spoke up Aladdin. "Didn't my friend here get back his wallet?"

"Sure,"—and the landlord's face went blank a little. "Mebby," he added, "you want to find him to put him through."

Aladdin laughed. "This is just a plain excursion," said he, "without any fancy crimps."

"Then you want a couple o' hosses," puffed Spangler.

"No, no horses."

McCardle himself was surprised. An excursion that was to take up the better part of the day, and without horses!

"You aint goin' to walk?" gasped Spangler.

"Leave that to us, friend," continued Aladdin. "All we'll ask of you is a hand-out in a paper bag; make it enough for four and I reckon it'll do for two. I've been on short allowance for a month, and now I'm just beginning to play even."

The landlord puffed away in the direction of the kitchen, and presently returned with a small canvas bag bloated with tinned-beef sandwiches.

"I reckon this'll be as much dinner as you can take care of," he remarked, handing the bag to Aladdin. "It aint often I let folks go like this," he added, "with no more line on 'em than I've got on you, and their bills unpaid."

"My horse is in your hands, Mr. Spangler," said McCardle. "If we don't come back you can keep him for what we owe you."

"That's fair, all right—providin' it's your hoss."

"Cut it out," grumbled Aladdin. "Think we're a couple of pikers? Come on, Mac."

He led the way northward, laying an angling course that would bring him to the river at the foot of the bluff. McCardle, not a little puzzled by his companion's actions, strode along at his side. A look behind showed th landlord, braced against the wall of hi tavern, staring after them with won dering eyes.

A mile above the tavern the riv made a turn to the westward. As descended the north slope of the bluff, at Aladdin's heels, McCardle's gaze comprehended this sweeping bend, every little wavelet glittering under the rays of the sun.

"Is this to be a walking tour, Aladdin?" asked McCardle.

"Nay, little one," the Mascot flung over his shoulder. "I'm a wonder at changing spots and breaking out in widely separated places on the map. For lo, these many years I have wandered, but rarely afoot. I have a constitutional weakness for saving my shoe-leather, and run to side-door Pullmans and brake-beams of the Limited. Neither horse nor wagon brought me to Forty-Mile, and yet I did not travel on my kicks. What's the answer? Follow me in here and I'll show you."

They had passed from the foot of the bluff and had reached a point at the water's edge where grew a thicket of young willows. Aladdin, followed closely by McCardle, crowded through the rank growth and halted at a bit of a cove which the river had eaten out of its bank.

"Presto!" cried Aladdin, waving his hand. "What do you think of that, eh?"

A battered old gasoline launch lay under McCardle's eyes. At the edge of

the cove was a boulder as large as a small house. It was half immersed in the water, and the motor boat lay alongside, nodding to the cables that secured it fore and aft. The craft was not more than fourteen feet in length, the gunwale scarred and splintered in places and the hull sadly in need of paint. The engine was in the stern and open to the weather. A small amount of plunder was piled in the bow—McCardle distinguished a roll of bedding and a rusty can, presumably filled with gasoline.

"Some peacherino, that," observed Aladdin, taking in the lines of the boat with a doting eye. "And she can run like a scared coyote when I let her out. I call her the *Happy-go-Lucky*. Got her in a raffle, down at Bismarck. I couldn't draw so much as a green persimmon in any man's lottery, but I fraternized with a cowboy, got him to buy a ticket and handed him a couple of cartwheels beforehand for whatever he drew. The *Happy-go-Lucky* is what came out of the shuffle."

"You came up from Bismarck in the boat?" said McCardle, surveying the craft doubtfully.

"Sure. Got in last evening and hid her out in the chaparral."

"Have you navigated these waters very much?"

"I went around the bend about sundown yesterday, and then concluded to drop back here and spend the night at Forty-Mile."

"Pleasure voyage?"

"I went at it happy-go-lucky—my aim in life is what gives the boat her name—but I had the hope that I'd tangle up with somebody who wanted to kiss his Jonah-days good-by. Climb in, Mac, while I cast off."

Very carefully McCardle got into the boat. Again Aladdin's resourcefulness was asserting itself, and the Easterner's confidence in him was returning. Aladdin came aboard with the bow rope, scrambled past his companion to the stern, tinkered with the switches and then began manipulating the flywheel. After one or two dexterous turns, the wheel settled down to business and the *Happy-go-Lucky* barked her way stern-foremost out of the cove.

"We're off!" cried Aladdin, reversing the boat's motion and grasping the long tiller that jutted out over the engine. "You'll find a gun in that roll of bedding, Mac. It isn't much of a gun but there's a hot end to it."

"Are we going to need a gun?" asked McCardle, picking up the roll of bedding and extracting a solid-framed Colt's revolver that looked as though it might have come down from the Custer massacre.

"Well, we're not going to scratch our entries just because we have to shoot to get back your property, are we?"

McCardle was troubled. He was willing to go almost any length in order to recover the stolen document, but gun-play was not exactly spelling diplomacy with t-a-c-t.

"You'd better take this," said he, handing the Colt's to Aladdin. "I've got one of my own."

"Wow!" exulted Aladdin, laying the weapon on the seat beside him. "You're no counterfeit, Mac, but the real goods. If anybody falls off the earth, this round, it wont be us. Now, fix your lamps on the left-hand side of the river. See that patch of scrub cottonwoods about fifty yards off the bank?"

The *Happy-go-Lucky* was churning around the bend and the farther reach of the Missouri was coming under McCardle's eyes. He allowed his gaze to settle slowly in the direction indicated by Aladdin. Toward the left-hand bank there was a break in the river's current, the waters parting around a low islet covered with brush and small cottonwoods.

"I see it," said McCardle.

"Don't let your gazers lose it for a second," went on Aladdin. "This battleship is going to invest that island, and we've got to make a landing. If you see any yaps moving to and fro in the brush, we'll give 'em a hail and beat to quarters. The river's east and west, here above the bend, and we're going to go up-stream and come down with the current from the west. 'Just befo-o-re the battle, mother, with the enemy in view'—or words to that effect. How's your temperature, Mac?"

"Normal," laughed McCardle. "You see, Aladdin, we haven't stirred up any-

one on the island. If that turtleback was inhabited, the people would certainly be tumbling out to see what's making this noise on the river."

"The only thing the *Happy-go-Lucky* lacks is an under-water exhaust," observed Aladdin. "She's the big noise, and no mistake, but there's more to her than that." A troubled look crossed the face of the Mascot. "I wonder if they've pulled their freight?" he added, more to himself than to his companion, studying the island sharply as the boat came abreast of it at a distance of less than two hundred feet.

"Wonder if *who* pulled their freight?" demanded McCardle.

"Why, I saw an 'A' tent on that cottonwood hummock, yesterday afternoon, but I raised it as I bore down from the west."

"And you think that Hungerford and the lame man are in that tent?"

"That's my guess."

McCardle's ardor went down several degrees. "Have you any particular reason for guessing that those men are there?" he went on.

"No reason except the hunch; but you can gamble your pile on my hunches, Mac, whenever I'm mascoting. Now we turn, and come down on that island with a bone in our teeth."

The *Happy-go-Lucky* swept around in a wide half-circle and dropped back toward the island like a racehorse. McCardle's straining eyes detected a flash of white that excited him a little even if it brought no particular encouragement.

"I can see the tent!" he announced.

"Hooray!" gloried Aladdin. "My money was down on the turn of that card! Heel yourself, Mac, and get ready to flatten out under the bulwarks."

With a strange tingling of the nerves, McCardle pulled the six-shooter from his pocket and watched the island alertly as they rushed toward it. The tent, it appeared, was on the highest part of the bit of detached land. In front of it, the trees broke away so that it could be seen very plainly from the west. Not a soul was in evidence, however, to challenge their landing.

"I don't believe," hazarded McCardle, hopefully, "that there's anyone in the tent or on the island."

"Don't be too sure of that," returned Aladdin.

"If there are people there, why don't they show themselves?"

"Like as not they want to catch us napping by lying low. But we'll see."

Aladdin shut off the power and the current brought the boat's nose easily against the soft mud of the bank. For a few moments McCardle and Aladdin kept their seats, watching and listening. Neither hearing nor seeing anything to alarm them, they scrambled ashore and made the bow painter fast to one of the cottonwoods.

"Wouldn't this curl your hair?" whispered Aladdin, ranging alongside his companion with the Colt's gripped tightly in his right hand. "Either they're hiding out and planning to get past our guard, or else they're away somewhere. I can't see the skiff that was bumping against the island when I came along last night, so it may be that they're ashore somewhere. Let's move on, Mac."

They proceeded cautiously into the undergrowth and on up a slight slope to the open flap of the tent. No one had appeared, and no sound other than that made by the lapping waves and their own movements had reached their ears.

In front of the tent were two flat, smoke-blackened stones on which the campers had evidently done their cooking. Aladdin touched the stones and found them warm. A coffee-pot, a frying pan and other cooking utensils were scattered about. On a line stretched between two trees a flannel shirt and several pairs of socks were drying. The two intruders stepped into the tent and found a couple of folding canvas chairs, two cots, a box of provisions and an old, hide-bound trunk.

"We're masters of all we survey," chuckled Aladdin, his apprehension fading. "Our right there is none to dispute. This is what comes of having a mascot, Mac."

"That part of it is all right, Aladdin," returned McCardle, "but I haven't recovered my missing property

yet. Even if Hungerford and the man with a limp own this camp, I don't see how we're going to land that valuable document unless we meet them personally. You see, that paper is the only thing I care about."

"You keep forgetting," complained Aladdin, "that I'm a mascot. It's my business to corral the unusual and the unexpected and throw them down in front of you. Let's frisk around a bit. You try the trunk while I look into the bedding."

Not at all sanguine—in fact, somewhat fearful that they were taking liberties with the property of innocent persons—McCardle stepped to the trunk and heaved at the lid. He fully expected to find it locked and was greatly surprised when the lid yielded and came open under his hands. Rough clothing, neatly folded, lay before his eyes; and, on top of it, was a long folded paper, yellowed with age and soiled with much handling. The Easterner recoiled with a gasp of astonishment.

"What's to pay?" called Aladdin from one of the cots.

"It's—it's here!" answered McCardle, huskily.

"Then tally another for the mascot!" laughed Aladdin. "You're not going off the jump, are you, Mac? This is what I'm hired for."

Stunned with bewilderment, McCardle picked up the paper and opened it mechanically. Yes, it was the original paper—the one Crawley had given him.

But while he stood looking at it, and while the delighted Aladdin gazed over his shoulder, a voice came sharply from behind them—a musical voice, indeed, but none the less startling and compelling:

"I'll trouble you for that, Mr. Hungerford! It belongs to me, and not to you."

McCardle and Aladdin whirled around. They were confronted by two young women—one of them white and the other an Indian. The white girl had a small rifle at her shoulder and was peering along the barrel at McCardle. Her companion was facing Aladdin with flashing eyes.

IV

HEIRS OF THE ARGONAUTS

McCardle, not long from the conventional environs of Grand Rapids, Michigan, felt a chill of self-reproach overcoming the sudden hot flashes of consternation that swept through him. He had presumed to intrude upon the privacy of two young lady campers, was his first lucid thought, and he wished that some friendly earthquake would happen along and kindly engulf him. Then, slowly, during the embarrassing stage wait that followed, and while the Indian girl glared at Aladdin, and McCardle looked stonily into the muzzle of the small rifle, there came other thoughts that were more reassuring.

First, the small washing on the line outside went far to prove that the camp did not belong to the young women. Again, McCardle had found his stolen paper in the old trunk; and, yet again, he had been addressed as "Hungerford" by the lady who was looking at him over the rifle sights. His dismay faded somewhat and he became surer of himself. He took account of the appearance of the two who had so abruptly presented themselves.

The white girl had brown hair and eyes and had on a very fetching stocking-cap. She wore a blouse, a knee-length skirt and serviceable shoes with leggings. A carved leather belt girded her small waist. Her face was browned, its features clean-cut and symmetrical. Yes, she was pretty, undeniably pretty and courageous.

The white girl's companion was of more stocky build, with glossy black hair and eyes and the prominent cheek bones of her race. Her clothing was coarse but not of buckskin, save for the moccasins which encased her feet. She was bareheaded and she was not pretty, but an Amazonian prowess was suggested by her very appearance. She also wore a belt, and from it dangled a holster. Her slim brown hand, as she surveyed Aladdin, rested on the top of the holster.

The moment was ripe for tragedy, but the resourceful Aladdin turned it into comedy with a genial laugh.

"Lady," said he, doffing his hat and bowing deferentially to the girl with the rifle, "you have side-stepped the truth a little. My friend is not Hungerford, and neither am I."

"Not Hungerford?" breathed the girl, her fair face filling with suspicion.

"Not at all, not at all," continued Aladdin, with an airy wave of the hand. "My friend and employer is Mr. John McCardle, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and I am Aladdin Jones, of Everywhere and Nowhere in particular, his best bower. We are somewhat at cross-purposes, it strikes me, and perhaps a few explanations will be in order?"

"I have heard of Mr. McCardle," said the girl—and she did not say it pleasantly. "He is in league with Ezra Crawley, if all I hear is true."

"Mr. Crawley," spoke up McCardle, not liking the tone of the girl's voice, "is an honest man and a gentleman."

"Mr. Crawley," the girl calmly insisted, "is a schemer and a scoundrel."

McCardle stared. The young woman's earnestness and conviction impressed him disagreeably.

"I agree with my friend Aladdin," said he, presently, "that perhaps explanations may not be out of order. I'm willing to begin."

"You ought to be," said the girl with a half smile, "inasmuch as Wahcootah and I appear to have the whiphand."

"Ouch!" exclaimed Aladdin. "I hope," he went on earnestly, "that you will restrain Wahcootah while my friend is talking. McCardle needs me—all his good fortunes are wrapped up in me, so to speak, and to be cut off in my youth and bloom—"

Aladdin's talk was inconsequential. McCardle broke into it ruthlessly.

"You called me Hungerford," said he, "and I presume you will take my word for it that I am not Hungerford, but John McCardle. Now—"

"Where did you get that paper?"

"From Ezra Crawley—"

"Of course! I know it came from Crawley originally and that he sent you West on a wild-goose chase—to steal for him what he had not the courage to steal for himself."

McCardle, being an honest young man, flushed angrily. "I assure you," he began, "that I would not be here if my mission were not an honest one."

The girl studied him, still over the rifle-sights. "I'm going to do you the justice to say," she observed finally, "that I believe that statement to be true. Nevertheless, you're being imposed upon. What I want to know, Mr. McCardle, is this: Where did that paper come from—last?"

"From this trunk."

The evidence was there, for the trunk-lid was open.

"How did it get into the trunk?"

"It must have been put there by Hungerford." And then, hurriedly, he explained how the paper had been stolen from him, at Forty-Mile, how Aladdin had recovered the wallet but not the paper, and how Aladdin had finally helped in finding the missing document by furnishing a motor-boat and leading the search to that camp on the island.

The girl was impressed, but apparently more by what Aladdin had done than by anything McCardle himself had accomplished. Thoughtfully she lowered the rifle.

"We are at cross-purposes, and no mistake," said she. "That paper does not belong to Crawley, nor to you, Mr. McCardle, but to me. I am going to prove my right to it, and then you are going to let me have it without any trouble at all." She smiled engagingly. "I have already said that I believe you to be honest, but imposed upon by Crawley. If you are indeed honest, you will also be just. I am sure of it."

McCardle was disquieted. The girl was taking a tack that would make it exceedingly disagreeable for him to maintain his own rights. He compressed his lips sharply.

"I am Miss Genie Maynard," proceeded the girl, confidently, "and I live on a ranch near Mandan with my uncle, Mr. Paul Maynard. Wahcootah, here, is a Dakotah. She is my good friend"—Miss Maynard's hand went out and rested gently on the Indian girl's shoulder for a moment—"and when I came up the river to find my

inheritance, she came with me. We are quite able," concluded Miss Maynard, her fine head going back in a forceful attitude of courage and independence, "to take care of ourselves."

"Just what is this inheritance you have come to find?" inquired McCardle, warily.

"I am an heiress—the heiress of those Argonauts of '65."

"I am the heir of one of them."

"Pardon me for shattering your illusion, Mr. McCardle. Only one person is living to-day who is entitled to that long-lost wealth. I am sorry, but this is true in spite of anything Crawley may have told you."

McCardle wrinkled his brows. "I regret, Miss Maynard, that I shall have to doubt your word. It is you who have been imposed upon, and not me. It is just possible," he added, as an afterthought, "that we are not talking of the same inheritance or the same Argonauts."

"I'll convince you that we *are*," returned the girl. "Listen: In 1865 a party of miners started from Virginia City for their homes in the East, with the accumulations of several years of hard work in the placerings of Montana. These miners had been lucky, far more fortunate than most of those who had hunted for wealth in the gulches. All told, they had gathered a treasure of half a million dollars in dust and nuggets. There were twenty of them.

"When they started down the Missouri River for home, they went on a big scow of their own construction. It was a rude craft, but stanch and strong. In the scow's very bottom, in watertight compartments, lay the wealth of each man, neatly tied in buckskin sacks and marked with his name. A floor of boards hid the treasure, and above this floor were packed the rifles, ammunition and provisions of the voyagers.

"The journey down the river was filled with thrilling adventures. As the boat was carried along, further and further into the lands of the hostile Sioux, traveling became so dangerous that, for several hundreds of miles, the miners concealed their scow in the bushes by day and journeyed only by night.

"Finally, when well below Ft. Stevenson, the dangers were supposed to be past, and the miners floated onward by day as well as by night. One day a rifle cracked on the bank, and that note of danger came like a bolt from the blue. As the echoes of the shot died away across the river, one of the miners sprang erect, staggered and plunged overboard, his life's blood staining the waters. Then, from the brush on the river bank came volley after volley. The current was swift at that point, and those in the boat were so busy loading and firing that they neglected to steer the scow. With a splintering crash the boat went full upon a rock; water rushed through a hole in the prow, and there the devoted little band of miners made their last stand."

The girl paused for a moment, and then went on in a lowered voice:

"In the story of the West there is no more thrilling page than that which deals with this last hopeless fight of those Virginia City miners. One by one their lives went out, and when their ammunition was exhausted the Indians swam out from the shore and finished their work with knife and hatchet. Only one man was spared—a Frenchman who had married a Sioux girl. The squaw begged for the life of her husband, and the Frenchman was saved.

"The bodies of the miners were thrown into the river, and after the scow had been looted of its rifles and provisions it was pushed into the current and swiftly sank with its weight of gold. Neither the Frenchman nor his wife said anything about the precious cargo under the scow's false bottom, and when the boat sank the Frenchman marked the spot with his eyes and impressed it upon his mind with relation to the rock that had stove the planks, and other objects upon either shore.

"This Frenchman went away with the Indians and died. Something of his story became known, but, after his death, it drifted into the traditions of the country and, by most people, was regarded as a wonder tale. My grand-

father, George Bennington, was known to have been in Virginia City in 1865, and ever since my uncle came to the ranch near Mandan he has been looking up all the facts he could lay hands on relative to Grandfather Bennington. Those facts all point to the circumstance that he was one of the party who left Virginia City in the scow, and yielded his life below Ft. Stevenson. Circumstantial evidence leaves no doubt of this, Mr. McCardle."

McCardle had listened intently to the girl's recital. It was not a new story to him, for almost precisely as she had narrated the sinking of the scow and the slaying of the miners, so had Ezra Crawley repeated the circumstances to him.

"I also had a grandfather in Virginia City in 1865, Miss Maynard," said he, "and Crawley, who came west for the purpose, hunted up all the evidence and is equally sure that my relative, Archer McCardle, came down the river in that scow, with his own store of treasure in the hold. My grandfather, according to family records, vanished mysteriously from Virginia City after writing that he had made his 'pile' and was about to start home with it. Why should one of your ancestors have monopolized all recent interests and rights in that half million of treasure? Is it not just as likely that a forefather of my own was concerned in that fight on the Missouri?"

The girl shook her head. "No, Mr. McCardle," said she, but not without sympathy. "Your case is merely a fabrication by Ezra Crawley. It was drawn entirely from my own family history, which Crawley learned from my uncle. Crawley is a relative of yours?"

"A distant cousin," answered the nonplused McCardle. "How is it, Miss Maynard," he went on, "that you happen to know so much about Ezra Crawley?"

"That," said the girl, "opens up another phase of the question. Will you tell me, Mr. McCardle, where that paper which you are holding in your hand came from originally?"

"Mr. Crawely told me that it had been found among the effects of the Frenchman who was the last survivor of the Argonauts, and that he had secured it from the Frenchman's family for a large sum of money."

"He did not dare tell you the truth."

"What *is* the truth?"

"It is rather disagreeable, but you should know it. Crawley stole the paper from Hungerford, and Hungerford stole it from my uncle. It has been a bone of contention for some time, Mr. McCardle."

"I can't believe that," said the young man, coldly.

"I'm sorry," returned the girl. "The Frenchman was wounded during the fight on the river and died years and years ago. He continued to live with the Indians, and was so crippled and helpless that he was never able to return and look for the treasure. It was he who drew that map and appended to it a brief account of the ill-fated expedition down the Missouri, and when he died it was taken by one of the superstitious red men, wrapped in thongs of buckskin and stowed away in his medicine bag. It descended to the redskin's son, who happened to be Wahcootah's father. Wahcootah and her people were often at my uncle's ranch, and she and I had become friends. She knew the Frenchman's story—it was almost like a legend in her tribe—and while at the ranch she learned of my grandfather, and of my uncle's theory that he had been one of the Argonauts. One day she brought the 'medicine paper' to my uncle and asked him to look it over and see whether it had anything to do with the miners. You can imagine how my uncle felt when he examined the paper. He appreciated its full importance, at once, and explained the matter to Wahcootah. If anything is found, she is to have a share in it."

McCardle listened in silence. Aladdin had dropped down on one of the cots and had followed every development with rapt attention. He did not express himself one way or the other, but he wore a look of exaggerated importance, and tempered Miss Maynard's assault on McCardle's rights by glances which plainly said: "Don't be

in a taking, Mac! I'm on your side and you're bound to come out all right."

The girl's story, as McCardle scanned it, was wildly improbable. Part of the girl's version was also Ezra Crawley's, and not until that moment did that whole affair of the Argonauts appear so baldly unconvincing to the Easterner. Crawley had been enthusiastic and plausible, and under the spell of his glibness the story had appealed; now, as it fell from the girl's lips, with the avowed purpose of blighting his own hopes, it had the odd effect of blighting his credulity, as well. But there was more to come.

"This happened during the early summer," proceeded Miss Maynard. "The story got into the papers; Ezra Crawley saw it and came from faraway Grand Rapids to talk with my uncle. *Your* grandfather, it appeared from Crawley's talk with my uncle, disappeared from Virginia City, Nevada, in '65, and not from Virginia City, Montana. This alone proves that he could not have been one of the Argonauts. But that is beside the matter, just at present, for we are dealing with the Frenchman's map and statement. My uncle kept it in a safe, in his office at the ranch. A month ago the safe was blown open and the paper was found to be missing. Nate Hungerford, who worked for my uncle, had also vanished. Here was circumstantial evidence of the strongest kind to prove that Hungerford was the thief. He and a man named Perry—a stranger who was crippled and who walked with a limp—were found some three weeks ago in a sod shack north of Mandan. They were intoxicated, and they declared that Crawley had purposely got them under the influence of liquor and had taken the paper and gone away with it. My uncle gave them a month to recover the paper and return it to him; if they failed, he threatened to send them both to prison. Perry went to Grand Rapids and reported from there that Crawley had turned the stolen document over to you, and that you had already left for the West. The last we heard from Perry direct, he had picked up your trail in Chicago and was following you. My uncle had a man in Bismarck watching for you. Day before yesterday this agent reported that you had come to Bismarck, had bought a saddle horse, and had started north."

Miss Maynard paused.

"Wasn't it rather foolish of your uncle, Miss Maynard," observed McCardle, "to trust two men like Hungerford and Perry?"

"I thought so," agreed the girl, "but he believed that his threat to send the two men to prison in case they did not return the stolen document would be enough to make them play fair. It seems that he was mistaken. The report that you had left Bismarck came to us at a time when my uncle was sick in bed. If anything was to be done, I was the one who must do it. I had studied that crude old map drawn by the Frenchman, and I knew the Argonauts' scow had been sunk a short distance up the river from Forty-Mile. It was necessary for some one to watch this part of the river and see if operations were commenced for the recovery of the gold, either by you, or by Hungerford and Perry. Wahcootah, who is interested, as I have already told you, agreed to come with me."

"Rather difficult and dangerous work for a woman, Miss Maynard," commented McCardle.

"For a Grand Rapids woman, perhaps," she smiled, "but not for a woman of Mandan. We have our headquarters in an old shack across the river from Forty-Mile, and we feel in every way equal to the work before us. While we were scouting around the river bank yesterday we caught a glimpse of this tent on the island, and we began hunting for a boat so we could come over and investigate. This morning Wahcootah found a skiff moored against the bank on our side of the river. It wasn't there the night before, so we reasoned that some one had come across from the island in it. If this was the case, then the time was propitious for us to use the skiff and investigate this camp. Just as we were about to embark, we saw you and your friend in your gasoline launch, and withdrew to watch you while you made your landing. We thought you were

Hungerford and Perry, and I didn't dream of anything to the contrary until you turned around and I saw your face. Perry was a stranger to me, but I had seen Hungerford several times at the ranch."

"You and Wahcootah were going to take this letter from Hungerford and Perry by force of arms?" queried McCardle, somewhat in awe of the determined Miss Maynard.

"We intended to have our rights," averred the girl. "You know everything now, Mr. McCardle. I have told you of the duplicity of Hungerford and Perry, and of Ezra Crawley, and have explained my rights in the matter of the lost gold. If you are disposed to be just, you will turn that paper over to Wahcootah and me."

"Why should Crawley want to involve me in this matter if I have no rights that anyone should respect?"

"He is to have a share in whatever you find, is he not?"

"That was part of our agreement, yes."

"Then your question is answered. Crawley did not dare return here and look for the Argonauts' treasure himself. He sent you, hoping that in some manner you would carry the undertaking through successfully. As I said before, he has imposed upon you."

"I am skeptical about this gold, Miss Maynard," observed McCardle.

"Then you deny a historical fact," she returned.

"I believe that the old Argonauts came down the river with their treasure, that they had a fight with the Indians, that their scow was sunk and that the miners were massacred. But I doubt whether the gold can be recovered."

"Why?"

"Well, thirty-five years and more have passed since that one-sided battle on the river. The scow must have broken up; the buckskin bags must have yielded to the action of the water, have decayed and released their contents; and the river, it seems to me, must have carried the gold away, little by little, until it is strewn, beyond all recovery, for miles along the river-bed. How could it be otherwise?"

Wahcootah, listening grimly but silently, threw an apprehensive look at Miss Maynard. The latter, apparently, was in no wise dsturbed.

"On the contrary," she declared, "I feel positive that the wreck has held together, that the gold is still in the hold of the scow in the watertight compartment, and that it can be found. If," she added, "you were so positive the gold was lost beyond recovery, why did you come out here from Grand Rapids to hunt for it?"

"The treasure was a secondary consideration," replied McCardle. "Ezra Crawley believes, as you believe, that the wreck has held together, and that the treasure can and will be found. I agreed to come out here and make a thorough search for it. It was not the gold that lured me so much as a desire to settle the fate of my grandfather. That has always been a mystery, and here appears a chance to clear it up. You remember that the Frenchman says, in the explanatory matter accompanying his map, that a piece of iron pipe, plugged with lead at each end, was put into the watertight compartment with the gold, and that this receptacle contains a paper with the names of the twenty Argonauts and the amount of gold each one stored in the hold."

"Yes, yes," breathed the girl, catching his drift.

"If my grandfather's name is inclosed in that iron cylinder, then the mystery that has always surrounded his fate will be cleared up and, incidentally, I have only to prove that I am his heir in order to become entitled to part of the treasure if it should be found. Similarly, your rights in the matter will be set at rest."

"I agree with you."

"Then," laughed McCardle, "it seems to me that we need not antagonize each other but that we can work together, each abiding by the consequences as revealed to us by the names in the cylinder."

"If we accept your theory," she bantered, "the cylinder may have been carried down-stream by the current and may never be found."

"I think not. The cylinder is heavier

than the largest nugget—many times heavier—and it would not so easily yield to the current of the river. However, if the cylinder is gone, then you may rest assured that the gold is gone also, and there will be no occasion for any dispute between us. Are you willing—"

Wahcootah, at that moment, made a sudden, swift gesture that commanded silence. It was a tragic gesture, and filled with deepest import. Aladdin sprang up from the cot and all in the tent bent their heads to listen.

A rustle was heard in the undergrowth outside—a stealthy sound as of some one creeping upon the camp.

"Hungerford!" whispered Aladdin, "Hungerford and Perry have—"

His words were cut short by the crack of a firearm. A bullet tore its way through the canvas, whipping into the tent, across it and out again. It passed murderously close to McCardle and Miss Maynard.

"Come out of there, one by one!" commanded a voice. "We've got the drop on you and we wont stand for any foolishness."

The voice was Hungerford's; there was no mistaking it. In that moment of peril, McCardle found himself thinking more of Miss Maynard's safety than he did of his own.

V

ALADDIN'S TREACHEROUS CONDUCT

"Here's a raw deal!" muttered Aladdin. "They tried to bore a hole in us before they asked us to surrender!"

"If there are only two of them," struck in Miss Maynard, with a calmness that delighted McCardle, "then they're the ones to surrender."

"There are five of them," announced Aladdin, making a cautious survey from the tent flap, "and from their looks they've swum out to the island from the nearest bank. They're a sure thing crowd, all right, and it's an l. p. cinch they didn't get their powder wet on the way over."

"Five!" gasped Miss Maynard.

"Where are they, Aladdin?" whispered McCardle.

"Right in front, Mac."

"This way, quick! We've not a second to lose. Miss Maynard, you first. The brush is thick, here at the rear of the tent, and we can creep away toward the east end of the island. Where did you leave the skiff?"

McCardle's wits had dealt swiftly with the situation. The thing to do, it seemed to him, was to get away from the tent and the island as quickly and quietly as possible. With Miss Maynard and Wahcootah as members of the party, surrender was out of the question, and a pitched battle not to be thought of. As McCardle, in low tones, addressed Miss Maynard, he stooped and lifted the bottom of the tent's rear wall.

"We left the skiff near your motorboat," said the girl, beckoning to Wahcootah and moving toward the lifted canvas.

"And those men are between us and the boats!" murmured McCardle. "We—"

An angry voice from without interrupted him: "If you're not clear of that tent in two minutes we'll riddle it with bullets! Last call!"

"They mean it, too," said Aladdin, turning from the tent flap, "and they're getting ready to cut loose with some more lead. But leave it to me, Mac. I'll draw 'em off and leave your way clear to the boats. As soon as you're out, get down to the north shore of the island, hike for the *Happy-go-Lucky* and point for Forty-Mile as fast as the nation will let you. Can you run a gasoline engine?"

"Yes."

"That'll do. Now cut for it."

Miss Maynard and Wahcootah had already crept from the tent and were making their way carefully through the thicket which banked itself up against the rear wall of the canvas structure. McCardle, before following them, turned to pick up the Frenchman's map, which he had dropped on one of the cots before lifting the canvas. The bit of yellow paper had disappeared. His momentary consternation yielded to the reflection that Miss Maynard must have taken charge of the paper.

"What are you going to do, Aladdin?" McCardle inquired, dropping to his hands and knees.

"I'm going to surrender," grinned Aladdin, "but not until I run them over to the south shore of the island."

"You're crazy! They'll shoot you!"

"Guess again. Here's where I feature myself, Mac. Hustle!"

As Aladdin paused for an instant inside the open flap, McCardle saw that he, and not Miss Maynard, had the Frenchman's map. And at that instant Aladdin leaped from the tent with a yell, holding the paper high over his head.

McCardle was astounded. Ugly doubts of Aladdin began to take shape in his mind. He had no time for suspicions, however, or for anything else but a hurried exit in the wake of Miss Maynard and Wahcootah. He heard a clamor of shouts, running feet and crashing bushes while forcing his way through the undergrowth. There was no shooting, and this proved that Aladdin, although having an exciting time of it, was in no particular danger.

A dozen feet from the rear of the tent, at a place where the bushes broke away slightly and offered a cleared space for standing room, he found the two girls waiting for him.

"What does all that noise mean, Mr. McCardle?" asked Miss Maynard.

"It means that Aladdin is clearing the way for us, so—Ah!" he broke off, gazing down the low slope toward the south. "There he is, and the five men are with him. There is nothing to prevent us reaching the motor-boat now."

Five dripping men, stripped to the waist, barefooted, bareheaded and each carrying a rifle, could be seen at the water's edge, crowding around Aladdin. The latter was showing them the Frenchman's map, and the anger of the men was giving way to exultation. As McCardle looked, Hungerford gave Aladdin a jovial and approving slap on the back. A grim expression settled over the Easterner's face, and the ugly doubts waxed stronger.

"Come," he said to his companions, starting northward on a détour that was to bring them safely to the motor-boat.

The girls followed him silently and swiftly, and not until they were in the craft and he was releasing the painter and pushing off did Miss Maynard speak.

"Are you going to leave your friend, Mr. McCardle?"

"He is in no danger," said McCardle, giving the boat a shove and scrambling aboard. "I'm sorry to say it, but I'm disappointed in Aladdin Jones. It is quite evident, I think, that we are leaving him among friends."

Gaining the stern, McCardle, after one or two attempts, succeeded in starting the engine.

"Crouch down under the gunwale," he suggested. "This motor makes as much noise as a threshing machine, and Hungerford and his men will hear it. If they show themselves and shoot, you'll be safer with the sides of the boat between you and their guns."

Wahcootah heard the suggestion impassively and made no move to put herself in a position of safety. Instead, she reached for Miss Maynard's rifle and fixed her keen eyes upon the receding shores of the island.

"I believe we are safe enough," said Miss Maynard, smiling at McCardle. "Hungerford will not dare go to extremes. Besides, he seemed in anything but a vengeful mood while he was talking with your friend—Aladdin, you call him?"

"Aladdin—yes!" And what McCardle said to himself about Aladdin would not have borne repeating aloud in that select company.

"Why Aladdin?"

"It is merely a play upon his real name. His mother's father was Albert Todgers, and his father's father was Adden Jones. Albert Adden Jones is the fellow's correct name, but it was shortened to Al. Adden, and then to Aladdin. He professes to be a mascot, and I must admit that he is exceedingly clever. I'm afraid, however, that he is two-faced."

"Perhaps you are mistaken, Mr. McCardle. He seemed to be devoted to you."

"Just now he seems to be more devoted to Hungerford and his men than to anyone else. He left the tent osten-

sibly to draw off our enemies and make it possible for us to reach this boat and leave the island; then, before I could stop him, he was gone and had taken the Frenchman's map with him."

A cry of consternation escaped Miss Maynard. Wahcootah muttered harshly to herself.

"I thought you had taken possession of that!" exclaimed Miss Maynard.

"I laid it down for a moment, when I lifted the bottom of the tent for your escape," explained McCardle, "and when I turned to pick it up it was gone. I thought for a moment you had it, and then, when too late, I saw Aladdin running towards Hungerford and the rest, holding the old paper above his head."

"You think, then, that he has deserted?"

"His meeting with Hungerford and his men had every appearance of a reunion of old comrades."

"But," Miss Maynard pursued thoughtfully, "he made his desertion of real service to us, even though he did take the map."

"That was the least he could do," said McCardle.

The boat had gone around the eastern side of the island and was dropping rapidly down stream toward the bend. McCardle, facing forward, was giving most of his attention to the noisy little engine and to the steering, while his companions sat facing him, with their alert eyes on the island. Wahcootah suddenly tightened her hands on the gun and flung it to her shoulder. Before her brown finger could flex upon the trigger, Miss Maynard clapped her hands upon the barrel and forced it down.

"No, no, Wahcootah!" she cried. "A shot from us would only tempt them to reply."

McCardle half turned in his seat and looked back. Aladdin and the five dripping and half-clad men with whom he was fraternizing were in plain view of those in the boat. The rascally five were shaking their weapons exultantly, and Aladdin was waving his hat.

"I'm the real heir of the Argonauts!" Hungerford trumpeted through his hands, "and if you folks know what's good for you you'll sheer off and leave me alone."

And then Aladdin, through a similar hand-megaphone, sent his own shrill voice down the wind: "Two call five and a quarter to see! Get that, you dub? Do you get that?"

McCardle turned gloomily around and faced down-stream. "I guess that settles it," he observed. "I'm just beginning to get a line on this fellow Aladdin."

"You think he was working for Hungerford last night?" asked Miss Maynard.

"No doubt of it."

"If he was in Hungerford's pay why did Aladdin prove him a thief?"

"He wanted to get into my confidence, I suppose, in order to discover what my plans were. Besides, what he did didn't hurt Hungerford. The map wasn't in the wallet when I got it back."

"But Aladdin led you straight to the map this morning, Mr. McCardle!"

"He knew what he was doing. He's now with his friends and we haven't the paper in our possession."

Miss Maynard shook her head with a puzzled air. "Hungerford, it seems," she remarked, "is now claiming to be one of the heirs."

"That is merely to afford him an excuse for his lawlessness," averred McCardle. "It is easy for anyone who knows the circumstances surrounding that supposed treasure to profess to be an heir of the Argonauts."

"Do you intend, Mr. McCardle, to let Nate Hungerford have his way?"

Miss Maynard looked steadily at the Easterner as she put the question.

"I'm not a quitter," said he, "and I'm more determined than ever to see this thing through. The matter is entering an ugly phase, however, for Hungerford has the men and the determination to fight; and, while we know that his pretention of being an heir of the Argonauts is merely a cover for his lawlessness, yet anyone who didn't know the real facts would consider that his claims were as good as yours or mine—until the finding of that iron cylinder disproves them. What we are to face, from now on, is no work for a woman.

If you will trust me to look after this, I will see that your interests and Wahcootah's are safeguarded."

"What would you do?" asked the girl. "If you try to get help from Forty-Mile, you may enlist men who will turn on you at the last moment and secure the gold for themselves. That's the trouble, in a country like this: one never knows who can be depended on."

"What I shall do is this," proceeded McCardle. "I shall say nothing about my business to anyone at Forty-Mile, but I shall covertly watch what goes on around the river-bend. If Hungerford and his party begin recovering the gold, I shall hurry to Bismarck, tell everything to the United States marshal, and he'll come back here with a large enough force to take charge of the gold until he can find who the real heirs are."

"Good!" exclaimed the girl. "Wahcootah and I, however, are not going to return to Mandan. We can stay here and help you. Don't shake your head," she laughed, "for I have quite made up my mind. Now if you will put us ashore on the western bank of the river, just above the Forty-Mile ferry, we will be obliged to you."

"Hadn't you better go to the tavern?" demurred McCardle. "Wouldn't you be safer there?"

"We have horses at the old shack where we are staying," was the answer, "and are quite able to look after ourselves."

McCardle obediently turned the prow of the boat across the river and headed for the rude little ferry landing.

"So far as information goes," said Miss Maynard presently, "the map is of little use to me. I have studied it and studied it until I have it all by heart."

McCardle nodded. "My case exactly," said he. "Like yourself, though, I have realized from the start how dangerous it would be to let the map get into other hands."

He shut off the motor and the *Happy-go-Lucky,* under her own headway, slowed to a halt alongside the landing and rubbed gently against the cottonwood piles. He started up to help Miss Maynard ashore, but she was out of the boat with a light spring before he had hardly gained his feet. Wahcootah followed her with equal agility.

"When will you take your first reconnoitering trip up the river?" the girl inquired.

"To-morrow morning," he answered. "Hungerford and his men will hardly get to work before then."

"Wahcootah and I will come over on the ferry, in the morning, and join you."

"All right," said McCardle, and was conscious of a thrill of pleasure because Miss Maynard had not taken his advice to return to Mandan, and because she was going to work side by side with him in the attempt to get the better of Hungerford and his men.

As he returned toward Forty-Mile, his pleasure was tempered somewhat by the reflection that perhaps Miss Maynard was staying around that part of the river because she did not feel that she could trust him with her interest in the sunken treasure.

He took the boat back to the cove, secured it fore and aft alongside the boulder, and then proceeded to the tavern. Spangler was sitting in the shade, his chair tilted back against the wall of his establishment, a ragged palm-leaf fan in one limp hand and the black clay pipe in the other. Both hands lay on his knees; his head was bowed and he was wheezing in a midday drowse. Flies droned and buzzed around him, and from the corral came the occasional tramp of a restive hoof. McCardle threw a glance inside the tavern's open door. The room was deserted save for the barkeeper, who was snoring peacefully on one of the benches. A tin clock on the wall informed McCardle that it lacked only ten minutes of noon. He sat down on the doorstep, and the slight noise he made caused the landlord to gasp and gurgle and lift his head.

"Ho!" he wheezed, his eyes on the young man, "it's you, huh? Thought you wasn't going to get back till night."

"Changed my mind," said McCardle. "How long before dinner?"

"Li'ble to hear from the Chink any minit, now. Where's that red-headed kittle-and-rooster chap?"

"He didn't come back with me."

"You left him some'rs?"

"Yes."

"Aint he *never* comin' back?" asked the landlord anxiously.

"If he doesn't, I'll see that you get your pay for what he owes you."

Spangler looked relieved. Just then, around a corner of the rambling structure, a greasy looking Chinaman appeared and began pounding a gong. Thereupon Forty-Mile became imbued with life. Spangler dropped his chair forward and lurched to his feet; the barkeeper could be heard stirring around in the big room; from the direction of the corral came three cowboys, and from some other direction appeared a pair of belated threshers.

"Only two of them threshin' outfits left," remarked Spangler. "Rest of 'em went away on a thirty-mile ride to be ready to jump into the wheat Monday mornin'. These two wont pull out till they've spent all their money."

The two in question brushed past McCardle to get a couple of appetizers at the Spangler bar. The cowboys followed, with much hilarity. McCardle went on to the dining-room.

The Easterner had much on his mind; he finished the meal as quickly as he could and then hunted a quiet place on the bluff for an hour or two of reflection.

Was it really true that his cousin, Ezra Crawley, was using him for a dishonest purpose? Crawley had a reputation for being a good deal of a schemer, but that he should go West, steal a valuable document and then involve McCardle in a lawless venture was hard to believe. From Miss Maynard's own story the Easterner was of opinion that he had as much prospect of acquiring an interest in that long lost gold as she had. He had other hopes, however, and they centered around that iron cylinder and the problem as to whether that old letter of his grandfather's had been written from Virginia City, *Nevada*, or from Virginia City, *Montana*. That one and only letter that had come, in the old days, from his much-wandering ancestor, had been dated simply at "Virginia City." It may have been in one state, or it may have been in the other. The envelope, whose postmark would have afforded a clue, had long since vanished. At least $100,000 hung on the evidence contained in that iron cylinder.

Again and again, upon McCardle's reflections, obtruded the brown eyes of the girl in the stocking cap. The vision held him so strongly that it could only be temporarily banished by a strong effort of the will.

Aladdin came in for a good deal of McCardle's attention. He had liked the red-haired youth, and missed his companionship. His mental attitude toward Aladdin was one of regret rather than of anger, although of course he was justly indignant.

Alonzo Perry, the man with the limp, had shadowed McCardle all the way from Chicago. McCardle had discovered this espial quite early in the game, and hence his excitement when informed that a man with a limp had been waiting for Hungerford with a skiff, the night before.

If Perry was accounted for, whence came the other three men whom Hungerford had gathered around him? Yet this was a bootless question. In that country, treasure seekers with consciences in no wise despotic were not hard to find, nor hard to enlist in any cause that promised gain.

There would be no treasure left, after the river had had its way with it for upwards of thirty-five years; of this McCardle felt positive. But he had hopes for that section of iron pipe, capped at each end with lead. Yes, certainly he had hopes of *that.*

There was a glamour of romance, anyhow, in treasure-trove, and there was no doubting that the romance of the work had intensified with the appearance of the girl in the stocking-cap. McCardle felt the tingle of her presence in every nerve. Miss Maynard's part in the undertaking gave it just the appeal for McCardle which sordid treasure-hunting lacked. He did not try to analyze his sentiments. He merely recognized them, called them foolish, and tried to banish them. Like *Banquo's* ghost, however, they would not down.

If McCardle had had plenty of

money, if already he had acquired name and fame for himself as an electrical engineer—if, in short, he had been ready to settle down and found a home of his own, why— This train of thought, as soon as it had ploughed into his sober senses, was incontinently ditched. He arose to his feet with a half-angry fling of his shoulders.

"I'm an idiot!" he grunted, and wandered slowly back to Forty-Mile.

It seemed an interminably long time until morning. He persuaded himself that his impatience was due to nothing more than the desire to get busy reconnoitering the river above the bend. It had nothing whatever to do with again meeting Genie Maynard—of course not! He talked alternately with the landlord and the barkeeper until supper time, and after the meal he smoked away a few hours until thoughts of sleep carried him to his little box of a room. And the tassel of a stocking-cap was flirted in his eyes as he drifted off into slumber.

Perhaps two hours, perhaps three, he slept; then he started into wide wakefulness. As he lay, his eyes commanded the window. A dark figure was silhouetted outside, against the glass. The figure was straining at the sash, and it was a low rasping sound of wood against wood that had aroused him.

A prowler! thought McCardle, every sense on the alert. He waited and watched, gathering all his strength for quick action when the right moment should arrive.

McCardle had raised the sash a few inches and propped it up with a hairbrush before going to bed. All the man outside had to do was to push the sash as high as he could, wedge it open and climb into the room. This he proceeded to do with careful deliberation, pausing now and again to listen for sounds of wakefulness from the supposed sleeper. McCardle scarcely breathed, so anxious was he to get the fellow within arm's reach.

When the man got inside the room McCardle jumped. In a flash he had gripped the intruder by the shoulders and pinned him against the wall.

"Let go, Mac, you old Indian!" came raspingly in a familiar voice.

"Aladdin!" panted McCardle, taking a stronger grip. "The nerve of it—coming back here after you've played double with me! Stop your squirming or I'll throttle you."

"You're a James dandy, I don't think," sputtered Aladdin. "This pulls down first money in the great bobble free-for-all—yes, indeed. Take that lunchhook away from my jugular, will you? I want to explain."

"That's what *I* want," answered McCardle, removing his hand, "and you've got to explain in a way that explains, too."

With that he drew Aladdin Jones over to the other side of the room and dropped him, none too gently, upon the bed.

VI

BEATING HUNGERFORD AT HIS OWN GAME

"Just for a starter," observed Aladdin, "I'm going to bat this one up to you: What do you take me for, Mac?"

"A spy and a traitor," answered McCardle, sitting down on the bed beside the Mascot.

"Oh, gee!" muttered Aladdin. "He's 'way over his head and never even guessed! A spy and a traitor—me! What funny noises!"

"You can't get away with it, Aladdin," went on McCardle severely, "for I've got the goods on you."

"Are they all as slow as this in Grand Rapids, Mac?"

"Don't try to fool with me, Aladdin!"

"I wont; but honest, Mac, somebody's fed you an under-dose of knock-out drops and it's left your brain logy. I helped you and the girlerino escape from the island without so much as a harsh word from the Hungerford push. You don't call that coarse work, do you?"

"You gave them that important document, and that's what all the trouble was about."

"It's that important document that made me solid with Hungerford. But for that, the bottom would have dropped out of the whole play. Right this minute that gang of strong-arm

boys believe I'm a friend and brother —just because I dug out with the Frenchman's map and turned it over to them. It was a cheap price to pay for their good will and your get-away."

"How much did Hungerford pay you for spying upon me?" demanded McCardle relentlessly.

"Not a soo. Say, Mac, what was it worth to him, that kettle and rooster trick? How much would you have paid me for it if you'd been in Hungerford's place?"

"You faked that up, Aladdin, just to curry favor with me. What I wanted wasn't in the wallet after you'd recovered it."

"Police! Mac, if you stay in this cast it's because I keep you there with both hands and a strangle-hold. I think it must be the brown eyes and the cap with a tassel that's dazzled you. Well, never mind. I'm your hired man, and I never did a better piece of mascoting than when I broke away from you on the island and used that old paper for stringing Hungerford. Now don't break in! Don't heave any guff at me that you'll be sorry for. I haul considerable freight, and I'll prove it to you before I get through elucidating. And remember, please, there's no con talk about it. I'm working for McCardle and doing my best. Now listen: What would you say if I told you that this assorted lot of dust and nuggets isn't in the place where the map seems to say it is? What would you say if I told you it isn't in the river at all? Further, what would be your opinion on being informed that while Hungerford and his sure-thing crowd are diving and panning the river-bed for Argonaut loot, you and Brown-Eyes can be garnering the treasure without any interference from this crowd of bumptious yaps?"

"Why," returned McCardle, "to all that I should say that you're using your imagination in an attempt to pull the wool over my eyes."

"Then, Mac, I'll have to come right back at you with the assertion that you're off your trolley. I looked over your shoulder while you were examining that Frenchman's map, and it didn't take me more than a couple of minutes to get hep to the whole layout. Now, I'm ace-high with Hungerford. On the dead, I never saw him before last night. You'll believe that, before long, even if you don't believe it now. What I told Hungerford when I rushed from the tent was this: 'I'm tired hooking up with a sap-head from that municipal wart called Grand Rapids; I want to train with the live ones; I'll stand in with you, Hungerford, for what I can get out of it—leaving my share to you; and I'll do all this on condition that you begin fishing the boodle out of the Missouri at once, for I can't stand for any delay.' Did Hungerford bite?" Aladdin chuckled. "Why, Mac, he took it down, hook, bob and sinker! To-morrow morning we begin our tussle with the river bottom."

McCardle remained silent. There was that about Aladdin which carried conviction that he was telling the truth, but the Easterner was distrusting his own judgment.

"Don't you see?" pursued Aladdin earnestly. "You can't go up against five toughs like Hungerford and his crowd and win out unless they're kept busy looking for the gold where it can't be found. That's my job. I'll keep 'em at it, too, until you and Brown-Eyes hog the loot and get away with it. Then I'll fade away and join you in a place where there is peace and plenty."

"If the treasure isn't where the map says it is—"

"Don't get that wrong, Mac. If it's anywhere, it's right where the map places it, only Hungerford is reading the map wrong. He's not using his brains any more than you are. And it's a good thing for you that he isn't, and a better thing for you that I've got at the right end of the thing."

"Where is the treasure, then? You say it isn't in the river. How can that be when the scow went down in the river?"

"One of the most natural reasons you ever failed to think of is the reason for that. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. There is a long, low bluff on the north bank just around the bend. Beyond the bluff is a flat grown up in a thick chaparral. To-morrow

morning you be in that chaparral. I'll meet you there and explain. My time is limited to-night, and if I linger here too long there'll be suspicions—and suspicions are the things I don't want and can't afford to have. Question is, Mac, are you going to give Uncle Al a vote of confidence or are you going to keep right on handing him a raw deal and queer all your right, title and interest in that Argonaut stuff? And remember, if you don't pin your faith in me, you may be queering Brown-Eyes more than you are yourself. What do I get in this draw?"

"Why are you here to-night?" asked McCardle skeptically. "What excuse did you give for leaving the island?"

"Hungerford offered me the excuse. I told him the *Happy-go-Lucky* belonged to me, and he thinks we can use the boat in beginning our treasure hunt to-morrow. 'Will you take the skiff and go after that motor-boat, Aladdin?' he says. 'I sure will,' says I, thinking more of having a quiet word with you on the side than of anything else. So, come night, I drops down to the cove in the skiff, and there, sure enough, I finds the *Happy-go-Lucky*. I hadn't a notion where you'd tie her up, of course, but I had hopes it would be in the cove. Quick as I could scramble ashore I made for here; and, not caring to advertise my visit to Spangler or anyone else around the tavern, I tried to get into your room by way of the window. Tell me this: Am I to go back with your full confidence or not?"

"I'll give you another chance, Aladdin," answered McCardle. "Somehow, you give me the impression of being straight. But,"—with a jesting chuckle—"if you're a mascot for the man you're working for, maybe Hungerford will get hold of the gold in spite of you."

"I'm mascoting for you," said Aladdin gravely, "and not for Hungerford. The charm stays with the man who has signed me on, and anything else wont count. What did I yell after you when you left the island?" he proceeded. " 'Two, call five and a quarter to see!' Didn't you get at the meaning of it? 'Two. call five'—that meant you and I calling Hungerford and his crowd. I thought you'd dive down into your sub-consciousness and come up with that shining fact."

"It was too deep for me."

"Well, you be in the chaparral in the morning and I'll meet you there. Don't let anybody see you from the river, Mac. Keep out of sight; that's your tip. So long!"

Aladdin got up from the bed, made his way to the window, crawled through — and vanished. McCardle lowered the sash to the length of the hairbrush and went back to bed.

"Is he playing fast and loose with me?" he asked himself. "Well, to-morrow morning will tell the story." Then he went to sleep and left the future to take care of itself.

As soon as it was light enough, he was up and shaving before a triangular piece of looking glass that hung above the cracker-box washstand. He dressed with rather more care than a mere reconnoitering expedition demanded. When the breakfast gong sounded he was ready, and joined Mr. and Mrs. Spangler in the dining-room. McCardle, as it happened, was the only guest left at Forty-Mile, although the landlord had hopes that some more might drop in during the course of the day.

"Where's the barkeeper?" inquired McCardle, wondering why that worthy, if there was no chance of custom at the bar, was not taking the first meal of the day with the rest of them.

"He was flagged from t'other bank," explained Spangler, "and went across with the Greaser roustabout to ferry some 'un acrost."

The Easterner's heart skipped a beat. "How long since?" he asked, casually.

"Jest before the gong struck."

When McCardle issued from the dining-room, he found two saddle-horses at the hitching-pole and Miss Maynard and Wahcootah seated on a bench by the door leading into the tavern "office." He hastened toward them with a smile of welcome and a word of greeting.

"You Easterners are not very ambitious of a morning, are you?" smiled Miss Maynard.

Her stocking cap had given place to a *sombrero;* there were spurs at her heels and she carried a four-thonged quirt. Her rifle, McCardle noticed, was swung in a case under the stirrup leather of a man's saddle. She offered him a gauntleted hand.

"I'll be with you," said he, "as soon as I can get the riding gear on my horse."

He was about to hurry off to the corral when the girl detained him with a gesture.

"Does Mr. Spangler know anything about the business that brought you here?" she asked, in guarded tones.

"No," he answered.

"That's good. Now, if you'll get your horse, we'll start. Ah, Mrs. Spangler!" she exclaimed, turning to that lady as she emerged from the dining-room door and evinced some surprise at sight of Miss Maynard, "how are you? Seen any antelope in the *coteau* lately?"

McCardle heard that much, and no more. He was glad that Miss Maynard knew the landlord's wife. Such an acquaintanceship might be a foil for curiosity and disagreeable questions.

McCardle's horse was one which he had hired in Bismarck, depositing the animal's value with the liveryman against a stranger's possible failure to return the saddler after some days or possibly weeks up-river. The horse was a broncho and inclined to be restive after a day of rest and fodder, but McCardle knew how to ride and could handle him. When he rode to the front of the tavern, he found the two girls mounted and waiting.

"Mrs. Spangler," said Miss Maynard, "my friend, Mr. McCardle. You have met before, I suppose," she added, turning to McCardle, "but Mrs. Spangler did not know you were a friend of mine. She understands that you are going back to Mandan with us after you have seen all you care to of this up-river country."

"If I'd have knowed you was a friend of Miss Maynard's," spoke up the landlord's wife, her face aglow with friendly interest, "I'd have had D'ri give you the best room in the tavern. There aint no antelope around here, Miss Maynard," she added, turning to the girl, "but if it's just seein' the country you want, and aint set on game, I reckon you wont be disappointed."

They rode away, followed by an invitation for Miss Maynard to be sure and get back for dinner.

"I've been up here several times with Uncle Paul," remarked Miss Maynard, "and that's how I happen to be acquainted with Mrs. Spangler. I ride around a good deal with Wahcootah, so she wasn't at all surprised at my sudden appearance. I'll tell her all about our work here—after the work is finished."

They rode slowly northward and McCardle told of Aladdin's night visit and repeated the substance of their conversation. Miss Maynard's face wore a puzzled look.

"I can't understand what Aladdin is trying to get at," said she. "If the scow went down in the river, then the gold ought to be in the river; unless"—and this by way of afterthought—"some one has got ahead of us."

"Aladdin would hardly know anything about that," said McCardle, more conscious than ever of the girl's witchery and charm. "Besides, it is his plan to keep Hungerford looking for the gold in one place while we hunt for it in another. He may be deceiving us, of course. You understand that we are taking our chances on that point."

"I have confidence in him," was the answer, "and I'm sure he is playing fair with you. He's an odd sort of a man, isn't he?"

"Very."

They had been riding along at some distance from the river's bank, and presently were close to the foot of the long bluff about which Aladdin had told McCardle.

"We're to proceed along under the lee of the bluff," said the Easterner, "until we reach that patch of chaparral in the distance. There is where, if Aladdin is true to his word, he intends to meet us."

A little way they rode, with the bluff between them and the river, and then, suddenly, Miss Maynard drew rein. Wahcootah and McCardle also halted.

"I'm going up the side of the bluff for a look at the scene of operations," announced the girl, flinging her reins to Wahcootah.

"I'll go with you," said McCardle, and dismounted and gave his own reins to the impassive Dakotah. "This will be our safest and best place for making observations."

Together they climbed the bare brown side of the bluff and dropped to their knees just under its crest. They were beyond the bend and beyond the island, and a wide ribbon of water lay under their eyes.

"There they are!" breathed Miss Maynard, excitedly.

Perhaps a quarter of a mile above the island a black point of rock showed itself by some three or four feet above the gleaming surface of the river. The rock was some fifty feet from the opposite bank.

Fifteen feet below the rock the motor-boat was anchored. Hungerford and one other man were in the boat and superintending the movements of three half-clad companions who were acting as divers.

"There they are, sure enough," mused McCardle. "They're looking in the right place, too, if my memory serves. That is the rock the scow struck on, thirty-five years ago. The Indians, after killing the Argonauts and rifling the boat of guns, ammunition and provisions, pushed it off. It must have filled and sunk at just about the place where the diving is going on."

"Yes," returned the girl. "Off the western end of the bluff—this bluff undoubtedly—five yards below the rock and abreast of two small cottonwoods on the nearest bank. That, as I remember it, is the Frenchman's description to accompany the drawing." McCardle nodded. "But where are the two cottonwoods?" the girl added.

There was nothing whatever in the shape of trees on the bank where those two trees should have been.

"They have probably been cut down, or uprooted, or burned or something," said McCardle. "I can't remember, either, that the Frenchman said anything about the island down there."

"Nor, I," answered his companion. "Probably he did not think it was necessary to mention the island. I don't see your friend, Aladdin."

"The skiff is also missing. Possibly Aladdin used the skiff to carry him to this side of the river. Very likely he is waiting for us in the chaparral."

"Let's hurry back to the horses, then," said Miss Maynard, "and get to the chaparral as soon as we can. I—I'm terribly excited," she finished, with a slight laugh.

"So am I," he answered.

They regained the horses and, as they mounted and rode on, Miss Maynard told Wahcootah what they had discovered. The Dakotah grunted in response, but made no other answer.

The flat, which lay to the west of the long bluff, was fully half a mile wide and ran back to a hilly barrier in the north. Almost its whole extent was covered with thickets of high bushes, broken here and there, and affording small open spaces. There was no difficulty at all in remaining screened from the men on the river. Mounted though he was, McCardle found is impossible to look over the top of the chaparral and see the water.

A quarter of a mile brought them abruptly within sight of Aladdin. He was smoking contentedly and leaning against a sharp point of granite that shouldered aside the sandy soil in a small open space. Against the boulder, at his side, leaned a Winchester rifle. He was facing them as they appeared, and lifted a forefinger in token of silence.

"Easy money, Mac," he grinned, when the riders were close to him and dismounting. "I've got Hungerford all balled up, but he thinks he's headed right, and that's the main thing. Good-morning," he added, bowing elaborately to Miss Maynard and Wahcootah. "A fine, large morning for a treasure-hunt. Fooling Hungerford is as easy as selling a gold brick to a Jasper. I'm supposed to be guarding this avenue of approach against surprises from Forty-Mile. Hence my presence in this sequestered spot; also, hence the gun, which is a loan from Hungerford. Come, gather round me, please, and I'll tell you."

"It looks to me, Aladdin," said McCardle, as he and Miss Maynard drew near, while Wahcootah remained in the background holding the horses, "—it looks to me as though Hungerford was anchored in about the right place."

"As a matter of fact, Mac, he's several hundred feet from the right place."

"He's close to the rock on which the Argonaut's scow struck."

"He thinks he is," chuckled Aladdin, "but he's several hundred feet too far to one side. You don't see the two cottonwoods, do you? Of course, you can't see anything from here, but they weren't in sight from the top of the bluff, were they?"

"No."

"Why is that, Aladdin?" the Mascot went on, addressing himself as was occasionally his wont. "I'll tell you why: because the river, years ago, engulfed a big slice of the other bank and the cottonwoods along with it. The Missouri is never satisfied with its course and keeps changing it."

"But that rock is still close to the farther bank, just as the Frenchman's map—"

"Again, Mac," interrupted Aladdin, "let me remind you that that rock over there isn't the same rock. At the time that old scow went on the rocks and the Reds got the Argonauts, that particular boulder was on dry land. Rise to that? When the Missouri changed its course here, it went around a bit of high ground below and formed that pretty little island where we had our skirmish with Hungerford and his men. Map doesn't say anything about that island, does it? That's because there wasn't any island when the Sioux trapped the returning gold-hunters. Thirty-five years ago, friends and fellow citizens," pursued Aladdin impressively, "the place where we are now standing was the bed of the Missouri. The waters flowed almost to the base of those northern bluffs. Little by little the waters receded from this side of the river, and little by little they dug out the bank on the other side. The sand rolled up as the years went by, and presently this nice flat was formed; then the winds and the birds scattered the seeds that ultimately grew into this chaparral."

McCardle was astounded. So was Miss Maynard. Wahcootah, holding the horses at a little distance and straining her ears to catch the drift of Aladdin's conversation, alone remained impassive, unimpressed.

"Where's the rock that stove in the Argonaut's scow?" inquired McCardle.

"Here it is behind me," replied Aladdin.

"And—and the scow?" whispered Miss Maynard.

"Buried in the sand—at, I should say, just about the place where Wahcootah is now standing. You and McCardle don't have to dive for your treasure, Miss Maynard. All you have to do is to let Hungerford, Limping Lon and the rest do the diving, while you get shovels and *dig*."

This amazing revelation was so logical and convincing that McCardle and the girl could only stare at Aladdin in stunned bewilderment.

VII

THE SUNKEN SCOW

An hour spent in examining the flat convinced Miss Maynard and McCardle that Aladdin's theory was correct. The river, since the days of the ill-fated Argonauts, had made for itself a new channel. As it dug the sands from one bank, it spewed them out against the other bank and so covered the path of its retreat. Little by little the old scow and the rock against which it had struck had been enfolded in grit and silt, and the scow completely buried. There was proof of this, proof which it seemed strange Hungerford had not discovered for himself.

The rock against which the Argonaut's craft had been stove was referred to in the Frenchman's map as a "two-pointed rock rising a man's height above the water." The boulder below which the *Happy-go-Lucky* was anchored was not a "two-pointed" rock but of sugar-loaf formation. The boulder that reared above the flat, on the other hand, answered completely the old description. The Frenchman

had said nothing about the island—a prominent object in that part of the river. Had the island been there at the time the Argonauts had battled to the death with the redskins, surely the Frenchman would have mentioned it. Again, the two cottonwoods had vanished. The trees might have been effaced by axe or fire or tempest, but it seemed more reasonable to suppose that the water had undermined them and carried them as drift down the river. The formation of the *coteaux,* or bluffs, was also such as, in some measure, to direct the Missouri's course in the change it had made.

"Aladdin," said McCardle, after he and Miss Maynard had finished with their running back and forth across the flat, "you *are* a wonder!"

"Thanks," answered the red-haired mascot, laying a hand over his heart and bowing. "I knew it was a Hun of a notion the minute I flagged it. Wonder you didn't cop it out for yourself, Mac."

"I haven't had time, until now, to go over this part of the river and compare it with the map; but I might not have been able to evolve the theory even if I had had the time."

"What must we do first?" queried Miss Maynard.

Her cheeks were flushed with excitement and her brown eyes were sparkling. Wahcootah was calmly attending to the horses and refusing to show any enthusiasm.

"Dig," said Aladdin, "and start in this afternoon. No union day of eight hours for yours! You and Mac and Wahcootah have got to uncover the scow and the gold before the Hungerford push get discouraged and begin to spread out or annex our own theory of a changing channel. This may come to-morrow, or it may come next week. Anyhow, between now and then it's up to you to get the yellow boodle and emigrate to Mandan with it before the five on the river have a chance to break up the picnic. I'll help. I'm to be kept guarding this flat and watching Forty-Mile for trouble."

"You have been of great assistance to us, Mr. Jones," said Miss Maynard, "and when I recover the gold both you and Mr. McCardle shall share it with Wahcootah and me."

"Not an ounce," said McCardle, "unless the iron cylinder contains the name of my grandfather."

"Then," was the arch response, "if it contains the name of your ancestor and does not contain the name of mine, Wahcootah and I are not to have any of the wealth!"

"We'll see about that later," laughed McCardle. "I never have believed very much in counting chickens before they were hatched."

"That's sensible. We may be two or three days here, and I suppose Wahcootah and I had better stay at Forty-Mile. How shall we satisfy the curiosity of Mr. and Mrs. Spangler when they see us coming forth every morning with shovels and picks and returning to the tavern, tired out, every night?"

McCardle was puzzled. "Why not," he suggested, "take Mrs. Spangler into your confidence? I think it will be best to tell her the truth."

"I was hoping you'd say that," answered the girl. "Mrs. Spangler need not tell her husband, or anyone else at Forty-Mile, and her quiet co-operation will be a decided help to us. Shall we go back, now, and return this afternoon and get to work?"

"The quicker the better," said Aladdin.

Without any further delay they mounted and started on their return to Forty-Mile. They halted long enough to make a second survey of the river from the crest of the long bluff. Diving operations were going on below the rock with undiminished energy.

"I hope they wont get discouraged too soon," said Miss Maynard, as she and McCardle were descending the slope.

"So do I," McCardle returned. "And let us also hope that nothing happens to discourage *us!*"

"Your idea that the river searched out the gold and bore it away from the wreck must be discarded now."

"I don't know about that. The current may have accomplished its work before the wreck was buried in the sand-bar. However, Miss Maynard, we'll hope for the best."

It was nearly noon when they regained the tavern. Miss Maynard went at once to talk with the landlord's wife and McCardle, and Wahcootah rode off to the corral with the horses. The Easterner volunteered to care for all the mounts but the Dakotah insisted on looking after her own and Miss Maynard's.

Not a word had McCardle heard from the Dakotah since he had met her. Her reserve, it seemed, was only broken during the quiet moments when she was alone with her white companion.

"What have you done with that red-headed feller, McCardle?" asked the landlord, when they were all at dinner.

"He's hanging out up the river," replied McCardle indefinitely. "You'll see him back here, before long."

Only one guest had arrived during the morning and availed himself of the Spangler hospitalities at Forty-Mile. He was a tall, slender man, perhaps forty years old, and was dressed in serviceable dark corduroy and wore a black slouch hat. He sat at a separate table, ate by himself, and made no advances toward Spangler or Spangler's other guests. Following dinner, and while Mrs. Spangler and Miss Maynard were strolling around in the direction of the corral, this stranger smoked a cigar and walked reflectively up and down in front of the tavern.

In due course Mrs. Spangler and Miss Maynard returned to the tavern, where McCardle and Wahcootah were waiting with the horses. The little party of gold-hunters mounted and rode away, the landlord's wife waving after them, and the landlord and his stranger guest watching with passive interest.

"I believe," remarked Miss Maynard, when they had jogged out of earshot, "that the new guest at Forty-Mile is Dave Harkins, a United States deputy marshal from Bismarck. I am not personally acquainted with Mr. Harkins, but Uncle Paul knows him, and I have seen him once or twice."

"What do you suppose he's doing here?" asked McCardle.

"He's on business of some sort, government business. In view of the circumstances, Mr. McCardle, his presence here rather gives me a feeling of security."

"I wish I knew what sort of government business was claiming his attention," said McCardle. "What did Mrs. Spangler say?" he asked, changing the subject.

"She promised to tell no one, not even Mr. Spangler. She thought our work was very romantic, and would have liked to go with us and help us. She decided, however, that such a move on her part would interest her husband too much. We left the shovels here," Miss Maynard finished, halting her horse and slipping from the saddle.

Mrs. Spangler and Miss Maynard had secretly gathered and hidden in the bushes two shovels, two picks and three canvas bags.

"What are the bags for?" inquired McCardle quizzically.

"For the gold, of course!" exclaimed the girl.

McCardle laughed at her earnestness and conviction. With the implements and the bags they rode on, pausing as usual at the long bluff to make a survey of Hungerford's operations. The *Happy-go-Lucky* had changed its position by perhaps a dozen feet and the diving was going forward industriously. As in the forenoon, three men were in the river and two were in the boat superintending the work.

"They haven't had any success so far, that's plain," observed Miss Maynard.

"And it's equally plain," McCardle answered, "that they continue hopeful. Aladdin isn't there, so he must be on guard on the flat."

A little later they found Aladdin impatiently awaiting their arrival.

"I went out to my boat in the skiff, at noon," said he, "and we all dropped down to the island for dinner. They've all gone dippy on the treasure proposition, and while they haven't as yet found so much as a splinter of that old scow, each man is figuring on what he's going to do with his *dinero*. Hungerford and Limping Lon are going to take half for their share, and the other half is to be divided among the rest." Aladdin laughed under his breath. "If

they only knew how they were getting the gaff," he finished, "they'd want to scalp me."

McCardle began at the boulder and stepped off twenty feet in a direction that once had been down stream. "We'll start in here," said he, throwing off his coat and picking up a shovel.

"Wahcootah and I are going to help," declared Miss Maynard, resolutely. "It isn't fair for you to have all the hard work, Mr. McCardle."

"You and Wahcootah can help best by acting as guards," the young man returned. "You, Miss Maynard, can make your way to the edge of the brush at the river bank and Wahcootah can keep a sharp watch eastward, in the direction of Forty-Mile. This will leave Aladdin free to help with the pick and shovel work."

"But I don't think that's—"

"If I'm in charge of this party," McCardle interrupted banteringly, "I ought to be obeyed without question."

Miss Maynard drew up her slender form to its full height, clicked her heels and saluted. "Very good, Captain," said she humbly.

A moment later the two girls had disappeared toward the south and east, and McCardle and Aladdin had begun their attack on the surface of the flat. The digging was not hard, and an hour's work carried them down to where the scow should have been had it been sunk in that particular place.

"Whoosh!" said Aladdin, drawing his sleeve across his dripping forehead. "Playing understudy to a son of toil is some tough on a fellow that earns his keep by mascoting. Mac, you didn't pick out the right place. Every time we fail to land on the right spot it means lost time and blisters and back-ache. Let me pick the next diggings. If I'm a mascot, what am I here for?"

"Go ahead!" answered McCardle climbing out of the hole and throwing himself wearily down in the shade of the boulder.

Aladdin shook the sand out of his clothes, surveyed the surroundings carefully and then moved eastward toward the end of the long bluff. He halted within a distance of twenty feet from the first excavation.

"Here's where we nail it, Mac!" he declared, stamping his heel into the sand. "Take it from me that here's where we uncover something worth while."

"I think you're too far east."

"That depends on the length of the scow."

"And then, too," proceeded McCardle, "the suction of water around the boulder, when the boat went down, would have drawn it to the south. I don't think you're south far enough."

"It's sort of by guess and by gosh, anyhow, Mac," said Aladdin, "and we might as well try an opening here."

"Suppose you dig there while I go to the south of you and put down a hole? We ought to finish the prospecting before sundown, and we'll have two chances to one to find what we're looking for."

"Ay, ay," chirped the Mascot, and moistened his hands and went at it.

Separated as they were, caution demanded that they should not raise their voices high enough to talk back and forth. They worked the faster for being unable to converse, and in spite of tiring muscles they kept doggedly to their tasks. A friendly rivalry manifested itself: when Aladdin had dug himself down to his waist-line, McCardle managed to be shoulder-deep in his own pit; and then Aladdin, putting on extra steam, succeeded in getting himself out of sight while his comrade was still able to look out and see that he had vanished.

The sun was swinging close to the tops of the bluffs in the west when Aladdin, happening to look up, saw McCardle standing on the brink above him and holding something in his hand.

"What have you grabbed, Mac?" inquired the Mascot. "Wow!" he added as the object was held more prominently and he saw that it was a human skull, blackened and stained with the damp soil in which it had been hidden.

"This,"—and there was reverence in McCardle's voice as he spoke—"must be a relic of one of those old Argonauts, Aladdin. It's within the bounds of possibility that this is the skull of my ancestor, or of Miss Maynard's."

"Ugh! my skin feels like sandpaper. Nothing queers me, or ties my nerves into bow-knots, like human framework. Put it away."

"There's a bullet-hole just above the eyes—"

Aladdin squirmed. "Quit piling it on, Mac!" he begged. "Caint you see what a crimp it throws into me? Drop it and come down here and see what I've found. Listen!"

Aladdin tamped at the bottom of the hole with his shovel. Every blow of the implement awakened a sodden, resonant echo. And then, while the Mascot continued his thumping, without the slightest warning his foothold gave way beneath him and he dropped into darkness, swinging his arms wildly in an attempt to grasp something substantial.

Delight and astonishment were about equally mixed in the exclamation that fell from McCardle's lips. Dropping the skull, he slid into the hole and followed his friend down into the darkness. The fall was not great—no more than three or four feet—and he alighted on hands and knees.

"This is a hot one!" came the awesome voice of Aladdin, through the gloom. "I've been looking for a treasure cave all my life, same as that other Aladdin, and it's a warm guess that I've just dropped in on it. Not very roomy, though. If I try to get up I'll bump my coco."

"This is no cave," said McCardle, with difficulty repressing his emotion. "We're inside that old scow, Aladdin! It's marvelous the way the wreck has held together. You broke through the rotten planks of the deck and—"

"Mr. McCardle! Mr. McCardle!"

It was Miss Maynard's voice, pitched in a key of intense excitement. McCardle rose to his feet and thrust his head through the irregular opening above him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The men on the river have been calling Aladdin," went on the girl, breathlessly. "Didn't you hear them? Now they're all coming this way in the motor-boat. And there's some one on the bluff, looking at them. Wahcootah just came and told me. There's danger, danger!"

McCardle and Aladdin scrambled out of the hulk and up the side of the pit.

"No time for talk now," muttered McCardle. "Aladdin, hustle for the river and keep Hungerford and his gang away from here. We'll have to start for Forty-Mile as quick as we can. Mind, none of those fellows must see these holes we've been digging. We'll be back here in the morning."

Aladdin was diving into his coat. "I'll take care of those dubs—don't fret," he said, grabbing his rifle and making off through the chaparral.

The bark and sputter of the *Happy-go-Lucky's* engine was echoing sharply from the direction of the river.

"What have you found?" inquired Miss Maynard, for the first time giving attention to the yawning darkness in the bottom of the pit.

"I'll explain to you later," he replied.

Wahcootah had the horses in readiness and they mounted and rode in the direction of Forty-Mile. Just where the chaparral broke away by the foot of the long bluff they drew rein and the Dakotah girl pointed to a figure near the bare top of the uplift. It was the figure of a man peering cautiously over the crest at the river, studying the scene through a pair of binoculars.

"It's Harkins," murmured Miss Maynard. "Isn't it, Wahcootah?"

"Ai," said the Dakotah.

"He seems to be interested in Hungerford," observed McCardle. "We'll wait till he leaves, and then we'll follow him back to Forty-Mile at a safe distance."

"That will be best," agreed Miss Maynard.

VIII

THE IRON CHEST

After the United States Marshal had descended the side of the bluff and strode off in the direction of the tavern, McCardle and Miss Maynard climbed to their look-out station for the purpose of observing Aladdin's success in keeping Hungerford and his men away. In the gathering dusk they saw the motor-boat, with the skiff in tow, making for the island. Aladdin

was in the motor-boat with the rest of the men.

"Aladdin has made good," said McCardle, with a glow of satisfaction, while they were continuing their journey to Forty-Mile.

"I don't know how we'd ever get along without Aladdin," returned the girl. "But what did you find on the flat? I'm all curiosity about that."

He told her, in a few words, and she clapped her hands delightedly.

"You've found the old wreck! Isn't it wonderful, Mr. McCardle? I don't think there's a stranger story in all the West than this! You've found the wreck, and we'll find the gold! There's not a shadow of doubt about it.

"I wouldn't be too sure, even yet. Not until we examine the boat, and have the treasure in our hands, can we be sure of anything."

"You'll admit, at least, that the prospect is bright?"

"Yes, I'll admit that."

When they reached Forty-Mile, Dave Harkins was nowhere to be seen. While McCardle and Wahcootah were turning the horses into the corral, however, they saw three strange and weary bronchos in the enclosure, and while the riding gear was being put away, Harkins appeared, followed by three silent and dusty companions, revolvers at their belts, Winchesters over their shoulders and spurs jingling at their heels. These minions of the law, heavy-browed and forbidding, strode on and vanished through the tavern door.

Mystery, some mystery of the law, was in the air. McCardle was oppressed with it, and felt in his bones that it had something to do with him, with Miss Maynard, and with the buried scow and the old treasure. These three strangers were at Forty-Mile at the behest of the Marshal—of this McCardle was positive. He looked at Wahcootah, but if her thoughts flickered with excitement or apprehension her stolid face gave no sign.

Mrs. Spangler and Miss Maynard were seated in chairs under a cottonwood a little way from the tavern door, and from the tavern bar came a chink of glasses and a gruff, "Here's how!" The landlord was tilted back against the wall of his establishment with his fan in one hand and his everlasting black clay pipe in the other.

Miss Maynard threw a significant glance at McCardle as he started into the building, bound for his room to prepare himself for supper. The glance told him that Mrs. Spangler was being regaled with an account of the afternoon's exploits.

At the evening meal there was much general talk and laughter at the host's table—where, by special invitation, sat the young women and McCardle, but there was ominous silence at the other table, where clustered the marshal and his friends.

The night passed uneasily for McCardle. He had premonitions of trouble, perhaps of disaster. The exciting stage which had been reached in the treasure-hunt had unsettled him, so that his own condition of mind invited gruesome fancies. He slept little and was abroad early, so early that he had to pass an impatient hour before breakfast.

He went to the corral. Four horses were missing—the Marshal's and the three strange bronchos that were there the night before. The officer and his men had left! Where had they gone? Such an early start betokened grave business, and McCardle would have given much to know what the business was.

There was a lantern in the shed near the corral. With an eye to future needs the young man carried the lantern to a point below the corral and hid it in the same clump of bushes where the shovels and picks had been secreted on the previous day.

A little later, at breakfast, he saw that Miss Maynard's face was flushed and that there was a bright restlessness in her brown eyes. The thrill of the work before them, he knew, was singing its siren's song in her nerves and veins. Even Mrs. Spangler was repressing her nervousness and exitement with difficulty. Wahcootah, as usual, was as calm, as unruffled and as taciturn as though digging up half a million of long-lost treasure was an everyday affair with her.

Not until they were mounted and

away did McCardle begin to get the whiphand of himself. Action was the tonic he needed, and Forty-Mile was hardly out of sight before he felt that he was captain of himself and of his destiny. He dismounted at the thicket and secured the lantern.

"What is that for?" inquired Miss Maynard.

"This," he laughed, "is to light us through our Aladdin's Cave—in other words, through the gloomy regions of our subterranean treasure-house."

"Where do you suppose the Marshal and his deputies have gone?"

"I don't know, Miss Maynard—and I don't care, particularly, so long as they did not go to the sunken scow."

"Isn't this exciting?" queried the girl, with a little gasp. "Is there anything more thrilling, in all the world, than a hunt for buried treasure?"

"No," he answered. "And, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, there is nothing more disappointing."

Her face fell. "I don't want to be disappointed!" she exclaimed.

"Does this gold mean so much to you?"

"Not so much to me, Mr. McCardle, as to Wahcootah. All my uncle has will some day be mine, but I should like to feel independent. It would be pleasant to have a fortune of my very own, dug out of that sandy flat."

As was their custom, they halted at the base of Long Bluff, midway of its length, left the horses with the Dakotah and ascended to make observations.

To their surprise, there were no operations going forward on the river that morning. The *Happy-go-Lucky* was not in sight.

"Have they given up?" asked the girl. "If they have, what does this mean to us?"

"We'll hurry on to the flat," he answered, "and find Aladdin. He'll tell us what it means."

The Mascot met them with a wide grin and a jovial manner.

"For a luck-bringer, Mac," said he, "you can back me against all comers, bar none. We're all by ourselves, on this part of the river, and will have the whole day for our loot-hunting."

"What's become of Hungerford?"

"Diving's too slow for him. All hands held a pow-wow, last night, and it was decided to go to Mandan for chains and grappling hooks. The quickest way to locate the scow, Hungerford thinks, is by dragging the river. I was left here to watch and see that no one came poaching on our preserves. Horses had been left on the river-bank, and it was early dawn when I put that gang of crooks ashore. They're miles from here, by now."

Miss Maynard and McCardle experienced an intense relief. They felt that with the whole day before them, they could finish their work easily. The horses were secured and, while it was possible that guards were unnecessary, yet Miss Maynard and Wahcootah were posted near the saddle-stock and instructed to continue their picket duty. McCardle and Aladdin lighted the lantern, took shovels, and slid to the bottom of the excavation and into the buried scow.

The boat was lying broadside-on, toward the rock that had wrecked it, and it was evident that Aladdin had fallen through the deck at a point close to the square prow. On hands and knees they troweled away the sand with their shovels and discovered the great hole that had proved the destruction of the craft and its navigators. The hole was large enough for two men to crawl through.

"That water-tight compartment was amidships, wasn't it?" queried Aladdin.

"I suppose so," answered McCardle. "We'll crawl back and take a look at the after part of the wreck."

The mound of sand rose as they progressed, and they discovered that one whole side of the scow seemed to have yielded to decay and the action of the water and to have been destroyed. The sand had banked itself up on that side after filling the interior almost to the deck.

McCardle flashed the lantern around and finally sat up with his head bumping the rotten timbers of the deck.

"It is going to be as I feared," he declared.

"How's that?" returned Aladdin.

"Why, when the side of the scow

went out, the gold must have gone with it."

"Ouch, that hurts! Say, Mac, you're more kinds of a wet blanket than I know how to tell. You're overlooking your one best bet."

"What's that?"

"Why, that I'm a mascot. I've set the pace, in this thing, and the old Missouri can't head me. Let's scrape away this sand and see what we find."

"We'll do that, of course, but I wouldn't give much for our chances of finding the gold."

Without further delay they began their work. The sand was soft and, as McCardle dug it out, Aladdin pushed it farther toward the prow and out of the way. The air was bad and the heat stifling. Again and again the two workers had to crawl into the prow and revive themselves with fresh air from the bottom of the pit.

After two hours of sweating labor, McCardle remarked upon a singular and discouraging circumstance.

"Aladdin, we haven't found a single object—a kettle, for instance, or a powder-horn, or so much as a bone-handled knife—that must have formed part of the Argonauts' equipment. Surely we should have happened upon something, in all this sand, which in the shape of relics would suggest those fated miners, unless—" He paused.

"Go on," urged Aladdin.

"Unless the river had carried them away."

"Well, I'm mascoting this minute as hard as I ever did in my life. Go on with the digging, Mac, and we're bound to uncover something."

Another hour of smothering work revealed, beyond all doubt, that as the boat was minus one side, so also was it minus a bottom. The lower planks had been wrenched and twisted from the rest of the hull, or else had rotted and been carried away piece by piece. And with those once stanch timbers, the treasure must have gone.

The sand, from the place where the scow's bottom should have been, was sifted and examined. It held absolutely no trace of yellow metal. Even Aladdin's confidence was shaken.

"My brace is beginning to fade," said he. "Pretty soon I'll be copping out a bunch of luck for myself, and then so-long to the mascot game. Or maybe the Slaves of the Lamp have soured on the whole proposition and are beating it, leaving nothing behind for me or for anybody else! I've always thought my mysterious powers would hit the toboggan some time, but it's pretty low-down to have them slip away at a time like this."

McCardle laughed grimly, wiping the sweat out of his eyes.

"It's a serious matter," pursued Aladdin gravely, "and doesn't call for a ha-ha. Sidetrack yourself, Mac, and let me tangle up with this alone, for a spell. I'm going to do an incantation along with a little shovel-work, rubbing the lamp the best I know how. Abandon me to my folly, friend, and let's see what comes of it."

"All right, Aladdin," agreed McCardle. "I'll go up above and talk with Miss Maynard. You can come along when you get ready."

A few minutes later McCardle, plastered with sand and grime, scrambled out of the pit and found himself face to face with Genie Maynard. She took no account of his disreputable appearance, being so eager to learn of developments in the sand-enshrouded hulk.

"Tell me quick, Mr. McCardle! Have you found anything?"

"Nothing, Miss Maynard," he reported. "It is as I feared: the river has washed away the treasure and has probably scattered it all the way from here to Bismarck."

"Oh!" A bitter disappointment throbbed in the girl's voice. "Are you sure?" she added. "Are you positive?"

McCardle, sinking to his knees, drew a straight line in the sand with his finger.

"The wreck lies like this," he went on. "All the timbers are rotten, and only the sand, which has packed itself around them, holds a few of them in place. All the down-stream side of the scow is gone, and the bottom with its water-tight compartments is gone. You see how it must have been? The current undoubtedly worked its will with the treasure for years, scattering it

before the sandbar had formed. I'm sorry," he finished gently, "but, as I told you, buried treasures are uncertain things, at best."

The girl was cast down to an extent which McCardle could not think was warranted by the circumstances. Had she been penniless, and had her whole future depended upon the recovery of the lost gold, she could not have expressed her disappointment more profoundly.

"I—I know I'm silly to take this so much to heart," said she, "but here was a chance to solve the mystery that has always hung like a pall over my grandfather's fate. And then, Wahcootah! A little of that lost wealth would have done wonders for her, Mr. McCardle. If she—"

Miss Maynard was interrupted by a muffled shout from the depths of the excavation behind them. Both he and the girl hastened to place themselves where they could see Aladdin. He was an earth-stained, weary, but jubilant mascot.

"What ho, my hearties!" Aladdin whooped. "Oh, my name was Captain Kidd, as I sailed, as I sailed—"

"What's the matter?" interrupted McCardle.

"Matter, quotha? Why, by the seven holy spritsails, a Slave of the Lamp just crowded in on me and handed me this." The youth stepped aside and offered the two above a view of a box-like object at his feet. "An iron chest, messmate! A strong box filled with jewels, plate and pieces of eight! Wouldn't this curl your hair? Come down, Mac, and help me up with it."

An excited cry escaped the lips of the girl. McCardle, astounded, slipped back into the pit and stood surveying the receptacle which his friend had unearthed.

It was an iron box surely, although time and river water and shifting sand had worked much havoc with it. It was encrusted with rust and coated with an irregular armor of gritty particles; and it had held together through all the years!

Aladdin cackled his exultation. What he said fell on deaf ears, so far as McCardle was concerned. He was speculating vaguely as to how the box could have remained when all the other treasure had vanished.

"Not all the gold," he remarked finally, cutting into the stream of Aladdin's chatter, "was stowed in buckskin bags. Some of it was put in that iron box. When the river destroyed the bags and swept away their contents, the strong box held true to its trust and its very weight kept it in the boat. This," declared McCardle, "is all the treasure that will ever be recovered. It—"

"Please bring it up!" begged Miss Maynard, so wrought up by Aladdin's discovery that she was dancing around the edge of the pit. "Hurry, hurry! Let's see what's inside! Wahcootah!" she called. "Come here, Wahcootah, and see what we've found!"

The box was heavy—McCardle judged that it weighed more than one hundred pounds—and it was carried up the steep slope of the excavation with difficulty. The excitement and exultation were general—it had gone to Aladdin's head and he was talking continually: if no one listened to him, he talked to himself. The calmest one of the party was the Dakotah, yet even through her phlegmatic nature gleams of interest were breaking.

McCardle seized one of the picks and dug at the matted rust and sand that covered the box. Hasp and padlock had once closed the lid, but they had rusted to fragments and dropped away when touched by the pick point. The hinges of the box were also useless, and when pried against, the whole top of the box came off.

If those who clustered eagerly about that ancient receptacle expected to find it filled with glistening gold they were disappointed. A muddy square, conforming to the size of the box, was before them—a square that was bulbous with lumps like so many inconsequential half-bubbles; and towards one end was a little semi-circular mound measuring seven or eight inches in length.

"The box, of course," came the voice of McCardle, "was not water-tight. The Missouri River got into it, and brought silt and fine particles. Now, this," and he lifted up the small mound,

"happens to be, I think, the iron cylinder containing the names of the Argonauts. Ah yes!" His voice was a-thrill with satisfaction as his eyes assured him that he had guessed correctly.

Aladdin dived into the box with both hands, and what he brought up was surely gold—nuggets large and small, crusted with earth. Here and there the yellow showed, dark and stained, yet undeniably golden-yellow, through the muck.

"Treasure!" he cried. "More than a hundred pounds of it! Do you get that? More than a hundred pounds avoirdupois! Sixteen hundred ounces and better, all at twenty dollars an ounce! Two times naught's naught; two times naught's naught; two times six is twelve; two times one's two, and one's three—say, there's more than thirty-two thousand dollars' worth of gold in this—"

There was a rustle in the encircling thicket, the sound of feet crunching the gravel. In consternation, the small group around the box turned, only to gasp and recoil in dismay.

Hungerford was before them, and grouped at Hungerford's back were Limping Lon and the rest of the villainous crew. Every man of the five had revolver drawn, and along every barrel sparkled a greedy and determined eye.

"Fine!" shouted Hungerford with a raucous laugh. "And if I hadn't used my wits we might be diving in the river yet, while you folks took the back track with thirty-two thousand dollars! Steady as you stand! One move and our guns will begin to talk. Lon!"

"Here, Nate," and he of the limp stepped forward.

"Take Raspen and empty that iron box into the canvas bags. We've got to hit the train in a hurry, so be quick about it."

Perry and the man Raspen put away their revolvers and came on to where Miss Maynard had left the canvas bags.

"Oh, what a frost!" mumbled Aladdin. "I've jumped from the mascot corner into the Jonah row, and our nine is blanked! Wont somebody please call the ambulance?"

IX

A TIGHT SQUEAK

So far as McCardle and his friends were concerned, the situation was exceedingly unfortunate. Beguiled by thoughts of absolute security, the Easterner, the Mascot and Miss Maynard had laid aside their firearms, and the imperturbable Wahcootah was the only one who was armed. But out of consideration for the two girls the idea of resistance with powder and ball was not to be thought of. Five desperate men were confronting the small party of four, and the odds against the four were too great. There seemed nothing to do but to let Hungerford and his men remove the treasure of the Argonauts.

Raspen picked up one of the canvas bags and shook it out. Hungerford ordered McCardle and his friends to fall back from the old strong box. They obeyed slowly, silently, the blazing eyes of the Dakotah leveled with feline animosity upon the man in the Mexican hat. Perry limped to the box, bent over it and scooped up a double handful of treasure. This he dumped into the bag with a triumphant laugh.

"Reddy played fast an' loose with us," he guffawed, "but right here's where we even the score."

"How do you like it, Reddy?" inquired Hungerford, whose weapon commanded the form of the Mascot. "That game of yours happens to be one that two can play at. When we picked you up, last night, there was sand in your shoes, sand in your clothes, and sand in your hair. I just about reckoned that something was going on. Raspen came across here in the skiff, during the night, and got the lay of things; then we fixed up that yarn about going to Mandan after chains and grappling-hooks."

Hungerford paused to admire his own astuteness, and to chuckle over it.

"When you left us on the farther bank, bright and early this morning," he went on, "we picked up our mounts —but we didn't ride toward Mandan. We went up the river about five miles, swam our horses across and stole back down to the western edge of this flat.

Left the horses there, came the rest of the way on foot and hid in the brush. You were all here, and busy, when we crawled into position. Then we waited for you to find something. We amused you for a while, swimming in the river, and now you've been a pleasant sight to us, digging down and uncovering that box. We're obliged to you; but I'm the heir that collars the swag."

While Hungerford was giving vent to his remarks, Perry was very busy, and the *slump, slump* of handful after handful of treasure beat out a sort of *tempo* in the bag Raspen was holding. The bag filled as the box emptied. McCardle watched despairingly as the contents of the bag crept up and up the stout canvas sides.

"So you're really a thief, are you, Nate Hungerford?" said Miss Maynard, coldly and calmly.

"No more than you, Miss," was the answer. "You and McCardle tried to do me out of my rights, and I had to resort to force in order to get my due. An uncle of mine was in that crowd of gold-hunters who came down the river, in '65—Job Hungerford. That gives me a look-in on whatever was found, I reckon."

"If what you say is true," spoke up McCardle, "then your uncle's name will be found on the muster roll of the rest of the Argonauts, enclosed in this iron cylinder. Put away your guns and we'll open the cylinder and see if—"

"No, you don't!" interrupted Hungerford. "I'm standing pat with things as they are. If you—"

Quick as a flash of lightning, the Dakotah lifted her arm. Simultaneously with the movement a spiteful *crack* echoed across the flat.

"Wahcootah!" wailed the voice of Miss Maynard.

Hungerford's right hand dropped limply at his side and the revolver fell from it and struck the ground at his feet. For the space of a heart-beat there was silence—then fierce yells from all five of the men—yells of rage, save that of Hungerford, in which pain was mingled. Perry flung backward from the box and Raspen leaped from the sack, each groping for a weapon at his belt.

A brawny ruffian at Hungerford's right shifted his revolver from McCardle to Wahcootah. There was death in the man's eyes and fierce determination in the finger that was tightening upon the trigger.

McCardle's right arm went back and then went forward with all his power. The iron cylinder flashed through the air and struck against the side of the man's head. He dropped as though felled by an axe.

McCardle flung himself as a shield in front of Miss Maynard. "Into the pit!" he gasped. "Quick!"

He had time for no more. Perry had leaped at Wahcootah and was fighting furiously for possession of the girl's revolver. McCardle had been seized by Raspen, and the two were at each other's throats like tigers. Aladdin ran to the sack of gold and bent to lift it. As he bent, Hungerford, the muzzle of his revolver in his left hand, brought down the stock in a vicious blow and the Mascot fell without a murmur and lay still and silent beside the iron box.

Wahcootah should never have opened that one-sided battle. The blood of her race, however, had cried for the fight, and she had begun it blindly.

McCardle and Raspen were on the ground, McCardle with his knee on Raspen's breast and his fingers strangling at Raspen's throat.

"Knock McCardle over the head, one of you men," shouted Hungerford hoarsely, "and then pick up the bag and rush for the horses!"

McCardle heard some one running toward him, but the hastening crunch of steps was drowned in another rush of feet, stern shouts and a flurry of fresh movements. The Easterner, half-blinded by the sand that had been flung in his eyes and nearly spent by his fierce efforts, rolled away from the prostrate form of Raspen.

As on a sheet, cast by a moving picture machine improperly focused, he saw the blurred outlines of many men in terrific struggle. Then, as his vision cleared, he distinguished the wiry form and sinister face of Dave Harkins, the United States marshal. A few moments later the picture had faded and there was peace and quiet on the sandy flat.

"A short horse is soon curried," remarked a voice, and McCardle got up to find Harkins standing beside him.

Hungerford and his men were disarmed and under guard, and one of the guards was wrapping a red cotton handkerchief around Hungerford's wrist.

"Where's Miss Maynard?" inquired McCardle.

"Here," the girl answered. She was standing with Wahcootah, a little apart, her disordered fancy struggling to untangle the recent whirl of events.

"And Aladdin—"

"Slightly disfigured but still in the ring," came, none too steadily, from the discredited mascot. "Somebody picked up a brick building and threw it down on top of me." Aladdin had lifted himself from the ground and was sitting on the edge of the iron box, feeling gingerly of the back of his head. "Welcome, thrice welcome, Mr. Harkins," he went on, peering at the marshal. "But what brought you here?"

"Hungerford and his men ran off five horses from the post at Ft. Totten, a week ago," said Harkins, "and that's the reason I'm here. I got it pretty straight that he was with a threshing gang, somewhere around Forty-Mile, so I came up the river after leaving word for three deputies to follow me. We've been all morning locating the gang, but it looks as though we'd come up with the fellows at just about the right time, eh? What's going on here?"

Miss Maynard, McCardle and Aladdin explained at some length, and they had the fascinated attention of the officers during their recital. After investigating the box and the bag and the encrusted gold, Dave Harkins congratulated McCardle and his friends and then assumed a judicial air as befitted one in authority.

"Naturally," said he, "the heirs of those Argonauts are entitled to this treasure. That cylinder, you say, contains a list of men who came down the river in '65 and lost their lives and their wealth. It would be well, I think, to look over that list—if time and the river have spared it."

McCardle and Miss Maynard were agreed, and upon the marshal devolved the duty of removing one of the lead plugs from the piece of pipe and examining the contents. The cylinder and its leaded ends, protected as they had been by the iron box, had resisted admirably the lapse of years and the wear and tear of the river and the sandbank. Whatever the cylinder contained had been hermetically sealed up with the lead.

Harkins, with a clasp knife, removed one of the soft-metal plugs; then he shook the cylinder, and a compact packet, wrapped in rawhide, fell into his open palm. Time had so hardened the rawhide that it was necessary to cut it away. The kernel of all this husk was a piece of soft-tanned doeskin. It seemed as white and fresh as when it had first been put away in the buckskin wrapper, the iron cylinder and the strong box. The marshal unfolded it in his hands, and it was to be seen as a square, covered with writing that had been burned into it with a hot iron.

"This is remarkable, most remarkable!" exclaimed Harkins. "This writing was done by an educated man, that's plain. Shall I read it?"

"Go ahead, Mr. Harkins," said McCardle.

It was an odd group that listened to the reading: the surly Hungerford and his men, out for a prize of thousands and arrested miserably for the crime of horse-stealing; the deputy marshals, guarding their prisoners and giving them their eyes and Harkins their ears; Miss Maynard, breathless with interest; Wahcootah, *insouciant* and inscrutable; Aladdin, sitting on the edge of the iron box and nursing the injury to his head; and McCardle, at the marshal's right, grimy and earth-stained, and with an attitude of the deepest interest. Against this background of rapt attention was projected the clear voice of Harkins as he read:

" 'Names, places of residence and amount of gold belonging to each of the miners who left Virginia City, Montana, for their homes in the East in the spring of 1865. The undertaking is one of danger, and if anything happens to the expedition, it is hoped the

gold will be found and, by means of this writing, given to those who should rightfully inherit. A blessing upon him who shall aid the cause of right and justice, and a curse upon him who may venture to find and to keep what rightfully belongs to others.' "

"Wow!" exclaimed Aladdin, lugubriously. "That tosses me in the air so far as coming in for any of that loot is concerned."

"What follows, Mr. Harkins?" inquired Miss Maynard impatiently.

The marshal went on with the reading.

" 'There are twenty in our party, counting the only woman, who is the Indian wife of Pierre Leroux. There are nineteen different lots of gold, eighteen of these lots in buckskin bags and two lots, undivided, in the iron box. Those having their store in the bags, with marks on each and the amount in ounces, are as follows:

" 'Barton Z. Knowles, Pittsburg, Pa., next of kin, Anna Knowles, wife, 216 K—— street, Pittsburg—1260 ounces.

" 'George Bennington, Iola, Kansas, next of kin Mazie Bennington, daughter, Iola—' "

The voice of Miss Maynard broke into the reading. "My grandfather!" she cried. "I knew it, I knew it!"

"Your grandfather, eh?" said Harkins. "Well, Miss Maynard, the gold belonging to your grandfather was in one of the bags and is missing." He consulted the writing. "There were twenty-one hundred ounces of it, too," he added, and whistled.

"Never mind that," said the girl; "the veil of mystery has been torn aside and we know what fate overtook my mother's father."

"See if you can find the name of Archer McCardle, of Kansas City, Missouri," said McCardle.

"There's no such name on the list," averred the marshal.

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

McCardle gave a shout and threw his hat into the air—to the intense surprise of everybody.

"Mac," cried Aladdin, "you're rejoicing a lot because your grandpa escaped the massacre. I'll bet that Hungerford, there, would have been glad to have all his forefathers wiped out if it would give him a share of the swag."

"This means a fortune to me," said McCardle, excitedly, "and I call on you all to witness that my grandfather, Archer McCardle, was not on the ill-fated scow. A man named McCardle died two years ago in Virginia City, Nevada, leaving an estate of several hundred thousand dollars. He died without a will. There are three grandchildren in Grand Rapids, and an adopted son in Nevada. The adopted son is fighting the other heirs, claiming that this Archer McCardle is not the Archer McCardle of my family. The adopted son declares that *our* Archer McCardle was with the ill-fated gold-seekers, and so could not possibly be the other McCardle. The only letter we have is dated from Virginia City, but it says nothing about whether it is the Virginia City in Montana, or the one in Nevada. The burden of proof lies with the grandchildren—and that document, Mr. Harkins, is conclusive. It means a hundred thousand dollars to me, at least."

This was surprising, intensely surprising.

"So *that* was why you were hunting for the sunken scow!" murmured Miss Maynard. "You were anxious to learn, in some way, that your grandfather was *not* one of the Argonauts." She put out her hand. "Mr. McCardle, I congratulate you."

He took the small brown hand in his, and thrilled with the touch of it.

"Well, well," said Aladdin, "maybe I haven't lost this mascot touch, after all. I was thinking the Slaves of the Lamp had double-crossed me, and that hereafter I wouldn't be so good for other people as for myself. I wonder what's juggling with the good-luck dope, anyhow?"

"You might look for Job Hungerford on the list," said McCardle to the officer.

"Not here," reported Harkins.

"I could have told you that myself, Mac," said Aladdin.

"All the gold that has been recovered," spoke up Miss Maynard, " is the

two undivided lots of treasure in the strong box. That, at least, can be turned over to those entitled to receive it. Who are those heirs, Mr. Harkins?"

Again the marshal consulted the writing.

"'In the iron box,'" he read, "'should be sixteen hundred ounces of gold. These belong to Albert Todgers and Adden Jones, both of Albany, New York. The same person is their next of kin, namely, Burton Jones of 46 H—— street, Albany, the son-in-law of Albert Todgers and the son of Adden Jones.'"

McCardle stared like one in a trance. His look brought recollection to Miss Maynard, and her glance and McCardle's rested on Aladdin. The Mascot got up and came toward McCardle with outstretched hand.

"Forgive me, old fel'," said he, "for getting past your guard. As near as I could figure it out, I was the heir of two of those Argonauts. Letters that used to be at the place I call home gave me the hunch. For years I've been on my uppers, prancing up and down the banks of the Missouri, but too far south. What the papers had to say about Paul Maynard, Hungerford and the Frenchman's map brought me farther north. I happened to fall in with you. I needed help and I knew I could give help if I hooked up with the right party, and I sure landed on my feet when I got in with you.

"It's only a piece of luck that the only treasure saved belonged to my two grand-dads. They unloaded the Aladdin label onto me, and it's no more than fair that they made good with the iron box. But I'm no hog, Mac, and we're going to slice this bag of boodle into four equal parts—Miss Maynard, Wahcootah and you will all come in for a share."

"Not I, Aladdin," returned McCardle firmly, touched by the generosity of the threadbare and penniless youth. "I have the biggest reward of all awaiting me in Virginia City, Nevada."

"It belongs to you and to you alone, Aladdin," averred Miss Maynard, "and neither Wahcootah nor I shall touch an ounce of it."

"Nah," grunted Wahcootah.

"Then you unload it all onto me," said Aladdin. "I wonder if J. Pierp. Rockefeller feels any richer than I do?"

The Missouri River still sings its dull requiem to the old Argonauts who met the red man's death above Forty-Mile; and little by little, year by year, its course changes; but never, so long as it flows from its distant source to mingle with the Father of Waters, has it told or will it tell a stranger or truer story than this of the sunken treasure-scow.

For it *is* a true story, in the main, as many of those who read it will aver. In Montana there are many, yet living, who will be glad to vouch for the scow, and its treasure, and its ill-fated passengers.

The recovery of the iron box did not, by any means, close the activities of Miss Maynard and John McCardle on that sandy flat. They hired laborers and they dug the ground over, not to recover more gold—for there was none to recover—but to gather up relics of the gold-hunters and lay them away in a solitary grave on the bluff.

During this work, which claimed a fortnight of time, McCardle came to know Genie Maynard so well that he understood, beyond all peradventure, just how deeply his heart was involved. When he left for Virginia City, Nevada, with the roll of the Argonauts and with an affidavit of its genuineness, subscribed to by Dave Harkins and others, he took with him a promise—a promise which, he declared, made him the happiest fellow in the whole Northwest. This, at least, is what he told Aladdin.

"Sure," agreed the Mascot, "but I'm next. Wahcootah stays with Miss Maynard, whatever happens, and you can expect me to intrude on your domestic happiness a good many times. You're going to stay West?"

"Yes. They need electrical engineers in Mandan."

"Hooray! But we'll take one trip East, just one. You've go to hand Crawley a piece of your mind, and I want to be around when you do it."

But McCardle only laughed.

The Adventures of Willie Bill

By A. L. SARRAN

No. I—THE CAT PARTY

IN THIS story is set down a record of those things by which Mary Roberts, true daughter of the corn-belt, came to know the unchangeable destiny that had been allotted to her.

Since coming home from school she had grown to hate the farm and farm-life. She wanted the pleasures which come with pretty gowns and crowded parties, to ride in taxicabs and not in country buggies.

Her slave in childhood days at the country school had never ceased to come a-wooing. His father's farm was now become his own farm, and Walter Mobley wished no kinder fate than to endow her with it and live his life with her in an Eden all their own. Yesterday, he had begged her to name their wedding day; but in a single, fleeting moment, she saw a picture of her future life with him, and it was only a continuation of the hateful conditions from which she already longed to escape.

So she turned to that universal refuge of feminine "career" seekers, to whom other and perhaps more alluring "careers" are denied—teaching school. And she little dreamed that in far-away Chicago an invisible fever germ had grown and multiplied itself into a million germs, and had already brought down to the Valley of the Shadow a little boy of whose very existence she was ignorant, and caused him to be sent to where her path would cross, there to wait her coming, and change the very aim and current of her life.

His name was William Wilbur Collins. It was so writ down in the old family Bible in which, for three generations, his mother's people had recorded their greatest joys and griefs. "William Wilbur" proved a name too formal for such an informal baby as this one made of himself, so his father shortened it for every-day use, and thereafter he was known as "Willie Bill."

He was a presidential possibility, having been born in the country, and of poor parents. Before he was three years old, the family forsook the drudgery and loneliness of farm life for the chance of winning fortune in the crowded city by the lake; but somehow or other, they found that one could be just as lonesome in a city full of people

as they had been in the open country, and they accumulated babies faster than fortunes.

When Willie Bill was eleven years old, he was sick of a fever from which a year later, he had not fully recovered. His father regarded his skinny legs and arms, and his hollow cheeks, and his little, thin body, and the father-heart sickened as he realized what a poor man's Chicago winter might do to his weak, ill-nourished boy. Then he swallowed some of his pride and wrote to his brother at Warsaw—the brother for whom he had named Willie Bill—and told him of the boy's condition, and the fear that was upon him that Willie Bill could not withstand the rigors of another winter by the lake. And Uncle Bill had written back, promptly, that the boy should be sent to him, to stay until he was well and strong.

And so his mother, whose heart made up in mother-love what her purse lacked in comorts, tearfully but gladly got him ready for his trip. The night before he was to start for Uncle Bill's, she tucked him away in bed long before the time when the Sandman was wont to come for him, and lying there, awake, he heard his mother ask:

"John, what will the child do if your brother should fail to meet him at the depot? Do you reckon there's any danger of his getting lost?"

"Not a bit, mother," he heard his father say. "Warsaw's nothin' but a wide place in the road, and nobody ever gets lost there. They used to have a little trouble on account o' folks goin' through the town without knowin' it, but Jim Glass fixed that by runnin' his pasture fence across the south end o' the street, and now, when a feller runs into that fence, he knows he's in Warsaw. Bill wont fail to see him at the depot. Don't you worry about that."

The next morning his mother kissed him good-by, with many tears and much advice. She entreated, admonished and enjoined that he should remember to do all the things she had told him, and to leave undone all the others of which she had made mention. Indeed, she had tried, in the loving-kindness of her mother-heart, to take all the know-hows accumulated in her forty-year-old storehouse of experience, and crowd them into the twelve-year-old playhouse of her boy; and they had spilled and run over, and were lost and forgotten; for the contents of a bushel basket cannot be put into a small cup.

But there remained three things Chicago had taught him—indeed, had ground into him until they were become a part of his very nature; and they were: an ability to look you straight in the eye while planning your undoing; to give a ready answer to every question, whether he knew it or not; and a self-reliance which would have been a credit to a full-grown man. So, when the brakeman came down the aisle of the car and pulled the little strip of pasteboard from the boy's hat, mumbling "nexstopswarsaw," Willie Bill nodded his head, understandingly, although he had no idea what the man had said.

The train stopped at a little red, square building and Willie Bill got off. Uncle Bill and his old-maidish wife were waiting for him—the one with a smile of hearty welcome on his face, the other with a stern countenance which the boy never saw, for it was replaced with the tenderest sympathy when she caught sight of his tired, white face and his thin, weak body. Uncle Bill grabbed him up and tucked him in the back seat of the surrey, where the old-maid wife held him close as they drove home. All the loafers were at the depot to see the train come and go (thereby maintaining contact and intercourse with the outside world), and at supper time that night the story of his coming was told at every table in Warsaw, together with a minute description of what he looked like and what he had on; and if any detail was omitted in the telling, it was promptly supplied in the questioning to which the teller was subjected, for the art of cross examination flourishes in the country. "How big is he?" they asked. "And what did he have with him? How old do you reckon he is? And does he favor his Uncle Bill? Did he look like he had been much sick? How did his uncle act? And was Mis' Collins glad to see him? How long is he goin' to stay? D'ye reckon they'll

send him to school?" All the little girls were curious to see the city boy, and all the little boys secretly resolved to punch his head if he tried to get smart and come any airs over them.

That night, as soon as he had eaten a bit of supper, Uncle Bill and his wife very awkwardly tucked a very tired and sleepy boy away in bed; and then, in their own room, held council.

"I tell you, Mister Collins," said the old maid wife, "I don't like the way that boy looks. No, sir, I don't. I wouldn't doubt the least bit but what there's more than just a spell of fever the matter with him. We've got him on our hands now, and we're responsible for him, and we ought to satisfy ourselves at the very beginning as to just what is wrong with him. Le's get up early to-morrow morning, and take him to Franklin, and have Doctor Boyd examine him. If there's anything serious the matter with him, I want to know it."

So the next day, Uncle Bill hitched up the surrey and they drove to Franklin, where a long, bony doctor looked at Willie Bill's tongue, and looked at his eyes, and counted his pulse, and listened to his heart and his lungs, and then turned him over and listened to his back, and thumped his breast, and punched him in the side, and thumped his little stomach as if he were thumping a watermelon to see if it were ripe; and when he had finished, he said: "Take him home and fill him up with warm, rich milk and good, fresh eggs. Keep him out in the air and the sunshine, and see that he gets plenty of sleep. In six weeks he'll be so fat you wont know him."

So Willie Bill rode the horses and drove up the cows from the lower pasture; and he hunted for eggs, and helped pick the peaches at "preservin' time;" and he breathed pure air, and slept long and sound. Soon his face grew to be like the full moon, and his body plump; his legs and arms became curves instead of skinny angles, and he waxed strong—also, full of mischief.

Uncle Bill's farm was just one-half mile from Warsaw, where there was a Methodist Church and Sunday School. His old maid wife was a Presbyterian of the old school, who believed the doctrines of predestination and infant damnation. The comfort she took in the one, and her faith in the justice of the other had been strengthened and confirmed since she had come to know Willie Bill in his healthy days. There was no Presbyterian church nearer than Chrisman, but every Sunday morning she found a grim pleasure in duty well done by arraying the young man in his best bib and tucker, and marching him to the Methodist Sunday school at Warsaw, where he endured an hour's discomfort, offset by the opportunity of learning to know, more or less intimately, the boys and girls of his own age.

Kindred souls will seek each other out, and, in time, his was linked with three, having spirits like unto his own. With Tubby Holmes, Boots Cameron, and Hen Watson, he played, and visited, and fished, and swam, and raced, and wrestled and fought, after the fashion of boys, until there was pounded into each of them a wholesome respect for the other three, and an especial pride in the ability, offensive and defensive, of the combined four. Insensibly they had come to consider themselves banded together against their fellows; and one rainy afternoon found them hid in the hiker crib of the grain elevator, ripe for the fulfillment of a scheme that for a long time had been maturing in the fertile brain of Willie Bill.

"Fellers," he said, "le's organize a lodge."

"W-w-what-what ki-ki-kind of a l-lodge?" asked Tubby Holmes.

"Why-y, don't you know what a lodge is? It's a gang of fellers who always meet in secret, and have grips and passwords, and are under an awful oath to stick to each other, and to help each other. And ever'body that don't belong is a scab and a sucker, and gits trimmed by the lodge."

"I thought you said a scab was a feller that didn't belong to no union?" demanded Boots Cameron.

"Aw-w, what's the dif?" replied Willie Bill. "A lodge and a union is all the same, only the names is diff'rent. See?"

"Seems to me like this gang is

a-stickin' together purty well," said Hen Watson. "Blamed if I can see what good it'll be for us to call ourselves a lodge."

"Say, if we're goin' to band together for keeps, we gotta be organized, aint we?" demanded Willie Bill. "And if you want to see what good it does to organize, you jist look at Chicago. Why, I bet you a million dollars there aint a place in the world organized like that place is. Why, say, ever'body in Chicago is organized into somethin'. And don't they do things there? Well, I should say yes. That's what this town needs, and there aint no use in puttin' it off. I've got it all thought out, even to the name an' everything. We can do it right now."

The Odd Fellows' lodge held its meetings in the hall over Hunter's store, and so did the Woodmen. The mysterious things said to have been done at these meetings had often excited the wonder and curiosity of these boys. So, knowing no good reason why they should not, and knowing one sufficient reason why they should—namely, that Willie Bill desired it—they agreed; and safely hid in the hiker crib, secure from interruption by the elevator manager, who was constantly on the lookout for what might happen when a small boy fools with matches, the United Order of the Compass, with all the signs, grips, passwords and rituals incident and necessary thereto, came into being.

That night the path of Mary Roberts crossed the trail of Willie Bill. It was an unfortunate day for the "career" she marked out for herself, that she chose to make her first venture as a teacher in a country school; it was still more unfortunate that she was sent to Warsaw by the Teacher's Bureau; and it was most unfortunate that she chose to board with Uncle Bill and his old maid wife, and was thereby thrown into too close communion with Willie Bill; else this story might never have been written.

In the evening after the first day of school, while they were yet sitting at supper table, Miss Mary expressed her belief that the children stood in great awe and fear of her; and gushingly she added that she wished she knew how to find their dear little hearts and make them love her, for she was led to believe, so she averred, that obedience came most easily by love, and not through fear. Whereat, the good-wife sniffed a sniff of disdain.

"If I were you," she said to the young teacher, "I'd begin right at the start and get next to the little devils with a good, stout gad." And she quoted King Solomon's noted saying.

"William," said Miss Mary, turning to Willie Bill, " how do the city teachers secure obedience? Do they control their pupils by love and kindness, or through fear of corporal punishment?"

Willie Bill glanced, appealingly, towards his uncle. "She means," explained Uncle Bill, "do you city boys mind your teacher because you like her and just naturally want to mind her, or is it because you know you will get the life whaled out of you if you don't mind her?"

"Aw-w, well," replied Willie Bill, "Miss Blucher, she was the teacher in our room, and we all minded her. She was jist so good we couldn't help it. She jist tell us what she wanted done, and we done it. Why," he went on, rising to the occasion, "if any o' the fellers had 'a' sassed her, or not minded her, or hurt her feelin's any way, the other fellers would 'a' lammed the life out of 'em. She was all the time a-doin' things for us, too," he added.

"I think I should like to write to her and ask her advice," said the teacher. "I wonder if she would think it was impertinent of me if I wrote to her. Do you know her address, William? Or, I suppose I could address the letter in care of the school where she teaches. I'll just do that."

Willie Bill's inventive faculties (called "diplomacy" in ourselves, and "ability to lie" in those we dislike) were immediately called into action. It would never do for Miss Mary to write Miss Blucher; she might learn too much.

"Why-y, she's — aw — she's dead, now, Miss Roberts," he said. "But she was a good teacher, and all the fellers loved her. Some of 'em cried out loud at her funeral; Hungry Callahan, he

jist bellered. All of us liked her—she never whipped none."

"I reckon that accounts for her death," said the old maid wife, grimly. "If she'd 'a' wore out a few good gads on you she might 'a' been alive yet. Goodness knows, if *you're* a sample o' what loving kindness will do, *I'd* hate to teach a room full like you, without some kind of weapon handy."

"Aw-w, now, Aunt Marthy, she was sixty-eight years old, and she'd been teachin' all her life, an' the last thing she said before she died was 'tell whoever takes my place to be good to the boys.' Why she was *all* the time a-doin' somethin' for us. She used to take us out to Lincoln Park to see the animals; an' down to the beach to see the flyin'-machines; and out to White City to hear the band. And she give parties, too," he went on, his inventiveness now thoroughly aroused. "She give a cat party jist two weeks before she was took sick, and she had all us fellers there. And when she died, we all throwed in and bought a big flower thing—oh! as big as this," he said, extending his arms, "and sent it to her funeral. It had *Teacher* on it in big letters, all made out of flowers. It was fine. And she was a fine teacher, too."

Aunt Martha's sniff was audible again; the manner, or maybe it was the tone, of it indicated doubt.

"William," asked the teacher, "what on earth *is* a cat party?"

"Aw-w, she invites us to come down to the house where she was a-livin'—see? An' she wrote the invites with her own hand; it said 'cat party' on 'em, too. And after we got there, she gives us all a piece of paper, and every feller's paper had ten questions on it, like, 'What kind of a cat is Niagara Falls?' and 'What kind of a cat is a book?' Questions like that, see? And we had to give answers that had 'cat' in 'em; like 'cataract' and 'catalogue'—see? And the feller that had the most best answers, he got a prize. And we had ice cream and cakes, too. A cat party's some fun, Miss Roberts. You oughta have one."

Willie Bill's story was seed sown on fertile ground. Within an hour this impulsive miss had planned the details of the cat party she would give. She could not take the children to Lincoln Park, nor to the lake front to see the flying-machines, nor to White City, for none of these were possible in Warsaw. But she could give them a party; and later on she would take them nutting down on the creek, and she would make them love her, too.

That night, in her imagination, she pictured her own untimely death and the sorrow of the children; and she cried a few tears into her pillow as she saw, in fancy, the floral tribute *her* pupils would send to *her* funeral, and heard their weeping as they watched her young body lowered into its cold and earthy grave. She wiped away her tears, and said to herself that there was nothing so much worth striving for as winning the love of innocent children. And when she had fallen asleep, she dreamed that Hen Watson had grown up and was become the President of the United States, that she visited him and that, taking her by the hand, he introduced her to a great company of men and women in the White House, and declared that he owed all he was to her training and her influence.

On the morrow she saw the directors and secured their consent that she might use the school room in which to entertain her pupils on the next Saturday night. Tubby Holmes' father was one of the directors, and he gave his consent reluctantly.

"You'd better watch them boys," he said. "You caint tell what they're a-goin' to do next. First thing you know, they'll be a-tearin' the roof off of the house, an' you a-lookin' right at 'em. O' course, I'm perfectly willin' you should have your party, but I'm a-warnin' you to be mighty keerful."

She wrote the invitations "with her own hand," and delivered them to her pupils; and when school was dismissed on Friday afternoon, she made them a little talk, and said she hoped they would all come—every one of them—that the party would be for the children alone, and there would be no grown-ups present to frown upon their dear, childish pleasures. "Just you and I, children," she said, "and we're going to have a good time."

Up on the top of the hiker crib of Stanfield's elevator, the United Order of the Compass met in special session, immediately after school was dismissed, to consider the matter of the teacher's cat party.

"What is the duty of all Captains when assembled, brethren?" asked the Captain of the East, who was Willie Bill.

"To see that no traitors are present," responded the Captain of the West, Hen Watson.

"How may we know?" demanded the Captain of the East.

The Captain of the South was Boots Cameron. "By the giving of the pass," he answered.

"What is the pass?" asked the Captain of the East.

"The-th-the p-p-pla-pla-places we ah-ah-oc-occupy," replied Tubby Holmes, who was the Captain of the North.

"Together, brethren," commanded the Captain of the East, extending both arms straight before him towards the center of the square in which they were standing, in the doing of which he was imitated by the others—after which, he solemnly pronounced the word "East" and dropped his arms to his sides.

"West," said Hen, dropping his arms, likewise.

"South," said Boots; and "N-n-naw-naw-north," stuttered Tubby. The taking up of the pass was completed.

"'Tis well," spoke the Captain of the East. "And now, what is the next great duty of Captains when assembled?"

"To guard against the approach of enemies," replied the Captain of the West.

"Why?"" asked the Captain of the South.

"Th-th-that-that our se-se-secrets be not kno-kno-known, and our-our-l-l-lives b-b-be not en-en-endang-endangered," responded the Captain of the North.

"On guard, brethren," ordered the Captain of the East. Instantly each boy faced outward, in the direction of that part of the compass of which he was the particular representative.

"All's well in the East," said Willie Bill.

"All's well in the West," said Hen.

"All's well in the South," said Boots, hurriedly.

"Bub-bub-bub-be s-s-still, f-f-fellers; here-here-here comes M-m-mister S-s-s-stanfield," said Tubby.

"Yes, an' he c'd git in here and break up the lodge before you c'd git done stutterin' about it," said Hen.

"Order, brethren," commanded the Captain of the East. "Where is the enemy now?" he asked.

"Aw-aw-aw-all's well, now," said Tubby. "He-he-he's he's gone on to-to-to the p-p-po-postoffice."

"'Tis well. The lodge will be at ease," ordered the Captain of the East. And as they disposed themselves comfortably upon the hiker floor, he continued,

"Say, fellers, now you're going to see some of the good in this lodge business. When I told the teacher about this cat party, I didn't tell her all about it. Not much! I kept the best part back for the lodge. Do you s'pose the kids and Janes in this burg knows what a cat party is? Or how to do at one? Now, lissen! Here's what they don't know. To have a cat party, and have it right, *you gotta have cats,*" he said, impressively. "Now here's what us fellers has got to do." And he proceeded to unfold his plan.

What this plan was, how it was carried out, and what its results were, are all set down in a letter which Willie Bill wrote to his former chum, back in Chicago, Master James Callahan, known to his fellows and his teacher as "Hungry."

warsaw september ten.

"dere hungry

"jee what do you no about this, me writin' on a tipewriter, my unckel bills wife ust to be one and she brot hers hoam when she got marrid and i have lerned to write on it, I am goin to be a privit seckertary when i cum back to chicago. well warsaw is a littel town but i am keepin bizzy awl the time. I have got up o loj, it is the united ordar of the cumpas and we are awl captins, unckel bill he picked out the naim and told me how to do it, he roat it awl down and we lerned it off by hart. You awt to here us open loj—that is of

coarse you caint becaws you are a enemy but if you come down we will innishyate you.

"Well i started to schule but it only lasted one weak. Miss robberts she was the teecher and she diddent no mutch but let on like she did. One day she ast me how did the citty teechers do and I let on like miss bluchers was ded and sed how she was the kindest harted woman in the wirld. i sed she took us out to linken park and white citty and give us a cat party and this teecher sed she wood give a cat party two.

"The teecher cum to our house a week before schule took up and on Sunday a feller cum to be her bo, I crauled under the floar where the ventilator is and lissened to him bo her awl sunday after dinner and he wanted her to give up the teechin bizness and mairy him, but she said no walter I must do my duty to these dere children. But he kepp on argune and said dam the littel brats let someboddy else teech them, and then she throde a trajjic frunt and sed for him to go far from her, and when she wanted him she wood send for him. And he sed do you mene you will send for me when you git reddy to mairy me, and she sed yes, and he sed when you send for me will you mairy me, and she sed yes, if she was ever fule enouff to send for him she wood certainly mairy him.

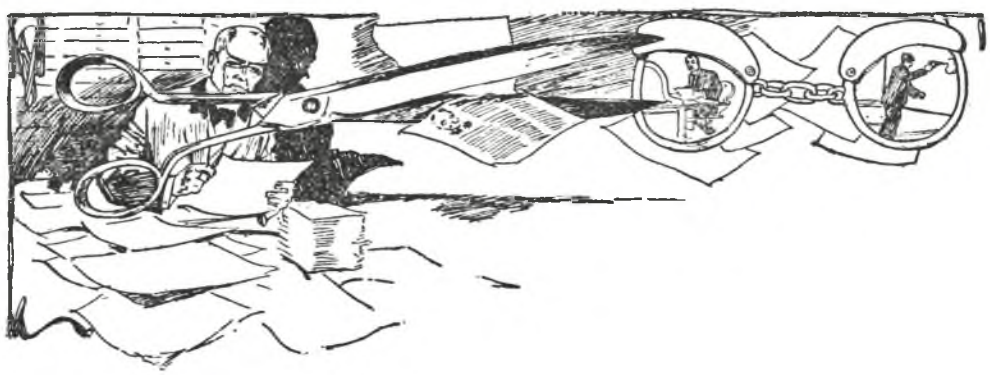
"Well the next day was the furst day of schule and the next satdy nite she give her cat party. I told the fellers in the loj that there had to be cats at cat parties jist like there had to be dogs at dog shows and horses at horse shows —I sed sum of the swells gives cat and dog parties that way, so we voted to git up awl the cats we cood but sekreatly, and to meat agin the next nite jist befoar her party. We seppyrated, and bein captains of the cumpus we went in awl direckshuns huntin cats the next day and got twenty two—tubby he got fassened under his house tryin to git there old tom cat, and his maw whupped him becaws he woodent tell what he wanted the tom cat for, so you see he is a stickker. Anyway we got 22, and had them awl in baskets with plenty of strings and thare tales tide together, and just as the teecher was sain now dere boys and girls i am shure we will awl no eech other better and luv eech other moar hereafter, we throde them cats in the winders and doars with there tales tide securely together in pares.

"You never herd such yowin and jowin and fitin in awl yore life! Say, hungry, eleven pares of cats fitin awl at once in wun littel room is sum nois —it sounded like awl the cats in the wirld was thare. Wun long legged girl hollered o mother and tride to faint and the rest of the girls commensed to cry and beller and the boys run out doars and the teecher had the histerrux. Two old tomcats got thare tales around the teechers ankkels and was fitin it out to the last fiddel string, clawin and spittin and scrachin, and the party broak up and they took the teecher to our howse and the docktor come and give her sum medisin. And the next day her bo come and she was so glad to see him she held on to his cote and cride on his vest and he patted her on the back of the hed and sed pore littel girl did you send for me and she sed why no. And he sed then who sent me this, and she looked at it and said she dident no, but she was glad sumboddy did, and he said do you mene it, and she sed yes. And then he went into the other room and ast unckel bill if they cood git marrid thare and he said you bet they cood and lit out to find a preecher. And i sed mister i sent you that tellygram i rote it last nite and got mister olliver to send it and he sed you air a brick and give me a dollar. And when the preecher cum that feller had a marrij lisens in his pocket awl reddy and they was marrid and went away and now they aint no schule to go to. Befoar he left he told unckel bill that he oad awl his happyness to me and wood it be awl rite if he sent me a substantial present and unckel bill told him to go ahed and he is goin to send me a pony his naim will be captain cumpas no moar at present.

"yores respectively

"william wilbur collins

"p s I wish you wood tell lulu to rite me a letter down hear i want to maik sum gurls jellus no moar at present."



"Slim" Driscoll, Samaritan

By FRANK X. FINNEGAN

IN THE mild sunshine that smiled down upon the noisy, smoky city, "Slim" Driscoll might pass for a convalescent invalid as he moved slowly through the press of traffic and glanced furtively from one to another of the unfamiliar faces that hurried past. He was very pale and his hair was cropped close. His clothing, while new, was of the nondescript style and fit that is usually issued to discharged inmates of hospitals—and certain other public institutions—and in his pocket rested the change of a ten dollar bill.

But Slim was not an invalid in the usual acceptance of the term, despite his appearance. Only the day before he had put in ten long hours at a machine that bit boot-heels out of sole leather with an insatiable appetite, and at that time the new suit of clothing, the ten dollar bill and "Slim" Driscoll himself, were the property of the state. With the dawn of the new day, however, the world had turned upside down for him; the weary hours of waiting came to an end at last, the great barred gates of the penitentiary that for six years had glared back so stonily in response to his hungry glances swung open, and the guards in their watch-towers along the walls leaned idly on their rifles and looked on as he walked forth to freedom.

Slim walked slowly on in a pleasant sort of daze, drinking in the joy of freedom with every breath, smiling covertly now and then as he had a vagrant thought of the work-bench back there where the boot-heel machine stood, and of the whitewashed space on the wall in front which had so long formed his horizon when he dared raise his weary eyes from his work. Never again! That was the one thought which had surged through his soul when he stepped through the gates that morning in his prison-made shoes and looked down at his prison-made clothes. Never again!

But what was he to do for a living if he abandoned the trade to which he had devoted so much thought and attention? Had he been a teamster desiring to reform he might turn his thoughts to the care of horses, or if he were a plumber in a repentant mood he might take to steam-fitting or the building of cement sidewalks. A burglar, however, is seriously handicaped when it comes to a change of occupation, and the fact was borne in upon Slim when he thrust his hand into his pocket and realized that the $8.60 at his finger-tips was all that stood between him and the Municipal Lodging House, where free beds and breakfast were exchanged for four hours' work at street-cleaning. As he pondered on the problem, his fingers closed upon a card in his pocket that had

been handed to him with his ten dollar bill by a clerk in the office of the penitentiary, and that he had not even paused to look at, in that great moment when the open gates stood before him. Now he drew it out curiously, leaned against a brick wall that the morning sun had warmed comfortably, and looked it over.

"Hope Haven," he read in big black letters at the top, and he smiled cynically, for Hope Haven, the refuge for discharged convicts who had the disposition to "turn square," was not unknown to him by hearsay. Despite the smile, however, he read the card through to the end.

"Brother," it began, "does the world look dark to you? Do you need a helping hand? If so, come to Hope Haven and find a welcome. We will help you to forget the past and to face the future hopefully. Do not delay—Hope Haven is open to you day or night. If you desire to take a step forward, if you need work or friendly advice or shelter, they are waiting for you at Hope Haven."

The smile faded from Slim's face as he read the card through to the address of the home. After all, why not go there until he could look around a bit and get his bearings in the new life that was opening before him? True, he had an appointment with "The Blinker," who had been freed a fortnight before, to hunt him up at a certain rendezvous both had frequented in the old days, and arrange to "put over" one more good, big job that would be productive of the wherewithal to take both of them far from that part of the country, where they were altogether too well known to the police. But suppose there should be a slip-up on the big job! Suppose they should fall into the nets of the police fowlers again! Driscoll shuddered at the thought and took another look at the Hope Haven message of welcome. A gruff voice at his elbow made him start in alarm, and instinctively he pocketed the card as he turned.

"Hello, Slim! So we've got you with us again!"

Driscoll looked up and found himself face to face with Connors, of the detective bureau—Connors, who had run him down with infinite patience six years before and fastened on his wrists the manacles that had just dropped off. The prison pallor of his cheeks gave way to a quick flush of surprise and anger as he looked into the cold, threatening eyes of his enemy.

"Why, yes," he said with an attempt at lightness, "I'm here again. Got here this morning."

"And you haven't had time to blow the get-away outfit," sneered Detective Connors, looking at the tell-tale shoes and clothing in which Slim was squirming. "Well, I suppose you'll get busy as soon as the lights are lit and land a new bunch of rags and a pair of patent leathers some place. What are you going to do now?" he demanded with a sudden menace in his tone.

"I don't hardly know yet," responded the badgered ex-convict, "but I think I'll jump this town. The West looks pretty good to me."

The detective laughed harshly and lighted a cigar.

"A fine chance we've got to get rid of you!" he retorted. "No such luck, Slim! We'll be rounding you up again the first time there's a squeal from any spot in town. You're not going to begin starving, you know. Say! You're just the man I wanted to meet," he went on as a sudden thought came to him. "Where's 'The Blinker?' I want him."

"What do I know about 'The Blinker?' " demanded Driscoll as a new terror of the hulking figure in front of him seized his heart. "Didn't I tell you I only got here this morning?"

"Here, can that stuff!" ordered Connors sharply. "You and him were bunkies pretty near all the time you were in stir, and he was sprung two weeks ago. Do you mean to tell me you haven't got a date framed to hook up with him? What do you take me for, Driscoll? That patter doesn't go with me! He's probably got a good job prowled by this time and is waiting for you. Come on now. Where is he?"

"I tell you, I don't know, Connors!" insisted Slim desperately. "I haven't seen a soul in this town but you that I ever saw before, and I haven't got any frame-up with Livingstone. Besides," he added in an unguarded access of

anger, "I haven't turned copper so far, and I don't expect to."

It was a rash speech and Driscoll regretted the words as soon as they were uttered, but he felt a positive fear when he looked boldly at Connors and saw the effect of the defiant taunt. The detective's face was purple with anger and he chewed his cigar to shreds as he thrust his fat forefinger almost into the eye of his quarry.

"Oh, that's the talk, is it?" he snorted. "You aint a copper! You're getting a little swelled up since you finished your bit, are you? Well, you listen to me, Driscoll, and you'll find out something that will do you good. I want Livingstone and you're going to turn him up for me inside of twenty-four hours or back you go—do you understand that? And you know what it means for you to go over again: it's habitual next time and I'll see that you get it good."

The thin face of the burglar was a dead white by that time and his lips were marked by a narrow bluish line, but the dull fire of resentment burned in his eyes and his anger unbridled the tongue that was usually mute in the presence of the law and its representatives.

"Oh, I don't know about going back," he retorted, making a move as though to pass the big plain-clothes man. "You haven't got anything on me, Connors, and nobody else has. You've got to make some kind of a bluff at showing some goods before you can put anybody away."

Connors glared at him and seemed to restrain with difficulty the twitching fingers that could choke the life out of Slim's white throat in a minute.

"I've got a good mind to clean you right here!" he panted. "Who do you think you're talking to—some dummy? I suppose that chatter means that you're going to turn square—that we can't get anything on you from now on. Well, you can tell that to Sweeney! I'll be on the job right along, Driscoll, and I'll get you if you so much as bat your eye in this town, for what you just said to me. But that's got nothing to do with this 'Blinker' business. I want him and you've got to turn him up—you've *got to,* do you understand?—by this time to-morrow. If you don't, I'll make this country too hot to hold you, whether you go west or east or wherever in hell you go! That's all—you know your little book now."

With a final snort of warning, he strode around the corner leaving Driscoll white and shaken in the sunshine. So this was his welcome back to freedom, he pondered, after six years of bitter expiation at the boot-heel machine! Betrayal of his pal into the hands of the police, or a relentless shadow ever at his heels, and the picture of the gray walls and steel bars ever before his eyes! Well, he would fight before he surrendered to Connors on that sort of a proposition, and with the decision, his unprepossessing face hardened a bit more and his jaw was firmly set. He had twenty-four hours of grace before the detective would take to his trail. If he could find a convenient door or window in that time which would yield to his persuasions he might handle alone such a job as "The Blinker" had planned to furnish them funds for a long flight, far from the ken of Mr. Connors. He had a momentary pang of compunction over the thought of thus "ditching" his pal, who might be waiting for him somewhere, but he salved his conscience with the assurance that "The Blinker" must have taken the alarm and escaped from the town, since Connors had not been able to find him in a fortnight. One cursory look into the rendezvous agreed upon would answer the demands of fraternity; then to work.

As he slipped his hand into his pocket it encountered the Hope Haven card once more. Slim drew it out with the same cynical smile that he had first bestowed upon its message and tore it into small bits. Then he moved toward the residence section of the city, as though he were bent upon a mission of importance.

Several hours later, when the dusk of Slim Driscoll's first day of freedom had fallen and the electric lamps were sputtering along the avenues and boulevards, a frenzied woman knelt beside a little writing table in her luxuriously furnished home and wrote a note with feverish haste.

"When you read this," she wrote, "you will be rid of me forever. God forgive me for what I am about to do, but after what I have learned to-day and to-night, not even my poor, innocent little babies can reconcile me to continue the life that you have wrecked. I have kissed them for the last time and put them to bed—God grant that the sleep I am going to will be as peaceful and dreamless as theirs. The world will say that I am mad—but *you* and *she* will know the truth."

She slipped the note into an envelope, addressed it and propped it on the desk with a book so it would catch the glance of the first visitor to the room. Then she stole softly to the door of the bedroom where her children lay asleep and stood for a moment looking with infinite tenderness at the tiny figures of a boy and a girl, half revealed in the light from the hallway. With a stifled sob she tore herself away from the picture and stumbled on into her own room; and when she had been swallowed up in the darkness her movements were swift and sudden. Falling upon her knees beside the bed she hid her face in the coverlet a moment as though in prayer, and then from her bodice she took a tiny vial and placed it to her lips. The next instant the little bottle dropped noiselessly upon the rug and she sank down beside it with closed eyes and slowly fading pulse. A little gold clock on her dressing table ticked noisily in the deathlike stillness of the house, and with every click of its incessant beat the sands of her life ran out bit by bit.

After a little time the window in the bedroom where the two children lay asleep began to move upward very gently and without the hint of a noise. Slowly the black space between the window sill and the bottom of the sash widened until it was large enough to admit the face of Mr. Slim Driscoll, which came into view inch by inch, beginning with the little button on the top of his black cap. When his eyes reached a level where they commanded a view of the bedroom, he watched and listened for several seconds and then a tiny pencil of light from an electric flash-lamp crept across the floor, widened to a beam and rested momentarily on every object in the room. Slim was very careful to keep it away from the eyes of the sleepers in the little twin brass beds, and the children did not stir. Everything looked promising, and when he raised the sash high enough, Mr. Driscoll slipped in on his rubber-soled canvas shoes and took a careful survey of the room.

"Kids!" he mused as he drew near the beds and saw the two tiny faces among the pillows. "Nothing doing in this room. I'm in luck if they don't wake up and bawl."

Noiselessly as a prowling cat, the burglar passed out of the room, crept down the hall where an electric-lamp was burning, slipped into another bedroom and struck his foot against something soft yet firm that sent a thrill of alarm through him. He stood motionless for an instant to see what might follow, ready for flight back to the open window if anyone spoke or moved. Nothing happened, and as he pressed the button of his pocket lamp and turned its lens toward the object at his feet, its rays fell upon the white face of a woman lying apparently dead upon the floor.

Flight was the first and most natural thought that occurred to Slim—to be caught in the house with a dead woman, would have most embarrassing and unpleasant results for a person of his calling. But even as he turned to retrace his silent steps, the light fell upon the little vial and curiosity overcame him. With a swift sweep of the lamp he satisfied himself that he was alone save for the woman at his feet, and he picked up the bottle and sniffed it.

"Laudanum!" he muttered. "She may not be gone yet!"

Dropping on his knees beside the inert form, he seized one of the wrists—the pulse was still beating faintly.

"She's alive!" he whispered aloud in his surprise. "But she's going to croak if she don't get help in a hurry."

The situation was one that might give pause to a more resourceful spirit than that of Driscoll, and he hesitated while a swift vision of the glowering face of Detective Connors passed before his mental eye. To be found there at that hour—even though the poison bottle should eloquently prove his innocence

in the matter of the mysterious lady beside him—meant Connors and all that Connors implied. To slip quietly away through the open window and leave things as he had found them meant—

Slim glanced down at the dying woman, thought for an instant of the two sleeping children in the other room—and turned on the electric light above his head.

"Here's where I get busy," he muttered grimly, "and Connors can go chase himself!"

He raised the body from the floor to the bed and wondered what he would best do next. Had she been rescued from drowning he could have attempted resuscitation along the approved lines, but poison was outside his glossary of first aid to the injured. Then the obvious thing occurred to him: to arouse the other occupants of the house—servants, relatives, whoever might be asleep while death was so near them. That it would probably bring swift judgment upon him in his rôle of burglar had become a secondary consideration: there was a life to be saved.

"Hello, there!" he yelled, stepping into the hall and directing his sturdy voice toward the upper floor. "Somebody—anybody—wake up. You're wanted down here!"

Silence followed for a few moments, broken by a frightened cry from the bedroom where the children lay—a wail for "Mamma" that brought Slim to the door.

"Hello, kids!" he said cheerfully, "is anybody else in the house? I want somebody right quick."

The terrified youngsters redoubled their cries at sight of the forbidding looking stranger, and it was evident they were alone in the house, for no answer came from above stairs. After a few minutes Driscoll managed to reassure them partially that he was not going to murder them offhand, and he made them understand that their mother was very ill and he was trying to help her.

"Where is everybody?" he demanded,"—the hired girl and—and everybody? I can't find 'em."

"Mamma let the maids go out tonight," sobbed the boy, who had climbed out of bed to investigate matters. "She put us to bed herself to-night. Nobody's home but us and Mamma. Papa doesn't come home all the time any more."

Slim realized that precious minutes were slipping away, and he was helpless to aid the dying woman, to whose side the weeping children fled as soon as they began to understand vaguely that there was trouble in the household. He had a wild idea of rushing to the nearest neighbor for help, when he espied the telephone in the hall and felt that the problem was solved. He hurriedly called the exchange.

"Hello, operator," he yelled, "send a doctor up here right away, will you? There's a—a lady that took poison and she's nearly dead. Hurry, will you?"

"What's the address?" demanded the operator.

Slim stopped short.

"I don't know," he announced, "but you haven't any time to lose."

"You don't know?" retorted the operator. "What's the matter? Don't you know where you are?"

It looked like another stone wall for an instant while the burglar studied this new dilemma. Then he thought of the telephone number.

"This is Garden 67638," he said, reading it from the card on the telephone, "you can find out where that is on your books there, can't you? But hurry and send a doctor right away."

"I guess you want a police ambulance," said the operator. "I'll call one as soon as I look up that number."

A police ambulance! Slim hung up the receiver with a jerk and turned away. He had sprung the trap on himself and there was but one loophole of escape—to slip away as he had come, before the police and the ambulance surgeons arrived. Why should he remain to be caught? He had done all that he could do for the hapless woman and her kiddies—it would be insane folly for him to remain to be caught.

He started down the hallway toward the bedroom where the window stood open, but as he passed that other room, the weeping children and the still, white face on the pillow held him. What if the ambulance did not come? Suppose the telephone girl did not find the street

number in her books—what a dog he would be to run away and leave those kids alone with their mother to watch her die!

"You kids better go back to bed," he said as sternly as he could. "The doctor is coming and I'll take care of your ma. You'll—you'll catch cold running around here," he added.

Nervously he felt for the pulse again: it was still fluttering, though weaker even than before. He piled the pillows under her head and shoulders in the vague hope that he was doing something to aid the flickering spark of life. He chafed her cold hands roughly because he remembered that was the thing to do in certain cases of unconsciousness. The confidence of the children had been wholly restored and in their terror they clung to the stranger, who seemed to be so kind to their strangely white and silent mother.

"You wont go 'way and leave us alone, will you mister?" sobbed the golden-haired little girl who leaned against his knee. "I'm 'fraid of Mamma when she looks that way."

Slim smoothed her hair with gnarled and unaccustomed fingers, and patted her tear-stained cheek.

"Don't cry, kiddo," he said. "I'll stick till the doctor comes."

When the rattle of the electric bell announced the arrival of the ambulance he stood up, pulled himself together, and set his jaw firmly against what blow fortune might have in store for him. They had come! The police were at the very door—there was even yet a chance for him to slip away through the window and off into the darkness. But it is in a crisis that a game man shows his stamina, and with all his faults Driscoll was not wholly a craven. He walked to the door, threw back the bolt and flung wide the portal. To his relief only the surgeon was on the threshold—the two police officers were in the ambulance at the curb, waiting his call.

"Where is the patient?" asked the doctor briskly, and when Slim had indicated the room and the surgeon hurried ahead with his emergency case, the burglar shut the door between him and the police very softly and thought hard.

For ten minutes he stood in the library while the doctor worked desperately to woo back the reluctant breath of life in the other room. Then the surgeon came in to ask questions.

"When did she take this stuff?" he demanded.

You can search me," said Slim lightly. "I found her just the way you did, only she was on the floor."

The surprised official took a closer look at Driscoll—there was something strangely familiar about his clothing.

"Don't you—er—belong here?" he asked.

Slim smiled.

"There's no use beating around the stump, Doc," he said. "I came in here on business—through the window—and I found the woman down and out on the floor. Then I called up the telephone people and they sent the ambulance. That's the whole game and I suppose you'd like to have me ride back with you and talk to the captain. All right—I'm waiting on you."

The doctor's sharp eyes had lighted on the letter resting against the book—it was unsealed, and he plucked the missive out. It told him the story in a glance, and he looked at Driscoll with a puzzled frown.

"You mean to say you broke in here to do a job and then called for a police ambulance—and waited for it?" he said.

"That's it," said Slim. "How's the lady—is she going to pull through?"

"Well, here," said the surgeon hurriedly, "I've got two fellows out there that would probably welcome you, but I guess we wont bother them. That window is still open—you'd better beat it while your rubber shoes are good."

"You mean—" began Driscoll in amazement.

"Just what I say," said the surgeon sharply. "Hurry now!"

Driscoll moved toward the children's bedroom in a daze and the doctor, following close behind, saw him climb the window-sill.

"All right, Doc," he whispered. "Just as you say. I hope the lady beats the laudanum stuff. Good-night, old boy."

And he disappeared into the darkness.

The Right Hand and the Left

By

JAMES J. CARROLL

MORTON LYNDON took the letter and frowned as he read. His private secretary had already given him the gist of it, but careful as he knew the man to be, Lyndon had been incredulous. When he had satisfied himself that the secretary's pithy statement enveloped the whole message, he handed it back.

"You may file this, Drohan," he said unemotionally. "An answer would be superfluous."

When the secretary had retired, Lyndon pressed a button and waited. Presently there entered a man, respectful and alert. Under Morton Lyndon, the latter qualification was an absolute requisite.

"How much is it costing us now, Mr. Jones," he inquired, "to produce 'sea-green' bronze?"

Jones named a figure.

"And Caldwell, how much—approximately—does it cost him?"

"About one-third more, sir."

"How is it, then," Lyndon pursued, "that we fell down on that government contract? Couldn't we, even without the profits from our other products to make up a possible deficit, have underbid him?"

"We did, Mr. Lyndon."

"Then?"

"The Government experts reported that the Caldwell bronze is superior to ours. And it is, candidly," Jones affirmed.

Lyndon encouraged his subordinates to voice their opinions frankly before him, believing that thereby much of value might be brought out, and perhaps many costly mistakes avoided. So his tone was now merely argumentative as he asked:

"In what respect is it so, Mr. Jones?"

"In tensile strength and non-corrosiveness, Mr. Lyndon," Jones answered.

"In any great degree?"

"Only a slight degree. But it weighed with the Board."

"H'm! But what of our chemists?"

"They have done as much as might be. They reduced several specimens of the Caldwell bronze to its original components, as no doubt you know, and later, embodied the same elements in like proportions in our mixture. Still, the result hasn't been quite what Caldwell obtains."

"It seems not, else we should have got the contract. But can you explain why, using the same formula, we are unable to get results that seemingly come easy to Caldwell?"

"I'm not sure that I can, sir," Jones returned slowly, "but I'll present the thing as it occurs to me, if you will permit." Encouraged by Lyndon's nod, he went on. "There is in my mind a term that is quite intelligible to me but which might not be to another: *craft-artifice*. This is a subtle something that comes with the passing of generations in a particular trade. It is as inexplainable as heredity—and as unacquirable. Thus, one might begin at a trade in early youth and, even with a decided bent for it, never become more than a skilled

craftsman; one's son, if nothing intervened, would in all likelihood do better, but some member of a later generation (again if nothing intervened) would become a *master* of the craft. You can understand this, I think?"

The other nodded.

"It might very well be," he said. "Otherwise it would be hard to account for the matchless work of old-time artificers."

"Well then," Jones advanced, "I believe that Caldwell has such a man in charge of his crucibles."

"How long have you *believed* this?" the other asked with some asperity.

"Since some time after we—the *Universal*—fell down on the Government's contract," Jones answered. "You see, sir," he detailed, "after that occurrence, I began to think there might be a defection somewhere between the laboratories and the melting furnaces, and I began a quiet but thorough investigation. I could, however, find nothing irregular—nothing withheld from the crucibles. Still, when I tested the metal, I could get no better results than had the Government's experts. I was puzzled to account for this, and perhaps I should have remained so if good fortune had not sent to me a discharged employee of Caldwell's. He professed to know the formula of Caldwell's 'sea-green' bronze, and when I challenged his boast, he glibly named off every constituent of it.

" 'Oi know everythin' that goes into it, sorr,' he declared, 'an' what Oi've named for ye is all av' it. But there's more comes out av' the croocibles than goes in thim!'

" 'How could that be?' I asked him.

" 'Oi don't know how it could be, but it is!' he insisted. 'Jim Bramley makes it happen, so he does!'

" 'Who is this Jim Bramley?' I inquired then.

" 'He's the head cock-alorum over the croocibles an' the meltin' furnaces,' the man answered, 'an' he's aither a witch or a jaynyus—Oi don't know whether. His father an' gr-ran'father an' gr-rate gr-ran'father were in the bis'ness afore him, an' it's meself do be thinkin' they're at his elbow always, tellin' him the saycrets about meltin!'

"This may seem inconsequential to you, Mr. Lyndon, but at that time I was in a condition to grasp at straws. You see, I've grown up here, and I take as much interest in the success of this branch as you do in that of this, and all the others. And this, too, believe me, irrespective of the fact that my position here depends on my ability to obtain the best results."

"We knew something of this before we raised you to manager, Mr. Jones," said Lyndon. "But proceed."

"Well, I thought there might be something in what the Irishman said," Jones resumed, "and I resolved to inquire into it. I disguised myself as a workingman (it isn't so long since I put off overalls, and it wasn't hard to do) and began to frequent a saloon where I learned many of Caldwell's men were in the habit of gathering on pay-nights. I made acquaintances among them, listened to their talk, and even drank with them. They were as free with shop talk as they were with their money, and I heard much of this Bramley. None of the men seemed to like him, but one and all declared that he could work miracles with the furnaces."

"You got the man for us, of course."

"No, sir. You see, you were in Europe."

"What had that to do with it?"

"Well, you know," Jones explained, "since we were 'systematized' I'm only allowed to pay our head furnaceman twenty-five dollars a week, and Caldwell, I've learned, pays Bramley forty-two."

Lyndon leaned his arms on his desk, and for a few minutes drummed softly with his fingers on its polished surface. Then he inquired:

"Are you satisfied that this Bramley can do as much for us as he seems to be doing for Caldwell?"

"Reasonably so, sir."

"Would you"—Lyndon swiveled around suddenly—"risk your position here on his ability to do so?"

Jones drew a quick breath.

"I'll take a chance on it, Mr. Lyndon," he said quietly.

"Do you think, Mr. Jones, that his defection would cause Caldwell any inconvenience?"

"I'm sure it would, sir; I believe that without the genius—or whatever it may be—of Bramley, Caldwell's 'sea-green' bronze would be no better than ours," Jones returned confidently.

"But," Lyndon objected, "the man might impart his knowledge to some one else."

"It it were mere knowledge, he might," Jones contended, "but it isn't. It's a gift—one that cannot be passed along except through heredity. And the man is but lately married, I understand. So we'd be safe on that head for many years to come."

"Then get him!"

"But—"

"There are no 'buts.' Bring him to me next Saturday afternoon. I'll make it worth his while to change. I tell you, Jones," Lyndon gritted, "we've got to break Caldwell somehow. We've *got* to. There are a dozen holding back that would trample over him to come in, if he were down. But while he remains up, they'll use him for a buttress. He's in our way!"

Jones nodded. "And the Government contract seems to have stiffened him," he commented.

"Well, get this Bramley here Saturday and then—we'll see!"

The following Saturday afternoon Jones and a strong-limbed, stoop-shouldered fellow with thin, tightly-compressed lips and an acquisitive nose, entered Lyndon's private office.

"This is James Bramley, the man I recommended, Mr. Lyndon," Jones introduced. Lyndon acknowledged the introduction, then requested the men to be seated. After that he took from his desk a typewritten paper and handed it to Bramley.

"Read it carefully, Mr. Bramley," he invited, "and then sign your name at the bottom, if it appeals to you."

Bramley took the paper and read with deliberation. When he had finished, he asked cautiously, "What am I to understand by the term 'nominal stock?' "

"Stock which you will not actually own, but on which you will receive dividends," Lyndon explained. "This contract promises you five thousand dollars' worth the first year, ten thousand the second, and so on, in progression, while you remain in our employ."

"Besides the wages named here?"

"Yes."

"Shall I have my own way about the management of the crucibles?" Bramley inquired then.

"So long as you give satisfaction—yes."

"You would want me to enter your service when?"

"Monday. The contract is already dated."

"But," Bramley demurred, "I should like to give Mr. Caldwell some notice. I'm not under contract with him, of course; still—"

Lyndon had been studying his man. He now made as if to reach for the paper.

"If you sign the contract at all, it must be now," he said flatly. "And Monday next you take charge of our furnaces!"

The man wavered. Then cupidity got the better of him and he said hurriedly, "I'll sign it, sir!"

As Bramley appended his signature to the paper, Jones flashed a glance at Lyndon's face. But he found it as unreadable as that of a graven image.

II

Some months later, Lyndon went to Washington and called on a certain Senator. After a desultory conversation, Lyndon pointedly asked:

"What are you doing about that suggestion contained in my letter of the twenty-fifth?"

"Nothing," answered the Senator.

"Why?"

"Well, it's inopportune this session," the Senator returned evasively.

"Why is it?" Lyndon's voice was quiet but insistent, and the Senator knew that he would have to give satisfactory reasons.

"It's this way," he explained. "The Omnibus Bill had already been passed when you wrote. And the appropriation for coast protection had only been sufficient to cover contracts already let."

"Caldwell's contract included?"

"Yes."

"But you know that the work already planned by the Board is altogether inadequate for sudden emergencies. Tomorrow—next week—any time, some nation—Japan, Germany, Russia—may find excuse to declare war on us. And the number of torpedo boats, destroyers, and submarines we have in active commission, or in course of building is insufficient to perform the offensive work that might be entailed. Our coast guns could, at best, but cover prescribed reaches, and the long stretches between could not be sufficiently patrolled by our battleships and cruisers. There are a thousand places along our coast where invading troops might be landed under cover of the menacing guns of a man o' war. If we had a sufficient fleet of torpedo boats and submarines, however, this could not happen."

"I know all this," the Senator said, "but nothing can be done about it now. There is the Watchdog—"

"Throw him a bone," said Lyndon impatiently.

"I have thrown him several," the Senator claimed ruefully. "But however avid he may be for bones, he still remains the Watchdog. Damn him, he'd talk forty-eight hours at a stretch to save the country fifty cents!"

Lyndon smiled at the other's vehemence. But he observed soberly: "We shall expect that you will provide large opportunities for us next session. We've got the goods now."

"I'll do what I can," the Senator promised, "but you know Caldwell has the confidence of the Board."

"I know. But I look to you to manage that he doesn't retain it."

The Senator frowned. "I can do nothing for you there," he said. "The Caldwell non-corroding 'sea-green' bronze has stood every test submitted by the Board. It is quite the best thing known for torpedo boat and submarine usage. No other nation has anything so good. And while Caldwell remains the sole producer of it, he can capture every contract at his own figures!"

"Nevertheless," Lyndon insisted, "I expect you to do much for us in the near future. You will receive, by and by, copies of newspapers containing allegations that the 'sea-green' bronze now being furnished doesn't measure up to the standard of the first castings submitted to the Board. When you do, it will, of course, be your duty to bring the matter before the Senate."

"But if these allegations should have no foundation in fact?"

"They will," Lyndon asserted. "You cause an investigation to be set on foot, and it will be found that the Caldwell bronze, as now manufactured, is not quite the same as that contracted for by the Government."

"But the Board's experts?"

"They have delegated their responsibility to an inspector who is stationed permanently in Caldwell's laboratory. He watches that the formula remains unchanged. This man guards the mixture till it reaches the crucibles; then he considers his full duty done."

"What more remains for him to do?"

"Nothing. But there should be another man in the machine shop—one with authority to condemn every casting below the required standard. And there would be a man so placed, I dare say, if there were no Watchdog to bark forty-eight hours over the expenditure of four bits."

"That's a point worth using," the Senator cried gleefully, "and be sure I'll press it home when the chance occurs. But if you're sure of your ground, why delay the matter. Why not get busy on it?"

Lyndon lay back in his chair and thrust his hands deeply in his pockets.

"There is no immediate reason for hurry," he said nonchalantly.

"No immediate reason for hurry?" the other echoed incredulously. "You don't mean that, surely? Why, if what you say is true—if an investigation should prove it so—all the work now being done would have to be condemned!"

"Not necessarily," Lyndon said. "You see, my dear Senator, the Caldwell bronze, even that now being furnished, is quite good. And the Board would not —could not—afford to have it torn out. But there would be penalties—heavy ones—inflicted. And the more work there had been accomplished, the more fines would be levied. You see the point?"

"I do," the Senator nodded. "Caldwell is getting himself into a bad box evidently. You should be able to buy his plant shortly."

"We may not want it then," Lyndon returned. "You see, *one* plant more or less can make little difference to us. We want the Government's work, though, and we'll get it if you do your duty by your country."

The Senator smiled dubiously.

"I'll do what I can," he promised.

III

A temporary blockade on Fifth Avenue brought Morton Lyndon's machine to an abrupt halt. The magnate was in a prodigious hurry, having to attend an important directors meeting, and he fumed at the delay. But seeing no help for his case until the congestion ahead should be cleared, he leaned back in the tonneau and gloomed on the passing throng. He had been thus engaged for perhaps a minute, when out of the only half-seen hurrying crowd there loomed two figures that caught and held his eye. One was that of a girl, tall and graceful, while the other presented a thin, spectacled, foreign-looking old man. They were already opposite where Lyndon was held before he had singled them out from the other passers-by. The girl was apparently interested in the remarks of her gesticulating companion, for her gaze was turned attentively upon him.

Lyndon lifted his cap, but the motion did not attract the girl's attention. Then an impulse seized him to call to her, but he thought better of it. For a moment he sat undecided until, when his machine began to move forward again, a sudden resolve made him lean forward and speak to the chauffeur.

"I shall stop here, Franz," he said. "You may take the machine home." Then he stepped out and hurried after the pair.

As it happened, the girl was accommodating her pace to that of her companion, and they had not gone far when Lyndon overtook them. As he crowded in by the girl's side, she looked up and her face lighted with recognition.

"Miss Mathews—" Lyndon greeted, lifting his cap and reaching for the girl's extended, gloved hand. "I saw you from my car and hurried after you. Hence my abrupt appearance."

The girl smiled and turned to introduce her companion. But the old man had slipped away in the throng.

"My old music-master," the girl explained. "He's a dear soul, but painfully shy."

Lyndon was not sorry for the man's departure. He adjusted his stride to the girl's.

"You were going where?" he asked smilingly.

"Uptown—home," she responded.

"You are still living—?"

"With my uncle now. My father died three years ago."

"I hadn't heard," he said. "I was away then."

"In Europe, wasn't it? Of course you wouldn't have heard."

"You are walking?" he ventured.

"Oh, yes," she said cheerfully, "I often do, nowadays. It isn't a fad either," she went on, detecting a glint of amusement. "You see, even the rector of a fashionable congregation may die poor. My father did."

"But surely, your uncle—?"

"Even he seems to have fallen into misfortune," said the girl. "He was quite prosperous when my father died, but something went wrong with some work he was supplying to the Government and the contract was broken."

"He was your father's brother?"

"My mother's. His name is Elmer Caldwell. You may have met him."

Lyndon glanced furtively at the girl. "It is possible," he said evasively, "but I should not have known him as your uncle."

"He is quite broken now," the girl resumed, her voice filled with pity for the man. "He was honest in his business, he claims, but somehow his product fell slightly below the standard demanded by the Government and there was such an outcry raised by Congress and the newspapers that the authorities had to fine him heavily. Besides, he was unable after that to furnish what the contract called for (although he claims that the formula had never been changed) and the work went to a com-

peting firm. Then his backers withdrew and he was forced to sell his plant for enough to meet outstanding obligations."

As Lyndon listened, he wondered if he should blame himself. But on reflection he could not see that he had done more than use the tools that had been forced into his hands. The movement that had crushed Caldwell had not been started by Lyndon. There had been a time when he, too (lately an inheritor of his father's business) had contemplated putting himself in opposition to it, but at the last minute he had had a wiser thought and had risen to the top of the wave that, had he attempted to stem it, would have engulfed him. And Caldwell might have done as much had he been less stubborn.

They walked along in silence for a while. Then the girl remarked: "So I'm going to work next week. My old music-master has obtained a position for me in the department store where he gives his patronage. And Monday I begin my duties there as cloak model."

"Cloak model! *You,* Dorothy!"

The pronounciation of her name (and the tone) brought a quick flush and a sudden upward glance from the girl, but she merely said: "I consider myself fortunate in getting the position —at this time."

"Look here, Dorothy," Lyndon began, his usual forceful manner asserting itself, "I cannot permit you to stoop to this. You must have seen—in the old days—that I loved you. I still do." He was heedless now if others in the passing throng heard him. "I should have told you this before—I meant to—but I have had to fight lately to prevent being overwhelmed."

"Even when you were in Europe?"

Lyndon winced at this, but he would not try to excuse his neglect by lying.

"It wasn't altogether a pleasure jaunt," he said. "Still, I *could* have found time to have written the state of my feelings toward you. I admit my fault—regret my lost opportunity. But it isn't too late now, surely?"

Here they were separated by an unexpected movement of the crowd, but when they resumed their positions, the girl seemed unprepared to answer. And Lyndon, after a while, became encouraged by her silence. For all that, when he spoke again he did so humbly.

"I regret now that I neglected the only worth-while thing for the immaterial," he said. "But if you will marry me I shall try to make amends to you —and to myself. May I hope, Dorothy?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Lyndon," the girl said. "I—you see, I'm to be married shortly. You would have heard perhaps, if I had remained in the old set. But now, since the change in my uncle's fortunes, we're living in humbler quarters. My uncle never married, and he found it easy to move away."

Lyndon pulled himself together bravely and his voice was quite steady when he said: "I sincerely wish that you may be happy, Miss Mathews. I had hoped that the joy of making you so would have been mine. May I ask the name of the man you've decided to honor?"

"His name is Malcolm Stuart," Dorothy confided, her eyes shining with a light that Lyndon had never beheld in them. "He was with my uncle from boyhood. He is going into business himself shortly; then—"

"I shall remember the name," Lyndon promised. "Good luck, Dorothy!"

After a twelvemonth of unflagging endeavor it began to be borne in on the mind of Malcolm Stuart that the days of rapid growth from small beginnings were—at least in his line—practically at an end. Indeed, from the start he had lost money steadily, until now at the end of a year's plodding, he had nearly reached the bottom of his capital.

One day when the inevitable seemed very near, there came to his place of business a man who introduced himself as Moses Clarke. He began off-handedly:

"Mr. Stuart, I am a business man and I'm here to make you a business proposition in a business-like manner."

Stuart had no inkling of what the man might be driving at, but his native caution bade him let the other talk until he had explained himself. The man then threw an appraising eye from the little office over the modest length of the place; then he resumed:

"I am the accredited representative of certain business interests, Mr. Stuart, and, acting for them, I am here to make you an offer for your plant—a fair offer, Mr. Stuart."

"And what would you call a fair offer, sir?" Stuart inquired, hiding his surprise as well as he could.

"Those whom I serve," said the man, "are in your line of business, Mr. Stuart. Frankly, they regard you as a possible dangerous competitor. They know the size of your plant, of course, but also they are aware of the relationship of the oak to the acorn. So in order to put you wholly out of competition with them, they have decided to offer you one thousand shares of preferred stock (or their present market price, if you desire it) for your business—fixtures, g od-will, etc. Does this strike you as a fair offer, Mr. Stuart?"

Malcolm Stuart knew that he was fully awake, and that his ears had not deceived him. But he considered the man either a practical joker or a lunatic. And he hesitated how to deal with him. Finally, he decided that however the case might be, it would be best for him to pretend to take the matter seriously, so he said gravely:

"I do not know whom you represent, Mr. Clarke, but I suppose you are in a position to offer proof that this stock which you mention is listed, and paying at least six per cent?"

"The proofs shall be furnished," Clarke assured. "And I may state now that it is paying even more than the percentage you mention."

"In that case," said Stuart, "I have no hesitation in stating that I consider your offer favorably. Still, if I should take the stock in payment for my plant as I would much rather, I'd have to receive with it a salaried office in the company."

Clarke rubbed his nose in uncertainty.

"Such a demand wasn't considered, I believe," he said thoughtfully. "Still, as you are an experienced man, I think I might safely promise you a superintendency. More than this, I wouldn't venture to guarantee."

"A superintendency will do—for a beginning," Stuart accepted soberly.

Clarke drew out a pocketbook, and took therefrom a much-folded paper which he handed to Stuart.

"Read this carefully, please," he directed. "Then, if you see no cause for hesitation, sign your name at the bottom."

Stuart gravely unfolded the paper. At the first glance he started visibly. But he read to the end before he said:

"I'll sign!"

Blennerhasset's Rembrandt

By SMILEY IRONBAKER

WINTER was setting in on the lower Mississippi. The wild fowl had about all passed below Memphis, their pinions whistling sharply in the raw, chilled air of early December. Rain storms followed one another across the bottoms, and every storm made Jip Morley realize how much he needed a new roof on his shanty-boat. Of late, he had had to set his cot "kittering" across the cabin in order to keep clear of the drippings that oozed dishearteningly through the roof with each recurring rainstorm.

All the rest of the boat was sound—pitchy pine hull that would never rot,

clear spruce cabin sides, matched deck planking, and an oak frame. When he bought the tarpaulin for the roof, however, he had been beaten. He was proud of his bargain, till he came to lay it on the roof. Then he found that it was mere bagging that had been soused in mud for filler and then painted.

"That's what comes of buying things at night from river rats!" he swore to himself; but he laid the stuff, and now the rains had washed out the mud, and he might as well have had mosquito netting, for all the protection it gave. Every storm discovered or revealed new leaks, but Jip felt that he couldn't afford a new canvas.

Jip Morley was a "junker;" he sold forty pounds of goose feathers, and "blew in" the money at Cairo. He sold ten dozen bottles of "Za-mi-a-ya Bitters," sure cure for thirty-three complaints, at only fifty cents a bottle to introduce it. It cost him a dollar to make five gallons, and he found the corks and bottles on the sandbars.

He was by turn hunter, fisherman, medicine man, drifter, fiddler, professor of magic and—river rat. His besetting sins kept him poor, for in town he never let himself want for anything if he had the money. When life was dull, and he was cold and hungry in a lonely wooded bend, his head racked with pains and his frame trembling with red palsy, he would console himself with the reflection that he was known as a good fellow from St. Louis to Cincinnati, and down to New Orleans. When he had recovered somewhat, he would brace up and consider what the authorities down the next hundred miles of river would stand best—medicine, junking, trading? He could trade a broken clasp-knife into a repeating shotgun on an eight-hour working day.

He was now in Pilkins Bend, with nothing to eat on the boat, and the showers driving in swift succession through his bagging roof, the memory of each shower preserved in the dripping on stove, cupboard, floor and chairs in a score of wet islands. The noise was exasperating—fairly maddening, in fact. It made a man hate himself for not 'tending to business long enough to fix his boat the way it ought to be fixed. However, Morley excused himself:

"I warn't to blame, spendin' my money thataway!" he muttered. "Why, dod rat hit, I 'lowed that tarpaulin war good—um-m! 'F I hardn't stopped to Cairo 'fore I laid hit, I'd be'n all right. I'd bought a new canvas, if I'd 'sposed this'n warn't right—course I would. Oh, well, that's life; I'll rub the bank an' git a tarpaulin' er sunthin'. Hit's an eight foot by twelve—jes a nice little cabin. Now 'f I was a married man, I'd need a cabin a hundred foot long an' three stories high. A woman takes up a heap of room an' sometimes the furder you git from her, the better off yer is. Dot rat hit, I ain' no corks fer medicine, an' the birds is all gone, an' they ain' no drift runnin', an' trappin' aint no good up this-away. I gotter go to swapping!"

He fumbled in his pockets, but couldn't even find a jack-knife. His cabin was almost bare. His stove was tied together with wires. His bedding was all rags. His cupboard held only a few rusty dishes, except for a new enamel-ware kettle.

"Theh!" he muttered. "Thay ain' a housekeeper from hyar to N'Orleans as wouldn't sparkle her eyes on that air kettle!"

He flapped his arms exuberantly, blew out the light, and went to bed to sleep the best he could, satisfied to see the day's work ahead of him. In the morning, at dawn, he observed that the sky had begun to clear a little with the promise of fair weather, and having no breakfast to get, he took his blue kettle and struck through the woods.

Half way to the levee, he found a two-story log house, the first story to live in when the river was in its banks, and the second in case the water of a flood covered the lower floor.

"Good-morning, Madam!" he greeted the brown-eyed, un-stayed lady. "I have here a kettle, the most extraordinary product of man's ingenuity, and I venture to remark that yo' need hit—"

"Si!" the woman called, "jes' look a' this yeah kettle!"

"You Sal-Bet, we aint buyin' from no peddler!"

"That's all right, old man—but I'm no peddler. I'm an interducin' agent: I'm just showing these kettles—I'm not sellin' 'em!"

"Sho! You say you be!"

Down the indoors ladder came a pair of buckle shoes, a reach of bare ankles and shin, four feet of blue-star overalls and finally the swamp angel. He viewed the sample with critical eyes, hefted it, tested it with his thumb nail, and finally tried it with his teeth.

"Hit's shore purty!" he allowed at last.

"Yes—they keep 'em in glass show cases up to Pittsburgh!"

"Land alive—how much be they worth?"

"Oh, not so overly much, 'siderin' what they is. You see, they wont nothin' burn into 'em; this year's a special sorgum an' apple-butter b'ilin' an' dumplin' pie kettle. Nothin' burns er sticks to the bottom of this kind—"

"Hit don't?" the woman cried with increasing interest.

"No," the river man lied cheerfully. "No matter how hot the fire gets, you can't burn nothing in it."

"I aint no money!" the man grumbled.

"Got any 'coon skins?"

In ten minutes Jip had seven dollars' worth of skins, and an invitation to breakfast besides. Shortly afterward he cut his shanty-boat loose from the bank, and traded his 'coon skins at Johnson's storeboat, fifteen miles below, receiving three enamel seconds in exchange, as well as food, bitter apples, sugar and other necessities.

An eager, busy man now, he went after money or its equivalent wherever he could find it. A little pile of brass in the hold grew rapidly; his grub-box filled to overflowing; live chickens cackled in a coop on the stern deck: and in his money belt his luck-token waxed fat and had good silver and legal tender company.

Then came another spell of raining, and the water poured through all the old holes in the roof and found new ones. To save sacks of flour, Morley piled it on his cot, and had to spend the night with his chin on his knees. His waking hours were many, and his resolution to get a new roof was one of firm and expressive language.

The rain lasted three days and nights, and it poured through the cabin roof with no let up. The lesson was impressive, and Morley went hunting for a canvas or other roof covering. He doubted if he could find one short of Memphis, but one can never tell. The coming of fair weather did not find him forgetful, and his main thought was a roof.

He dropped into Fariway eddy. It was a good landing. The levee loomed almost at the bank, and beyond the levee was a plantation in the neck of a swamp. The levee was an old, abandoned state levee, for the government had built a new levee two miles back—because above Fariway there was a caving bend, and the swamp-neck plantation was doomed to cave into the river.

The mansion was old and unpainted, surrounded by beautiful cypress and gum shade trees. The roof was green with moss, and the gloom of ages was in the great pillars, the broad windows, the huge fireplace chimneys. At some distance from the mansion grounds were the negro quarters, a score of cabins on stilts, which looked like huge mushrooms.

Morley, looking across the scene, appraised it, and headed straight for the mansion; one goes to the quarters of prosperous mansions, but to the mansions themselves, if they are not prosperous, when one is trading from a shanty-boat.

Mother Shipleh herself opened the door to greet the visitor. She wore some old, old fashioned jewelry,—a brooch as large as a saucer, and black pearls,—and an old, old silk dress that looked as heavy as sail-cloth; her manner was gentle and full of pervading dignity, even though the dress was worn through at the elbows, and there was plastering gone from the ceiling of the room behind her.

She said that she was trading off some of her old trash, but just what, she couldn't tell for the life of her, there was so much of it. She led the way through the high rooms, and gazed

helplessly at the accumulations of two centuries. Her furniture was a strange medley of heavy woods and cheap "prize-package" stuff. Out of a dozen ancient fireplaces, most of them used to keep things out of the way, curled up huge wrought dog-irons, brass and-irons, bed-warmers, tongs and kettles. On the walls were old paintings and new chromos—dozens of them. Morley looked hungrily at the brass, but no, they were not for sale. She thought she did have some things she wanted to be rid of, but somehow, they didn't seem to be around anywhere.

"We have been cleaning house this fall," she remarked. "I just disremember where I did put that old trash—"

She led him doubtfully from room to room, till she came to the hall—a hall whose finish was black walnut, the banister a foot wide and six inches thick, and the posts two feet square and six feet high. Heaped against the stairs was a mass gathered by the servants to carry upstairs when they should get around to it. There was dust on everything, and the place was chilly. Here there were some brass dishes and statues and things—just what she was looking for. There were forty pounds, which Morley estimated at thirty pounds and for which he paid cash—three dollars. As he turned to go, he spied a roll of canvas in the corner of the hall. It was at least eight feet high, and Morley stepped to it with restrained eagerness.

"That's an old picture, suh!" she told him. "It was in the sitting-room, but a gentleman had a much prettier picture to put in its frame for ten dollars, so we took this out. You noticed the 'Scene in Heaven?' "

"Yessum."

"That's real good canvas, if one had use for hit!"

"Um-m—kinder old. How long is it?"

"Yes—about fo'teen feet."

"Well, I could use that—give you a dollar for it?"

"Well, I might's well. I got some much prettier pictures than that—real bright, pretty ones, and new, too. This one is so old. Of course, this is on canvas—I don't know what Father went and bought that mess of old pictures for, anyhow. They aren't very bright!"

"I'll give you two dollars."

"Well, all right. Take it along."

Morley paid the money, and pausing only to look at the lithograph, "A Scene in Heaven," in the frame once occupied by the canvas, he headed for the shanty-boat. The lonely old lady would have been glad to talk to him for hours, but when one's business is done, it is time to make the get-away.

He dropped the canvas roll on the bank and dumped the brass into the hold. Then he returned to unroll the canvas.

"Lawse!" he exclaimed. "That's quite a pic'ure!"

He walked around to get the right side up.

"By gum!" he muttered. "Hit's a levee picture, that is, but those fellers is the funniest bunch of Dutchmen I ever seen! White lace collars, broad-brimmed hats, Buffalo Bill goatees and short pants—velvet pants! That's the levee all right, but I never see Ol' Mississip' rollin' up like that—mus' of be'n a dry gale, the way the sun's shinin'—hu-e-e! Well, this ain' mendin' that roof. Wonder if that paint'd leak? Theh's some cracks into hit, dod rat the luck!"

Holding it up to the light, he could see several cracks, but he knew what to do—trust a river man for that. Working rapidly, he stretched the canvas on the roof, and tacked it, paint side down. It not only fitted, but he had an overlap on each side of more than an inch, and more than two feet overhang at one end, which he cut off.

In the meanwhile, he had a pan of tar heating on a driftwood pile on the bank. When he had tacked the canvas down, he carefully swabbed it with a good thick coat of hot tar, brushing it in with a broom. Long before night, he had the best tarred roof on any shanty-boat from St. Louis to New Orleans. He had never heard of a canvas laid paint side down and then tarred on the back. He thought it ought to be tight.

He was about to throw the extra two feet of canvas overboard, when he noticed that he had a complete picture of one of the faces of the funny Dutch-

men. It showed the hat, the bright eyes, the lace collar, and the goatee.

"He's a pretty good looking Dutchman!" Morley mused. "I guess I'll jes trim 'im up an' tack 'im on the wall. I ain' no pictures to speak of in this old shanty-boat!"

With his jack-knife, which was very sharp, he trimmed the picture even and square, with about four inches of sky above the hat and considerable space to spare on both sides of the collar, which was "like a lady's white petticoat," as he surmised. Then he fitted the picture into an old walnut picture frame he had picked up in a river drift-pile, and hung it on the wall.

"By gum!" he muttered, standing off to look, "that makes a purty darned good picture, get it fixed up. Some day I'll varnish it, an' give it to some girl."

Things didn't happen to come just right. The only girl he offered it to was Mamette Lafray of Arkansaw Old Mouth, and she stuck up her nose at it, preferring a picture of a black angel among a lot of white ones which he had, so the picture of the Dutchman was on the boat when Morley arrived at Vicksburg.

The Pedro brothers were at Vicksburg, waiting to buy a boat to trip down Chaffeli, winter hunting. Morley's was just the boat they needed, and they traded their larger boat for it. When Morley had moved his valuables onto his new shanty-boat, he asked the brothers if they cared about the Dutchman.

"I kind of got used to the cuss—like to look at 'im," Morley explained.

"Take 'im along," Sam Pedro remarked. "I nevair haf no use fer ze Dootch!"

So Morley hung the Dutchman over the table where he could look at him when he ate his meals. A week later, he pulled out of Vicksburg, and about all he had left that hadn't been nailed fast was the picture. Penniless, and with hardly a pinch of salt on board, he floated down Yazoo New Mouth into Vicksburg eddy, and around Palmyra Bend, sick and at odds with all the world. Yet shortly, he was rubbing the bank again, and when he arrived at New Orleans in May, he had tons of copper on board, fruit of a raid on an old sugar mill. When he sold out, he had five hundred dollars in cash, his trunk, and the picture of the Old Dutchman, who seemed almost like a partner to him.

"Dod rat the old cuss!" he muttered. "Wish he could come out an' have a glass of beer with me! I kind-a like 'im. I never seen a feller with a face like his'n before. I bet he was a good old sport, all right, all right. I seen a feller looking thataway at a purty gal!"

Two weeks later, when Jip Morley came up out of the depths of New Orleans, the Old Dutchman was the only friend he had left in the world. He took the picture out of the trunk, and wept over the pink face and white collar. In weariness, he sought the railway station, and rode north on his railroad ticket. He carried the picture under his arm, or set it on his lap, and wept afresh at each station.

He couldn't make out just what the Dutchman was thinking about, and it hurt his feelings because the Dutchman was not confidential and friendly. This was the only respectable picture that Morley had ever seen, that was worth looking at twice on the same day.

At Cincinnati, he went seeking a shanty-boat to trip the river again. He found what he wanted for sale at fifty dollars, and that left him forty dollars for equipment. He needed about fifteen dollars for that. He spent the twenty-five dollars and then stumbled down to the wharf, to board his boat.

The steam-packet *City of Pittsburg* was just rounding in. When she landed, a party of tourists came down to look at the little house-boat, which was a great curiosity to them. At sight of the ladies, Morley straightened up and wiped his forehead. With calm dignity, he boarded his boat and unlocked the door.

"Excuse me," one of the tourists asked. "We never before saw a Mississippi river house-boat close at hand—would you let us look at it?"

"Glad to have you, suh, suttin'ly!" Morley answered, bowing elaborately. "Besh dang boat on the Mississipp' river!"

The five came aboard and looked into the cabin. They uttered low cries of astonishment. The cabin was neat and clean; the bedstead was white enameled iron, the bedding covered with a clean counterpane; there was a new stove, new dishes—all clean. That was not what they had expected, judging by the owner.

Their eyes roved, and suddenly one of the ladies exclaimed:

"Why, what is this picture?"

The five gathered before the Dutchman.

"Why, it looks like a—"

"Sh-h!" one of the men cautioned, leaning to examine it closely. "By Jove, how did that get here?"

"Funniest darn Dutchman ever shee!" explained Morley. "Hesh sure a funny cush—"

"Where—where'd you get it?" one asked hoarsely.

"Down the river, las' trip. Biggesh picsher ever shee, fourteen foot long, an' cover shanty-boat—never leak a drop. Swabbed tar on the back of it, an' paint on the bottom—good roof. Thish what overlapsh. Picture of levee, funniesh ships ever shee, an' waves rollin' up high's a house. Thish feller, he lookin' on, an' lot of other Dutchman. Levee broke, an' ships goin' through. Roof never leak a drop. Paint thick on one side an' tar on other, laid on hit."

The visitors turned pale. One of them gasped:

"Where's the—the house-boat you speak of?"

"Lord knows—down Chaffelli, I expect—Oh, I don't know an' I don' give a slam. I'd rather be dog 'n a p'or white man."

"I'll give you five dollars for this!" one of the men offered, his voice catching.

"Five dollars?"—straightening up and a shrewd look coming to his eyes. "Wuth that to me, old hoss!"

"Well, then six—ten dollars!"

"Ten dollars?" he looked at the picture with a new respect in his eyes. "That old cuss worth ten dollars? Well, all rish—take it 'long. Gwan with it!"

The man clutched the picture from its nail, and handed over a ten-dollar bill, and the tourists crowded out the door, their breath coming short with excitement. Before they were half-way up the wharf, however, Morley came stumbling after them.

He snatched the picture frame from the man who carried it, and threw the ten-dollar bill in his face.

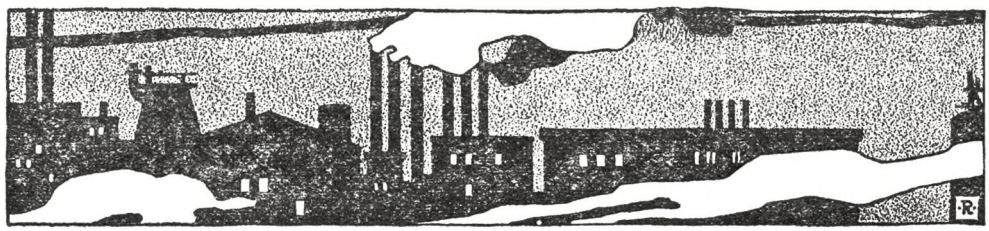
"Gimme back that old Dutchman!" Morley cried. "Take yer old money back. I can get lots of money any time, anywhere—can't get old Dutchman like that anywhere; hesh good feller, Dutch is! Him an' me's pardners—come on, old Dutch, wouldn't sell you fer a hundred dollars. On'y Dutchman ever seen was good company!"

Holding the picture tight, he staggered back to his boat, threw off the line, and went afloat. The tourists, staring after him, saw him sitting on the bow deck, looking at the picture of the Dutchman, reeling from side to side as he stared.

"For the love of man, get it!" one of the ladies sobbed. "Don't let it go!"

"It's a Rembrandt—Blennerhasset's lost Rembrandt!" one of the men gasped. "On a shanty-boat roof—tarred! Good Lord!"

Through eyes dim with exasperation and excitement, they watched the shanty-boat swinging down the Ohio, and as far as they could see, the man sat on the bow, swaying and reeling, staring at the funny Dutchman, whose power he felt without understanding.



The Fiery Mills of Men

By CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS

VIVIEN was a coquette—a beautiful mill-town girl who played havoc with the hearts of the susceptible young men. How she met a man strong enough to tame her is here told in a story of exceptional charm and power

No. V—A JUGGLER OF HEARTS

THE name which her romantically inclined mother had given her the day she was born might have been expected to be a handicap. Vivien it was, and the mother had never permitted it to be contracted to the unlovely Vi. Vivien, however, was no more than four when she began to live up to the name in her appearance. The feeling that the name fitted her like the highly colored clothes in which her mother garbed her grew as she grew. When she swept from the shadowy land of childhood to the no less mystic land of womanhood she was—well, she was just Vivien. There was none like her in that town of belching mills.

Even at eighteen she was a little girl, but her slenderness gave her an effect of height. Though a man may not add a cubit to his stature, there are high-heeled shoes for women, and Vivien availed herself of these to an extent that was a scandal to her old, bearded, religious father. Also she held her chestnut-haired head high on her slim, brown neck. This tossed her nose—it was of the snub variety—into the air. She had a habit of looking at people—men mostly, for she rarely bothered herself about women—out of half-closed lids. Her lips were scarlet; and very white, though somewhat uneven, teeth gleamed behind them.

Her mother had been dead for five years at this time, and she kept house for her father—a heater in one of the mills. With the duties of the housekeeper she took the privileges. She nearly drove her father to distraction by the number of beaux she had. He made it his business to know every one of them, and he succeeded in driving away one or two of whom he was suspicious. But the others came and went—came when Vivien was kind and went when she was cruel. But she was so extremely kind when she was kind that she could drive a man away one day and lure him back the next. Yes, the women said she was a little flirt, and not at all pretty. The first was doubtless true, but the last was not; and in their secret hearts the bitterest-tongued of the women knew it.

On a blustering night in late November she walked down the railroad track to take her father's lunch to him. She did that several times a week, not because her father could not have taken the lunch with him when he went to work, but because Vivien knew she would meet a man or two on the way or at the mill. At the mill, too, there

was now and then a newcomer whom Vivien had to appraise as soon as he arrived. If the newcomer seemed worth while, she set his heart going pit-a-pat with a glance from her lovely, veiled eyes.

She crawled now through a hole in the fence and stood at the mill door, looking into its seething interior. Her father saw her and came to the door. He stood talking to her a few minutes, wiping the sweat from his beard. A man came up behind him and passed into the outside gloom, wiping the sweat from his own shaven face. He looked at Vivien and Vivien looked at him. Vivien flushed twice—the first time because no man had ever stared at her quite so insolently, and the second time because she had flushed the first time. She was not given to that sort of thing. She was used to looking men in the eyes, coolly, confidently, and usually mockingly. Therein lay her power and a great part of her charm. But this man seemed to have anticipated her. His gray eyes were smiling, though his lips were quiet, and she felt that he was playing with her, or against her, the game which she had always told herself was her own. She addressed herself to her father as if to show the stranger that she ignored him.

The man got his breath of air and repassed her. She knew that his eyes were on her again, surveying her up and down, and she gave him an angry glance. His mouth then relaxed in a smile.

"Who is that?" she asked her father.

"The new floor foreman," her father said.

"That boy!" she exclaimed, but her voice was not as contemptuous as she had expected to make it.

That boy evidently heard her exclamation, for he sent a merry laugh back at her over his shoulder.

"I used to work with his father years ago," her father said. "He's a fine boy, and a good workman."

As she went back up the track in the darkness, Vivien could not get the stranger out of her mind. Her steel had struck upon a strange armor. She was uncomfortable. She tried to shake off the feeling, but it would not be shaken. Then she resolved that she would drive that smile from his challenging eyes and bring another expression there.

The next afternoon the man came to see her father, because of that older friendship. Vivien opened the door for him and ushered him into the dining-room where her father sat. She went into the kitchen and moved about her work noiselessly. The stranger began to talk in a soft, pleasant voice, which she liked too much for her own peace of mind. Somewhat against her judgment, she presently entered the room. Her father introduced them. Jim Shannon was his name. As soon as she heard that pronounced, she thought of an Irish ballad singer whom she had once fallen in love with. She had cried into her pillow the night the singer had left town. She offered the man her hand and he took it and held it longer than was necessary. Again she felt her warm blood flood her face. She tried to flash her eyes at him but failed. His own were so steady that she had a sense of shock when she looked at him. She snatched her hand away and hastened from the room. She listened, but she did not hear Jim Shannon laugh.

He whom the men in the mill called Tony—not distinguishing between a son of Greece and one of the Sicilian Isle—proposed to Vivien after his first dance at the Thanksgiving Eve ball given by the Hickory Nut Club in the hall above Sam Vickery's saloon. He did very well with his proposal, but Vivien only laughed at him. That was unfortunate, for the girl had filled the Greek's heart with the very madness of love. From the first moment he had looked at her, he had wanted her for his own. Because he was stalwart and handsome of face, she practiced her wiles upon him. Her father let the Greek visit his home as often as he chose; for if the Greek was there another less harmless would not be. For to all the world the Greek was an honest man. The good Lord at his birth had put into his face that which no man could deny was the stamp of utter truthfulness.

The first night he called, the Greek poured his simple story into the girl's ears. She listened rather breathlessly, for the story was more or less romantic. He had been stolen away fom his Grecian home by an "uncle" and had been brought to this country. For years he had shined shoes at the stand which the "uncle" owned, had been half-starved and beaten; but he had grown to robust manhood notwithstanding. He had ambitions beyond shining shoes, and on his eighteenth birthday he had beaten his "uncle" within an inch of the "uncle's" life, and had fled. He had got a job as a common laborer in a mill, and, his fear of his "uncle" not being quite dead, he had presently taken that course which empires are supposed to take and had reached this mill town. He was still a common laborer, but he would not always be that, he knew. He was working hard and studying. He did not expect Vivien to marry him at once. He only wanted her to wear the little gold ring which had been his mother's. That would be a warning to all other men to stay away.

But Vivien only laughed. Soon she swung out on the floor in the mazes of a waltz, Jim Shannon's arm about her waist and Jim Shannon's gray eyes shining down upon her. They circled the room and passed the Greek. Vivien said something to Shannon, and he looked at the Greek and laughed. The Greek crept down the stairs to Vickery's bar.

"Whisky," he said to Vickery.

Vickery looked at him in some astonishment. The Greek had never taken a drink of whisky in his life, so far as Vickery knew. But if he wanted to start now, that was his own business. Vickery set a small glass on the bar—his foreign trade demanded five-cent drinks—and the Greek filled it. The cheap, hot liquor brought tears to his eyes as he gulped it, but, once downed, it caused a pleasant feeling in the pit of his stomach. He waited five minutes. Then he put a dime on the bar.

"Bigger one," he said.

In half an hour he had drunk five of the ten-cent drinks, and his head was whirling. He went out into the street. A little fine snow was falling, and the wind was raw; but with the liquid fire in his veins the Greek did not notice the weather. For an hour he stood opposite the dance hall and watched the dancers pass the windows. Yes, it was just as he had expected: Vivien and Shannon were dancing almost every dance together. Shannon was the cause of the girl's rejection of him. She was attracted by the big pay that Shannon received. For a poor Greek, working his own way, she had only a hard little laugh. Thus were the first seeds of bitterness sown in the Greek's breast.

It was the law that the dancing should cease at midnight. Just at that hour the laughing, happy couples flocked down the stairs. Shannon and Vivien were among the last. They started for her home and the Greek skulked after them. He watched them from across the street as they paused at Vivien's gate.

If the light had not been poor the Greek would not have made the mistake which he did make. He thought he saw Shannon stoop and kiss the girl on the lips. What really happened was that Vivien got even with Shannon for the mockery to which Shannon had subjected her in the few weeks since he had come to her father's house. They had been gay on the way home, but as they neared their destination Shannon grew sober. The light died from his eyes. Vivien felt the change and she knew her chance had come. As they stood at the gate Shannon took her face in his hands and lifted it, so that he could look into her eyes.

"Vivien!" he breathed.

He bent his head, but before his lips touched her scarlet ones, she slipped from him, ran up the steps, and stood with her hand on the door knob. From this point of safety she sent a laugh down to him that was so maddeningly full of the keenest mockery that he set his teeth. He stared at her, his face white in the half light.

"Vivien!" he breathed again. "I love you all the more for that. I'm going to marry you. Do you hear me? I'm going to marry you before this year is gone!"

She tried to laugh again, but the laugh did not ring true. She went into the house, closing the door behind her. She leaned against it, her heart pounding in her breast so that it nearly choked her, till she heard Shannon's footsteps die away in the distance. Then she went weakly up the stairs.

The Greek had thought their lips met. He watched Shannon till the latter's tall figure had swung from view. Then he staggered across the street and went into Sam Vickery's saloon by the side door.

When the Thanksgiving dinner was ready next day, the landlady rapped on his door. Getting no answer, she looked inside. The Greek was asleep with his head on the table. A half empty bottle was beside him. The woman shook him awake.

"Are you drunk?" she asked. "You, of all men!"

The Greek looked at her with bloodshot eyes.

"I'm sick," he said roughly. "Leave me alone."

The landlady had a temper of her own and she flung herself from the room, declaring, "Lots of other people will eat the dinner if you don't."

He stayed in his room till the next morning. By that time the bottle was empty. He had not removed his clothing. The landlady appeared on the threshold.

"You can move," she said sourly. "I'll have no man acting this way in my house."

The Greek rose apathetically and went away, saying he would send for his trunk. He went to board with Sam Vickery. Sam telephoned to the mill for him, reporting him sick. The Greek drew fifty dollars from the bank and sat down at a table in Sam's saloon. He took a drink of ten-cent whisky every thirty minutes. He did not return to the mill for a week. By that time he had to take a drink every little while to keep his nerves from flying to pieces. The men in the mill told him he looked "bad."

Up to this time the Greek had merely brooded. That could not go on forever, and the first indication that there was soon to be a crisis came when he began to watch Shannon. He watched with the eyes of a man in whose heart there is evil. The frankness which had been its chief characteristic had gone from his face. He was unable to look his fellows in the eyes. Once or twice Shannon, happening to glance in the Greek's direction, saw the fierceness of his expression. But his own thoughts were busy with Vivien, and he gave no heed to the Greek. Also, it was not in him to fear the man's malevolence, so that the Greek was left to himself to nourish his enmity.

For he knew his emotion for enmity when he awoke one night in a cold sweat. The whisky was flat within him and he had none in his room. He dragged himself to a window and knelt beside it, gasping for breath. His mouth was hot and dry, and though his sweat was cold, his body was on fire. This being his first experience of the kind, he believed he would never be able to stop drinking. As the night slowly passed, he still knelt by the window, his quivering nerves filling his brain with horror. His breath was nearly stifled, and when he tried to swallow he choked. At five o'clock he dressed and went down to the bar. He could just whisper a request for a drink. He poured the raw whisky into his stomach and demanded more.

"You don't want another drink," the bartender said brutally. "You've almost got the D. T.'s now. Cut it out for a while. You been drinkin' like a fish."

"I've got to have it," the Greek said.

"You'll not get it here. Go across the street for it if you want to."

The Greek staggered from the place and went to the saloon across the street. By ten o'clock he was drunk again, but it was not the state in which he had been finding solace. His heart was beating like a trip-hammer, and his head was so filled with blood that he thought it would burst. He bought a flask of whisky and took it to his room. He tossed for an hour, took a drink, and then fell asleep. He awoke at five o'clock and without eating managed to get to the mill in time to go to work, this being his night to change shifts.

His work was to help pull the red-hot, finished rods into the open air after the rollers were done with them. The work was not hard, but it seemed monumental to him to-night. His hands were shaking so that he could hardly hold the big iron hook. He saw that even the man who worked with him—a big, stolid, blond-mustached Swede—noticed his condition. Once, passing a suddenly opened furnace door, he received the hot blast in his face. It took his breath away and he almost fell over.

When he could stand it no longer he slipped across the street and took two drinks. Again he had the sensation of suffocation which his pounding heart was giving him as warning. As he went out of the saloon door, he remembered afterwards, he looked back and saw that the clock on the wall marked exactly ten o'clock.

As he re-entered the mill yard, he saw Shannon standing in the doorway. Shannon, the Greek thought, seemed to be waiting for some one. He did not notice the Greek.

"He's stuck on himself because he kissed her," the Greek said to himself.

He passed to his place and began hauling out the rods again. He watched Shannon balefully, till Shannon, with something like a sigh, turned back into the mill. He had not been gone for more than a minute when Vivien came through the hole in the fence. The color fled from the Greek's hitherto flushed face. He had seen the girl several times since the night of the dance, but this was the first time he had been near enough to her to speak to her. Dragging the iron hook in the dust of the yard, he crossed to her. She looked up. At something in the Greek's face, she stepped back a pace.

"Did you come to see him?" the Greek asked, pointing into the mill room through the open door.

"Don't be a fool, Tony," the girl said, impatiently. "I came to bring my father his lunch."

"You haven't come for a week now," he said. "Did you have a fight with him?"

"Why should I have a fight with him?" she asked. "He's nothing to me."

A look of wild hope came into the Greek's eyes.

"He kissed you, didn't he?" he exclaimed.

"He never did," the girl said indignantly.

She was looking beyond the Greek, her eyes eager in a way which belied her assertion that Jim Shannon was nothing to her.

"Hush!" she suddenly said. "You had better go back to your work. He's coming."

The Greek was bending to his task when Shannon appeared in the doorway. They had not met since the girl had flouted him, but if Shannon felt any resentment he did not show it. The light which had nettled her was in his eyes again. He rubbed his hand on his shirt and offered it to her. She took it gingerly and withdrew her own before he could press it.

"I wanted to see my father," she said—which was not at all what she had intended to say.

"He's busy just this minute," said Shannon easily. "You have lots of time."

"How did you happen to come out here just as I came," she asked, more to say something than because she did not know.

"I thought it was about time for you to come."

"How did you know I was coming?"

"I asked your dad."

"Oh, I thought perhaps you could *feel* it."

She flushed at that, because it sounded foolish in her own ears. Why could she not get to that triumphant ground which she had occupied when she had refused to let him kiss her.

"I asked your father if he'd object to me as a son-in-law," he said.

"You did not," she flared out at him.

"I did. I haven't much time, you know—only about three weeks. You're going to marry me, aren't you, Vivien?"

His voice was wistful, pleading now. That was her chance, but somehow she couldn't take it. With a gasp of relief

she saw her father approaching. He took the lunch basket from her, spoke a word or two, and returned to his work.

"You see," said Shannon, then, "he wants to give me a chance—he said he'd like to have me in the family."

"I'll not marry you—ever," she said stubbornly.

He did not speak at once and she fastened her eyes on a mass of metal just from a furnace. She knew that he was regarding her with his sobered eyes, and it made her uncomfortable again.

"I must be going," she said. "It's getting late. I guess I wont bring Father's lunch any more. It's getting too cold at night."

He walked to the gate with her. On the way they passed the Greek. The girl glanced at him, but Shannon was too much engaged with her to notice anything else. In the shadow by the big gate he put his hand on her arm.

"You're prettier to-night than I've ever seen you," he said in a voice hoarse with feeling.

A Tam O' Shanter crowned her curls, and she had pulled the collar of her red sweater up about her throat. As her glass had told her before she left home, the two made a pefect setting for her clean-cut, brown young face.

"Do you know it?" the man asked.

A gust of wintry wind gathered a handful of dust and swept it over them. She stood a moment with bent head and closed eyes. He looked back into the mill yard an instant, and then he caught her to him, her arms pinioned at her sides. His lips sought hers.

He had expected her to struggle, but she was as quiet as if she were made of marble. Astonished, he released her. She looked up at him with eyes filled with tears.

"I'd have expected Tony to do something like that," she said.

He recoiled as if she had struck him.

"I guess that's right," he said with an effort. "But you drive me crazy, Vivien."

"That's all I'm good for," she said, "to drive men crazy. They say the Greek has just about lost his mind. He's been drinking."

"You don't class me with the Greek, do you? Vivien, marry me, and I'll do anything in the world for you. Why wont you marry me?"

She looked away from him. Her lips trembled a little.

"You laughed at me," she said.

"And you laughed at me. That's what you've been doing all your short life—laughing at men, and breaking their hearts, some of them."

"Is that what—"

She did not finish the sentence. Regarding her, he saw her face suddenly lose its tremulousness. Her eyes widened, and the spreading pupils almost met the whites. Then she screamed.

"Jim!"

Shannon wheeled to the direction in which she was gazing. The madness of the Greek had come to its culmination. The cause of all his sufferings, mental and physical, stood there in the shadow of the big gate, talking to the woman whom the Greek adored. It had been more than his torn nerves and poisoned brain could stand. He was now within ten feet of Shannon, the big iron hook poised for a blow. His face was gray and distorted from the hate that was sweeping through him.

"Tony!" Shannon said in a voice that carried, though it was little more than a whisper.

A maniac's cry broke from the Greek's lips. He leaped forward. Shannon whirled the girl away from him, and she caught a picket of the fence to steady herself. The hook came down and Shannon dodged. A glancing blow caught him on the side of the head. He went to his knees. Before the Greek could raise the hook again, Shannon clasped him about the legs and threw him heavily to the ground. The Greek, though stunned, writhed from him. They got to their feet and rushed to the embrace of madmen. But the Greek's strength was gone in his one effort. He crumpled down, gasping, with Shannon's long fingers on his windpipe, pressing harder and harder till his breath was almost gone.

When men came running from the mill, they found Shannon bending over

his prostrate foe, watching for some sign of life. But the Greek lay motionless.

"Call an ambulance and get this man over to the hospital," Shannon ordered. "He's crazy with whisky."

The ambulance came and took the Greek away. As they lifted him into it, he began to rave wildly, sobs shaking him.

Shannon turned to the girl. She still stood where he had flung her, clutching the fence picket for support. Her face was white and her scarlet lips were trembling. Without taking the trouble to see if anyone observed him, Shannon bent and laid his lips gently on hers.

"I'll take you home," he said. "Come."

Coatless and in his bare head, he walked to her home with her.

"Oh," she said, there, "suppose—suppose—"

"But," he said whimsically, now that he was sure of her, "it didn't happen."

She looked at him. Her eyes were still dark with pain and horror.

"It would have been my fault," she said. "I drove the Greek crazy with my flirting."

"You'd better stop it then," he rejoined. "At least, you'd better flirt only with me. Of course, I wouldn't stand for that unless you married me. Then I'd have to. I think we'd better quit fooling with each other, hadn't we?"

Her eyes filled. "Please!" she whispered.

"Marry me?" he asked.

She nodded. She could do no more.

"I fell in love with you the minute your father introduced us here in the house that night," he said, after a while. "Did you begin to care then?"

She tossed up her head, but not in the old way. "It was long before that," she said proudly. "It was when I first saw you at the mill. Perhaps it was before that. It seems like always."

For a week the Greek was sole spectator at a Wild West show in his room in the hospital. As soon as he was discharged, he sought out a boarding-house far down the street from Sam Vickery's saloon. He even sent a man to get his trunk.

The Right Man's Face

By FRANK ATWATER WARD

ABSOLUTELY nothing could break the monotony. I yawned; and in answer came the summer drone from the hedges, the distant caw of a black corn-robber, and the small infinity of sounds which only the country's early afternoon can bring forth. No; not a thing would disturb the monotone of life until the hat of my landlord would bob up over the hill on his way home from the ten-acre lot, or his wife patter along the dusty road after her visit to the neighbor.

"The world's a fraud, Jim," I added to the letter under my pen, "and your cure is far worse than my nervousness. Another week in this grim solitude of the Berkfield Hills, and I'm gone! You ought to be doctor enough not to push a man farther along on the road to despair. I warn you I may stand it a week or more—no longer, mind!"

My tired eyes turned to the landscape for the hundredth time that day—down the hill, over the dusty road. Its pale, snaky length wound down without a break, then was swallowed, far below, in a toy forest.

From this forest as I watched, two black dots appeared like flies on a ribbon. They moved too rapidly for men walking, or even running.

"Bicycles," I decided lazily, adding in exasperation, "and ten to one they take the fork and don't come past!"

I kept my eyes on them. Men they must be; women cyclists were too rare. Why such speed, I wondered. Was it a race, or a mere spurt for excitement? Little clouds of the powdered road followed them, mute testimony of their haste. In the heat haze which trembled upward from the earth, they and their stage-setting of rolling, sun-drenched country seemed part of an unreality.

So it did not seem actual when the leading rider slowed his pace, wavered the width of the road, and sprawled from his wheel. A few seconds later the other rode up and dismounted. That instant he, in turn, collapsed, and there came to me, so faint that it fitted splendidly with the fantastic dreaminess of it all, the crack of a revolver. A second shot followed at almost the interval between the two spills.

I took up my pen.

"To show the condition I am in from nervous exhaustion," were the words I added to the letter, "I have just imagined—"

Then it dawned really for the first time that it had not been imagination, but hard fact. Down there on the road lay two men—dead, probably—and as a good citizen I must go down to the spot. I capped my pen.

The walk was grueling. Long before I reached the end of the dusty slope I had cursed the day, the sun and those man-killing men who had come into my life on bicycles and now lay dead—or dying. Who they were or why they banged away did not trouble me at the time.

The road curved and curved and threatened to go on forever. At last, toiling wearily onward, I topped a sharp rise and almost fell upon what was left of the drama.

At first it appeared certain that the man who lay in the center of the road, his podgy, square-jawed face to the sky, was dead. Three feet away his revolver glistened, and somehow it recalled the other fellow; but he and his bicycle were nowhere.

The man was not quite dead, for he was breathing. Over his right eye was a nasty gash from which blood had flowed to dry on his white face—perhaps he was only stunned by a glancing bullet and a dash of water might revive him.

I straightened and looked about. On the other side of the road and across the field, a line of willows curved along in a manner which suggested a stream. It was worth looking for; something had to be done, and I had forgotten to bring a single thing, not even a flask of whisky, which would have proved useful.

Half-way over the low fence with its fringe of bushes I stopped. In front of me was an automatic pistol of cold blue steel, backed by an even colder pair of blue eyes. They watched the terror which must have leaped into mine and held steady for a moment; then the weapon was lowered.

"For the love of Mike!" cried the voice I knew so well, "what are you doin' here?"

Trembling, I sat down across the rail of the fence. "Good Lord, Soldier—you nearly shot me!"

"Soldier" Adams grinned, even as he had done over the corner table in McLaughlin's in the old days when I was covering Police Headquarters for the *Star*, and he was in revolt against society. Evidently he had not changed his scheme of life.

My explanation of how I came to be on that road in the Berkfield Hills was brief.

"Broken down, huh? Well, I'm broken out." He was forced to chuckle over this for some time before going on. "Just out of Wethersfield, where I was doin' seven years for the old trick of executin' a clever imitation of a gent's handwriting. And here I am." His thumb jerked toward the fallen man in the road. "Nearly got me. One of them fly-guy constables, after a reward. And he winged me, too, Look!"

On the calf of his leg was the wound, still bleeding, of which I got a brief glimpse before he yanked down again the soaked trouser leg.

"But," I protested, "let me bandage it. Here's a clean handkerchief—"

His irony cut me short. "Of course I'm goin' to leave that there signboard on the trail. Grab hold of the wop's feet and we'll pack him away in the bushes."

With his face distorted at the pain in his injured leg, Adams climbed the fence and, grasping the wounded constable by the shoulders, began dragging him from the road. I seized the boots, as though to stop their helpless wagging, and together we lifted the body over the ditch. A final heave put it across the fence and into the pasture beyond.

"You sit down," said I, "while I get the bicycle."

He nodded, but followed me out on the road. At first I could not grasp what he was doing; then it became plain. Carefully he was smoothing out signs on the road; each footprint, the trail of the constable's heels, even the imprint of the revolver, were all wiped out. With his hat he fanned the dust over what was left.

"Now," he said crisply, "get busy with the bandage. I'm about all in. Perhaps—"

His fingers were busy with the pockets in the unconscious man's clothes; soon he fished out a flask.

"Have some?" he grinned, as he twisted out the cork. "No? Well, there's how to you both, and hopin' I knocked some brains into his skull. Bah! how I hate the stuff! But it puts blood in a man."

Soldier needed the stimulant. Gone was the fresh, clear skin of him, and the jail pallor and unhealthy complexion, by very contrast, brought back the Soldier of other days. While I bent over the dressing of the wound, which was clean-cut and completely through the muscle of his calf, my mind was busied in recollection.

It must have been the law of opposites which had drawn us together; yet Adams had become my friend when I was down and out, on the edge of disgrace. A chance drink and we became acquaintances; then, when the men of the press were digging deep into the case of the Staten Island yeggs, he had dropped a hint. High praise from my city editor and a fatter pay envelope from that week on were the results of what I unearthed, and we were friends henceforth.

"How did you get sent up?" I asked, for it was amazing that he, the despair of the police of six cities, should have fallen.

He spread his delicate hands. "Just the game," he shrugged. "Caught with the goods, because one of the gang split on me. I don't bear him no grudge, though; he thought I was giving him the double cross."

In my astonishment I drew the bandage too tight, and he winced. "What?" I cried.

"You know me," he said quietly. "This guy didn't."

In Soldier's code were two great rules. One was: Thou shalt not turn against a pal. The other read: Thou shalt not lie. Other morals he had none, but those two laws were rigidly inviolate.

"What was the matter with your lawyer, Soldier?"

"Oh, my mouthpiece worked hard enough, but—"

With a warning grip on my arm, he bit his next word in two. His keen ears had caught, a second before mine, the cadence of a horse's hoofs. Like statues we waited while up the road came a farm wagon, the loutish boy nodding on the seat, the tailboard rattling. As if he had heard, the constable groaned.

Instantly the escaped convict's eyes became cold and hunted. For the first time there glided through me a sense of what I was doing.

"You wont welsh, will you, Bo?" he whispered, reading my thoughts. "Lord, it was hell in the pen'!—and look here!"

I found his face close to mine, his eyes wide and candid.

"Did I ever lie to you," he continued, "in them times I tipped you off to good things for the paper? Did I?"

"No," I returned.

"Then hear me now. Before Gawd, I've made up my mind to quit the game. No—don't look at the Rube. I had to get him; he was shootin' to kill. Anyway, he'd 'a' taken me back." Soldier drew a long breath. "I had seven years

to go—and you don't know what that means. We were friends, Mr. Quarles—"

"Soldier," I jumped to reply, "I'll go you. Quit the game, as you've said, and I'll be doing the square thing after all."

"Right!" The cold light faded from those eyes. "Now for the get-away. I was headin' for Brooklands, where an old pal is leadin' the simple life. Look at this rig! Regular tourist, aint I? Yanked these from a hook in front of a store the night I got out of Wethersfield—the man was just gettin' ready to shut up shop."

"Very good," said I, "but what will you do now? Can you ride the bicycle?"

He shook his head. "It don't hurt me to walk with my leg stiff, though."

In the silence which followed we could hear the far-away tinkle of a cow-bell. More than ever the affair seemed reft from a dream. Yet there was the wounded constable, looking fearfully dead for all his heavy breathing; at my elbow was the escaping forger, who, he had made it plain, wanted my help.

"Aint there a farm," he asked suddenly, "one of those quiet old places, where I could hide for a few days? You're so damned respectable you could make people believe I was shot out huntin'."

Yes, I was respectable. The two plain and elderly folk with whom I boarded would take my word for anything—would believe, for example, that Soldier was a former valet, relic of a more affluent period. But I have always hated a lie, and anything but the truth somehow could not be told to Farmer and Mrs. Peddicord.

"I'll—I'll hide you in the barn, Soldier," was my stammering compromise. "When you're strong enough you can go on."

His hand gripped mine. "Fine as silk. Now let's move!"

Deftly he bound the senseless countryman with strips of his own shirt and would have added a gag had it not been for my protests. Once more we had to crouch in our hiding place while a wayfarer jogged past on the road, and every moment I felt a growing sense of uneasiness when I thought of the Peddicords and a possible discovery of my convict friend.

At last we started, but Adams stopped half-way to the road.

"Hold on—we forgot the bike."

In a moment he was with me again, grunting over the weight of the bicycle. He set it down in the ditch and pushed it along for a hundred yards where it would leave no trail before wheeling it out upon the road.

"Get the idea?" he laughed.

Unconsciously I had followed his lead and had also walked in the ditch. "Not quite," I answered.

"It's easy. You and I walk here in the ditch and I'll push the bike along the road. Whoever finds that chap hollerin' from the bushes will dope it out that I've gone on, ridin' the wheel. Now, when we get to the fork you ride the bike for a couple of hundred yards up the road we're not goin' to take. Get me?"

"To lead people astray on our trail, of course. But look here, Soldier, how did you know there was a fork?"

He ignored this. "After you've ridden a ways," he explained, "you jump off and bring the bike back at the side of the road where the wheel marks wont show. That'll fool 'em a bit—they're only a pack of Rubes, anyway."

So we toiled on up the hill. Every swing of the man's wounded leg made his lips twitch. Of course, I took charge of trundling the wheel, but we made slow work of it and twice had to rush to cover as teams passed by. When the wound started bleeding again there was a tiresome wait while I tightened the bandage.

"Soldier," I burst out, sharply, because the squat figure of the felon, limping along, was so out of keeping with the quiet of the Connecticut hill country, "this is the first time I've ever broken the law!"

"Huh," he grunted, but the grin was suddenly sponged from his face. "It wont happen again," was his tight-lipped addition. "Where are you stoppin'?"

"The name is Peddicord."

There was a whistled intake of his

breath as he stumbled. Quickly my arm shot out in support.

"Damn this bike!" he growled. "Here's the fork, anyway. Now do your little stunt."

Under his directions I pedaled up the road to establish the blind trail. Soldier was sitting where I had left him, but he made no move to rise as I came back. His sullen face refused to meet my glance.

"Tired?" I asked, when he had turned the seconds of waiting into a minute or so.

"Go on and leave me alone," was his reply. "I know what I'm doin'. It'll be safer over there in that patch of woods, and you can frisk some food out to me once in a while."

"In the name of goodness," I exclaimed, "what is the matter now?"

"Nothin'—only I uster live round here and knew the Peddicords; uster play with their kids—"

"They haven't any children."

"He's—he's dead," Soldier supplied.

"Even then," said I, "they needn't see you, if you're hidden in the barn."

But it took me several precious minutes to show him his foolishness; then, grumbling, he went on up the road, insisting that his hosts should never know, and in this manner we came to the farm. As soon as I had reconnoitered and found all safe, Adams hobbled past the vegetable patch and was soon installed with his bicycle in the hay loft.

Not five minutes later, Mrs. Peddicord, her tired face smiling beneath her sunbonnet, came across the little lawn and found me dozing over the half-finished letter.

"Been kinder dull for ye, aint it?" she asked gently.

"No," I answered quite truthfully, "not particularly."

Her eyes, as if by coincidence, turned toward the winding road; and for what was really the first time, my breach of hospitality, the offense of bringing to their doors an escaped convict, came over me. In the shame of it my cheeks burned.

Later, as the three of us sat at supper, my nervousness increased. Could I really trust that man in the hay-loft? What was to stop his stealing into the house at night? I could already see the struggle as the farmer, waked by some noise, flung his weakness against the terrible strength of the convict. Perhaps death—

I almost leaped from my chair as heavy knocks sounded at the door of the farmhouse. Old man Peddicord threw back the wooden bolt, and a man, so tall he stooped to clear the doorway, shambled in, a shotgun across the hollow of his arm.

"Hello, Jared," he asked quickly, after a nod to the startled woman. "Been here all arternoon?"

"No—jest come home a half-hour ago," returned the farmer, while two other armed men filed in. "What's the matter, Joe?"

"We're huntin' a convict. He broke out o' Wethersfield a few days back and to-day he stole a bicycle down to Gobury. Sid Warner was arter him on another bicycle. He shot Sid 'bout a mile'n a half down the road—"

A gasp from the farmer and his wife in unison cut him short.

"Is Sid—dead?" asked Peddicord.

The tall man shook his head. "Nope, but he's right bad hurt. We thought mebbe you or some one seen the man come past here."

Peddicord set his eyes upon mine. "You was here, Mr. Quarles; did you see anything?"

My quiet negative assured him, but not the leader of the searching party. His long legs carried him a step in my direction, while his gaze was a bit too sharp.

"Heard the shots—didn't you?"

"Yes,"—and I hoped that my voice was cool—"I heard them. They woke me from a nap. I thought some one was shooting crows."

For a moment more I felt his eyes upon me, while the others waited, stolidly; then he turned to Peddicord.

"Well, good day, Jared. No, thank'ee —we aint got time for a snack. We're after this fellow Adams 'fore he fires his gun into some one else. Sid plugged him, he says, and I reckon the rascal aint gone fur. Come on, boys; we'll go back up the fork where we seen the tracks."

The door closed. Peddicord, his face averted, tugged at his beard a few moments before he sat down. As if a brush had touched him here and there, deepening the wrinkles and the hollows beneath his eyes, the man had grown older by years. He was as pale as his sunburn would allow, and trembling.

"Come outside for a spell," he whispered, as the wife carried the dishes into the kitchen. In wonder and a little anxiety I followed him out to the stone wall, where he motioned for me to sit beside him.

"Did yuh know this man Adams?" he asked sharply.

"Yes—but look here, Mr. Peddicord, you don't think—"

"I'm thinkin' nothing," he cut in, quietly. "You uster write for the papers in New York and you'd oughter know. Who was Adams before—before he become Adams?"

"I don't know."

He waited. "Mr. Quarles," he went on at last, "I've got a son somewhere. You've seen Mother ask me somethin' each time I've been down to the village and seen me shake my head. I allus shakes it, because we never get letters from him any more. But one day I seen his picter in the paper—as a criminal."

The word was whispered.

"You mean—" I began, to fill the pause.

"Yes," he supplied, "jest so. God knows, Mr. Quarles, we done our best by him. He left us a good boy, with a clean world ahead of him."

"Are you sure that Soldier—that John Adams is your son?"

Peddicord smiled in dreary fashion. "I reckon there's no doubt of it. He stopped writin', and then—then I seen the picter. I never told Mother. If I'd been here to-day and seen him—I'd 'a' known. I reckon, though it's been fifteen year. You see," he added simply, "I'm his father. Did you know him at all, Mr. Quarles?"

With the light full upon Soldier's better points, I sketched my acquaintance with one of the keenest forgers who had ever tortured the souls of the police of several states. Of his honesty with friends, of his absolute abhorrence of a lie, even to save his skin, of his generosity—for always, as I talked, there came before me that gentle-faced woman, who had waited for the letter.

We returned to the house.

"It must be dreadful," Mrs. Peddicord quavered, as she sat knitting by the fire later that evening, "to be hunted like 'n animal."

The old farmer did not look up from his study of the worn carpet. "No more'n he deserves, I reckon," was his slow comment; and his tone was that of a judge who weighs thoughtfully and condemns with gentle mercy.

Meanwhile my mind had swung again and again to the gloom of the hay-loft and to Soldier, torn by heaven knows what pangs of hunger, forced to await my chance to slip out to the barn. And I had forgotten, when stowing him away, to give him a larder.

The hours dragged until nine o'clock, when the two old people, with a kindly "Good-night," he passed out of the room; and I heard their feet upon the stairs. Swiftly I gathered together a chunk of bread, some scraps of meat and a piece of cheese; but, tip-toeing from the pantry, I stopped short in chagrined surprise.

"I thought so."

Old man Peddicord was peering at me from the doorway. A stammering excuse sprang to my lips to account for my pilfering, but his slow smile and shake of the head made me soon fall silent.

"Taint no use, Mr. Quarles. But don't worry; I aint goin' to give him up. He's my son. Is he in the house? No? Well, I'll take them things out to the barn."

I tried to expostulate, to keep him from the meeting, but that slow smile again cut me short.

"Here!" I cried, and handed him the food. "He's in the hay-loft. You'd better give him warning; he's got a revolver."

"I reckon he'll know my voice," returned the father, "but—but I'll be keerful."

He was gone. For what seemed hours I listened to the slow *tick-tock* of the old-fashioned clock in the

dining-room. Twice I was out of my chair to follow, but a sense of shame, as of a listener at a keyhole, held me back. At last Peddicord stepped in and closed the door.

"'Twan't him," he said quietly.

"What?" I gasped, springing from the chair. Years had been sponged from the old man's face; a glad light was in those gray eyes.

"No—and I'd 'a' known him—his own father." He sank into the chair which I had just left. " 'Pears he uster know Jimmy; they run together in the city, and once when this feller done something wrong they printed Jimmy's picter."

"Such things often happen in newspaper offices," I quickly assured him. "Once my paper used a photograph of a man dead for ten years instead of a chap who was sued for blackmail. Did —did Adams tell you where your Jimmy is now?"

"He's livin' up in Canada on a farm. Yuh see, Jimmy wasn't altogether straight for a time, but he never done much that was bad. Now he's reformed."

"You're quite sure," I found myself forced to ask in the pause which came, "that it isn't your son—out there?"

By his straight glance I was convinced. "No," he answered curtly, "that man, thank God, is no child of mine. But, for Jimmy's sake, I'm goin' to help him."

"Good for you, Mr. Peddicord. He's not a bad fellow, Adams; he's worth helping."

"Mebbe," the old man said slowly. "Goin' out to see him? Well, good-night."

Still wearing that look of peace, he left the room, and I heard the creak of the stairs and a door shut gently overhead.

Outside under the cool stars I walked slowly to the barn, my thoughts in turmoil. Certain facts wouldn't "gee." Still worrying I climbed the ladder with as much noise as possible and lifted my lantern high in the hay loft.

A man crouched in one corner. He turned his face to the light, and the shock nearly sent the lantern crashing to the floor. Instantly the dull eyes of the man became bright, the protruding jaw receded and the ugly twist of the lower lip was smoothed. Once more I was looking at Soldier Adams, as he brushed the lock of hair from his forehead.

"That's how I fooled him," he grinned up into my amazed face.

"Then you *are* his —"

"Right! An' that's why I'm goin' to beat it quick before he gets another squint at me. I didn't look much like your old friend, Soldier, did I? It's a good old trick, and it's kept me free when they had the net drawn tight."

Again he distorted his features until he looked another man.

"Oh. I lied like—but, believe me, it hurt. And he fell for it—swallowed all that I told him about his Jimmy. Now I'm goin'; I couldn't—couldn't stand it again. Give me some more grub and I'm off."

"Look here," I pleaded, "you're all in, man! You can't go till you've had a rest."

His face was paler than ever as he looked at me. "Supposin'," he almost whispered, "it wasn't him what come next time—but her! Now get that grub," he ended savagely.

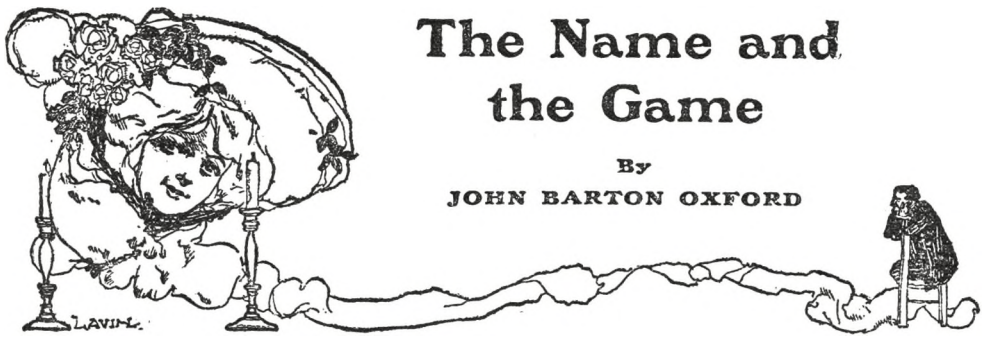
Forthwith I obeyed. Five minutes later, when our slow progress had taken us some distance up the road, he let his hand fall from my arm.

"Go back now. One o' the old folks might wake up and find you gone. I can beat it along myself."

So we stood there for a few moments, with only the tiny squeak of a circling bat to break the stillness. Then twice he cleared his throat.

"I'm comin' back," came his fierce whisper, while his grip made my fingers tingle, "and I don't care whether he knows it's me was here to-night. Why? 'Cause I'll be straight when I come back. That's why!"

Long I watched his limping figure until it mounted the brow of the hill, far up the road. For a moment it was cut sharp against the moonlit paleness the sky; then it fell from view. My way was now toward the farmhouse, where the old couple had begun their waiting for Jimmy Peddicord.



The Name and the Game

By
JOHN BARTON OXFORD

THE daily morning grind with the gloves and the punching bag in the training quarters was over. Swathed in an old green sweater, Fudge Rooney came into the hall, pulling a battered felt hat over his eyes as he made ready for his road work. But as he passed the door of the front room of the suburban cottage, where his training was going on, Mike Twohey, his manager, called to him and beckoned him into the room.

"Shut the door, Fudge," Twohey instructed, as Fudge crossed the threshold.

Rooney pulled the door shut after him, and turned to the fat, red-faced man who sat in the swivel chair before the littered desk, puffing away at a big, black cigar.

"Well, what's on your mind, Mike?" Fudge demanded, as the other, without speaking, blew smoke rings ceilingward.

"Sit down, Fudge," said his manager. "I got a little proposition to put up to yer. Yer'll holler like a stuck pig when yer hear it, but if yer a wise guy yer'll listen to me out."

Rooney stiffened in his chair. What he had been expecting, fearing, for the past few days was coming, then. He pushed back the old hat, elevated his feet to a little table, and tried his best to assume a nonchalant air—which was somewhat spoiled by the sudden tight setting of his jaw.

"Fire away with it," he invited genially. "But, I'ave me tell yer before yer begin," he added, "that yer want to bear in mind one thing: I aint fallin' for no funny business. I've always been straight and I always intend to be, so long as I stay in the game. When I can't be straight, I'll quit it—see?"

"Straight?" snarled Twohey. "Who ever heard of a straight pug? They all of 'em throw a lot of hot-air, but they come to terms sooner or later. You're in bad, Fudge; these last fights, the last four you've had—you've taken a drubbin' in every blamed one—and me backin' yer and losin' good wads of coin. It's gotter stop. And I been watchin' yer trainin' for this go I've managed to get for yer wit' Sleepy Cahill at the Mat and Ring Club next Thursday. Yer aint got a show wit' him, Fudge; not a show."

"Aint I?" asked Fudge ominously. "Yer wait—"

Twohey waved him to silence with a fat, be-ringed hand. "Aw, hot-air is all right in its place, but it don't go wit' me. Naw, yer aint got a show. Yer've lost something, Fudge—yer spring, yer punch, yer foot-work, is all of 'em way off. Now, I know it aint yer fault. Yer've been playin' in hard luck the past few goes yer've had. But something's wrong wit' yer. Yer goin' back.

"The bunch is onto it already. They wouldn't bet a blamed red on yer to win, now, no matter who yer went against. But they don't think it's hard luck. They say yer've been layin' down to yer man these last few fights—that we've fixed 'em."

A steely glitter came into Rooney's blue eyes. "No one better be sayin' anything like that to me," he muttered.

"That part of it is all right enough," said Twohey, "but it don't do us no good—no good at all. Yer've got the name; and that bein' the case, yer might jest as well play the game and make what yer can out of it, seein' they're talkin' that way about yer anyhow."

He paused. "Go on,' said Fudge unpleasantly. "No one's stoppin' yer."

Twohey began nervously fingering the bunch of heavy seals on his watch-chain. "As I was sayin'," he continued, but his eyes did not meet those of the fighter, "yer might jest as well have some of the coin, as to have the name without the coin. Now, no one's goin' to risk a red on yer Thursday night—that is, not for yer to win. But there'll be plenty of bettin' as to how long yer can stay against him. There'll be a chance to grab back some of what we've lost if we know about how long yer will stay. Fudge, wit'out beatin' round the bush, you gotter lay down to that gink in the second round—the second round—see?"

Fudge took his feet down from the table. "I guess you got my answer to that all right before I give it," said he. "Nix on it, Mike. None o' that for mine. I'm the exception that proves that rule of yours; I'm the one guy wot *is* straight."

"Now yer keep yer shirt on and listen to me," snapped Twohey. "I'm in bad on your account. I'm ashamed to tell you or anybody else what them last four fights o' yours has cost me. I gotter get back somehow; and you're in bad, too. Yer owe a pile o' money. Yer gotter have some right off. Heeney's comin' down on yer next month for tl at note—see? Yer gotter take this way of gettin' a little—it'll be jest tidin' yer over till yer get out of this slump and on yer feet again."

"Nix on it," said Fudge hotly.

Twohey's little eyes blazed.

"Look here, you big stiff, you're goin' to do like I says. If yer don't, I'll make a bum outer yer—a bum, do yer get that? I'll go out and holler that yer *did* lay down in them last fights. I'll holler it broadcast in the highways and hedges—and that's the end of you, all right, wit' the feelin' against yer the way it is now, and the whole bunch only too ready to believe it of yer, bein' sore at what yer've lost for 'em."

Fudge Rooney seemed to crumple and shrivel as he stood. "Yer wouldn't do that, Mike?" he said brokenly. "Aw, yer wouldn't go and do nothin' like that?"

"Wouldn't I?" grunted Twohey. "Yer just hold out on me much longer and see. I tell yer this is yer only chance, and if yer see fit to chuck it up, I'll holler yer out of the game. Get wise, now. Climb aboard the wagon while there's time."

"I aint never done nothin' like this," Fudge began miserably and in choking tones.

"Aw, can that tremolo," said Twohey unfeelingly. "There's a first time to everything. Are yer goin' to get on yer feet again, or are yer lookin' to be hooted out o' the game? Think quick, now, and speak up"

Fudge swallowed hard.

"Yer got me cold," he said at last.

Twohey's eyes brightened. "Of course I have," said he. "Are yer goin' out in the second round of that fight?"

There was a long pause.

"If yer say so," said Fudge finally. "There aint no other way as I see."

"That's the talk. Now yer sayin' somethin' worth while," Twohey declared. "Yer promise me solemn, then, do yer, that yer'll lay down to Sleepy Cahill in the second round of yer fight wit' him at the Mat and Ring Club next Thursday?"

"Yep, I give yer me promise," choked Fudge and hurried blindly out of the room.

But instead of going out for his road work, Fudge went to his room upstairs and spent a miserable hour of it. He, Fudge Rooney, had at last consented to let a fight be fixed for him!

Immediately after lunch he changed his clothes, boarded a car in town and went straight to the Connors' flat.

"Mary," said he, when he sat alone in the little parlor with Mary Connors, the pretty daughter of the house, "I want back that di'mond ring."

"The di'mond, Fudge?" she questioned in unbelief. "Why, yes. Here it is."

She stripped it from her finger,

"Now tell me why," she said very gently.

Fudge squirmed in his chair. He was not particularly good at improvised excuses.

"Well, yer see, girlie, this has been an awful bad year wit' me. Things has went from bad to worse right along. And I can't see where they're goin' to straighten out any, either. And I aint got no right to keep a girl like you waitin' and waitin' forever; so—"

She was watching him narrowly, noting his hesitation and his very evident misery.

"Fudge, that's not the real reason," she interrupted. "Tell me the truth. Don't be afraid."

Thus encouraged, he babbled out brokenly the whole miserable tale— of his ill luck, his debts, his worries and, finally, of his forced compact.

"And that's why I wanted the ring back," he confessed. "That's the real reason. Me that has always been straight has turned crooked at last like they all said I would. Yer can't never marry a crook, Mary."

The girls eyes glistened. "Yer not a crook yet, Fudge," she said softly. "Yer just a hard-used and too-much-worried boy. Yer must win that fight. Tell Twohey that yer goin' to, and *win it*. Keep the ring till then, and when yer've won from Cahill, come back and put it on my finger again. Oh, Fudge, what do I care about money or the waitin', so long as you don't let 'em ever make yer crooked?"

Somehow Fudge found himself at last on the sidewalk, twirling the ring in his fingers as he almost ran back to his training quarters. It was all so simple now. If Mary had that much faith in him it was all he asked. A dozen Mike Twoheys didn't count against him now.

But when he reached the quarters Mike was not there; nor did he return that night, though Fudge fidgeted and fumed and sat up long after midnight awaiting him.

Indeed, it was late the following afternoon when Towhey came back to the cottage. Fudge was after him as soon as he entered.

"Mike, that agreement is all off. I —" he began.

"It's a devil of a time to tell me after the coin is up, aint it?" howled Towhey. "Yep, eight thousand cold I've managed to get placed at all sorts of good odds that yer wont last three rounds wit' Cahill. There's some of the bunch still thinks yer straight and that it's nothin' but a jinx workin' on yer that yer aint done no better lately, and they fair fell over themselves getin' the coin up wit' Casey and Grogan that I commissioned to get it placed for me. All off, like thunder it is. Yer too late. Yer've give me your promise—yer solemn promise here in this room, and I hold yer to it. A welcher is worse'n a feller wot can be fixed. Yer give me yer promise, now don't bother me any more. Go do yer part of it."

"All the money's up?" gulped the wretched Fudge.

"That's wot I said—wa'n't it?" grunted Twohey.

Fudge drew himself upstairs. At his table he scrawled a hasty note to Mary Connors.

They've got me. Good-by for always

was all the final note said, after several unsatisfactory ones had been destroyed.

The arena of the Mat and Ring Club was crowded that Thursday night. Above the ring glowed a huge calcium light. Tier upon tier of faces, half obscured by the drifting clouds of smoke, rose from the ringside and receded into the darkness under the roof.

The preliminary bouts over, the announcer shouted the event of the evening through his megaphone. This was immediately succeeded by a great burst of cheering as Sleepy Cahill, the favorite by almost prohibitive odds, came from his dressing-room and crawled through the ropes. An outburst far less in volume greeted Fudge Rooney, as he, too, entered the ring a moment later.

Just before he crawled through the ropes, Twohey drew him away from the seconds around him.

"Make it look good, Fudge," he whispered in Rooney's ear. "Don't do nothin' raw. Make it look like a classy go in the first round, and about the tail end of the second—well, yer know what to do."

Dimly Fudge heard the referee's instructions as he and Cahill stood together with that official in the center of the ring. Dully he shook the grinning Cahill's gloved hand, and then the gong sounded.

The fight was on; he was scarcely aware of it in his wretchedness of mind, until a stiff jab from Cahill's left woke him up. Then he began the ducking and side-stepping for which he was noted, and brought through one or two quick punches to Cahill's body—not hard ones, for what was the use of hammering unnecesarily the man to whom you were going to lay down?

They sparred beautifully; lightning-like blows and blocks coming in a way that brought the crowd to its feet. And then, almost, it seemed to Fudge, before the round was fairly begun, Cahill swung his right viciously at Rooney's head. It was an open blow, easy enough to duck. Rooney dodged out of harm's way, and just for the appearance of the thing, since the blow had left Cahill's face uncovered, he tapped the latter lightly on the jaw with his left.

It was a puerile blow; although it looked from the seats like a wicked enough punch, there was really no force in it whatever.

What, then, was Fudge's suprise, not to say his consternation, to hear a groan from Cahill—to see him throw up his hands and topple spread-eagled to the mat.

For a moment he could not realize it all. Then anger, fear and the horrible thought of his promise to Twohey surged through him like some awful, distorted nightmare. Even before the referee could bend over the prostrate Cahill and begin counting, Rooney was stooping over the fallen man, clutching at him clumsily with his gloved hands, striving to lift him up. Fortunately the mighty cheering from the spectators drowned the agonized words he was pouring into Cahill's ears.

"Aw, get up! Get up, can't yer, yer big mutt! That never hurt yer none. Get up, yer blamed faker!" Fudge begged. And only when his two seconds jumped into the ring and pulled him away, white-faced and trembling, was the referee allowed to count out the vanquished man in anything like peace. Still dazed and mumbling brokenly, the seconds led Fudge toward his dressing room, and as he went, the crowd thronged down from the seats and struggled about him.

"Kin he come back?" one wild partisan was yelling. "Kin he? Say!"

They were slapping his back, congratulating him and trying to shake his hand; but Fudge with bent head heard and saw nothing of it all.

Scarce had he been led into the dressing-room, when Mike Twohey, his face fairly green and shaking as with the ague, burst in. Fudge caught his coat.

"It wa'n't no blow at all, Mike. I never soaked him hard enough to hurt a kitten. I—"

"I know, I know," said Twohey shakenly. "I was right there. I saw it. They beat us to it—and to eight thousand of my coin. Gimme my hat and lemme outer here. Gee, it makes me sick—sick!"

Because he had no other place to go, Fudge dressed and went back to the little cottage in the suburbs. He sat down on the steps, his head whirling and his face twisting queerly. How long he sat there thus he never knew. He only knew that sometime, after eons and eons of time, the front gate clicked.

Up the path in the mellow moonlight came Mary Connors.

"I've just heard the news," she cried. "It was splendid. Now put the ring back on my finger."

Fudge swallowed hard, and as she came up to him, he held her back.

"Wait!" he said "Wait! I'm just as much a crook. I—"

"Never mind that part now, Fudge," she said gently. "You won the fight; that's the main thing. Put on the ring, dearie."

Slowly Fudge drew out the diamond ring and turned it about in his hand.

"I aint got no right to do it," he said, taking her hand in his; "but I'm goin' to put it back there. I've been awful close to the line, Mary, awful, awful close; it was something like a miracle that saved me. But I'm goin' to put it back, and then I'm goin' to get a new manager and I'm goin' to the top. What's more I'm goin' *straight!*"

Martha Ferguson's Disfranchisement

By
FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE

AINT Dave come home yet, Marthy?"

The querulous voice of the sick man in the "little room" aroused Martha Ferguson from her eye-straining perusal of the county newspaper.

"Taint time fur him yet, Andrew," she called, rising from the splint-bottomed chair by the window and stepping briskly across the kitchen. "They're cuttin' ties over to Langdon's woods, you know," she added, pouring a dipper of water from the wooden bucket into the simmering pot on the stove.

The November twilight was fast deepening into dusk. She took the lamp from the shelf behind the stove and turned toward the table As she passed the window by which she had been sitting, she paused and gazed out upon the fading landscape. The bare, terraced hillside, with its blackened stumps and sparse clumps of second-growth oak and chestnut was drearier, even, than the bare interior of the little cabin. Beyond, she knew, lay the fat, level fields that bordered the creek and grew the crops that placed the county at the head of all the White Burley district; on a clear day she could glimpse the green Kentucky hills, across the river.

Martha thought of their own meager tobacco patch, and sighed as she placed the lamp on the table, lighted it with a paper spill, and picked up the newspaper to resume her laborious reading. The crackling of the printed sheet aroused the invalid in the little room.

"Yo' got a paper thar, Marthy?" he asked.

"Yes, Mis' Blackburn give it to me when she druv by this mornin'."

"Got anything in it about the price o' terbacker?"

"I aint looked to see," replied Martha. "We aint got no terbacker to sell, nohow. Mis' Blackburn tol' me them that belong to the Equity got fourteen cents fur their'n. Can't get no sech prices fur anything we kin raise up here. I wish 't we c'd sell this place an' move down in the valley. Then mebbe we c'd git a doctor fur yo', an' it'd give Davy a chanct, too. Taint right to keep him up here in the hills all his life. He c'd git a job steamboatin', mebbe, if we was down thar."

"I don't take no truck with doctors an' their medicines," replied her husband. "I aint never took none o' their stuff yet, an' I don't aim to. I'll be all right, time spring comes. But yo'r right 'bout Dave. He's a good boy an' he'd ought to have a better chanct."

"Here's Davy, comin' now," said Martha, taking the steaming pot from the stove and emptying its contents onto a platter.

"Hello, Ma!" cried David, a tall, broad-shouldered, round-faced youth, striding across the dooryard with his broad-axe on his shoulder. "How's Pappy to-night?"

"He's some easier to-night," replied his mother, as David tugged at his clumsy felt boots in the corner behind the stove. "He's been mighty bad most

all day, till near sundown. I wish't I knew what to do fur him."

"Don't worry so, Ma. Pappy'll be all right soon. Wont you, Pappy?" he cried, rising from his chair and sniffing at the savory dish on the table. "What yo' got fur supper, Ma? Rabbit stew? Um-m! That smells good. Want some rabbit stew, Pappy?"

"I don't feel like I never wanted nothin' to eat," said the sick man, as David poked his head into the little room. "'Pears like I don't have no taste fur nothin' no more."

Not until David had pushed back his chair, crumbled a bit of cured tobacco leaf into his pipe and lighted it, did his mother speak again.

"How much yo' got comin' f'm Mister Anderson, Davy?" she asked, as she filled the dish-pan from the steaming kettle.

David pondered over the question. "Le's see—to-day makes thirteen days," he replied, finally. "That's thirteen dollars, so fur."

"Gittin' pretty nigh through, aint you'?" asked his mother.

"Boss said we'd finish this lot o' ten thousand by the end o' the week," replied David. "He didn't know whether he'd git another contrac' or not."

"That'll make eighteen dollars fur the hull job," said Martha, after a moment's figuring. "Taxes comes next month: that's sixteen dollars. Aint thar some other job yo' kin git, when this one's done?"

"I don't know of none, Ma. What's the matter? Aint yo' got no money left?"

"Eighty-seven cents is all, Davy. Yo' know we didn't git but mighty little fur the terbacker."

"Wont Blackburn trust us fur anything we need f'm the store, till next crop comes in?" he asked, with youth's readiness to discount the future.

"But yo' got to think o' yo'r Pa, Davy," said his mother. "Look an' see ef he's asleep." David tip-toed to the door and peeked in. "Seems like he's sleepin'," he said. His mother took the newspaper from the shelf and handed it to him.

"I seen this notice in the paper to-day, an' I been figgerin' how we c'd git some o' this here medicine fur him," she said, lowering her voice lest the sick man hear.

"Cure-e-na?" David spelled out the bold, black type. "Do yo' reckon hit'd cure him?'

"It says so in the paper," replied his mother, "an' thars a man writ a letter to the editor tellin' how it cured him, an' he had the same kind o' mis'ry in his back an' legs yo'r Pa has. That's his picter—looks some like Pa, don't he?"

"He cert'n'y do favor Pappy a deal," admitted David, scrutinizing the coarse half-tone cut that embellished the advertisement of "Cure-e-na." We might git a bottle an' see if it does him any good."

"But it takes six bottles, Davy; it says so in the paper. An' six bottles cost five dollars."

"My, that's a heap o' money, Ma, to pay out jes' fur medicine. I tell yo' what I kin do. Mebbe Blackburn has it down to the store, an' I'll be goin' down that-a-way to-morrow. I'll see if we can't git some on the bill."

"Don't do nothin' like that, Davy," exclaimed his mother. "Yo' know how sot yo'r Pa is ag'in medicine, an' if he seen any sech money as that on the bill he'd carry on scan'lous. It'd be hard enough to git him to take it if 't was give to us. 'Sides, yo' got to w'k to-morrow."

"Not at all, I aint, Ma," replied David. "It's 'lection day, an' the boss give us all half a day to go down to Rocky Fork to vote. He's runnin' fur sheriff. It'll be my fu'st vote, Ma."

"What yo' all talkin' about out thar?" interrupted the complaining voice of the invalid.

David and his mother exchanged glances of caution. "Jus' talkin' 'bout 'lection, Pappy. I'm goin' t' vote fu'st time, to-morrow."

"Yo'll have to take my place, Dave," replied the sick man. "It'll be the fu'st time I've missed votin' the straight Republican ticket sence I voted fur Gen'l Grant in sixty-eight. How yo' goin' to vote, Dave? Republican, same as yo're old Pa?"

"Co'se I be, Pappy. All us Fergusons is Republicans, aint we?"

"I c'n remember," said the old man, "when th' wa'n't a Democrat in the county, sca'cely. That was right after the war was over."

"Say, Pappy," exclaimed David, interrupting the flow of reminiscence, "if yo' hadn't 'a' spoke o' the war I'd never 'a thought of it. Ben Anderson says how he c'n git yo' a pension if yo'll sign the papers."

"I thought pensions was only fur them as fit in the war?" spoke up Martha.

"Well, wa'n't Pappy in the war? I've heerd him tell a hundred times how he shot one o' Morgan's raiders with his ol' squirrel rifle."

"But he wa'n't in the army—he had to stay home an' look after his ma," said his mother.

"That don't make no difference," said David. "Most every man in the county what's as old as Pappy gits a pension, an' Ben says how half of 'em never smelt powder."

"That's so," came the voice from the little room. "Ben Anderson's own daddy gits twelve dollars a month, an' he was up to Columbus all through the war, clerkin' in a grocery store. He had to swear to a lie to git it. But they aint all like that. Thar was more men went f'm this county to the war than any other place in Ohio."

"Then I don't see why yo' can't git one, too, Pappy. 'T wouldn't make no difference to the gov'ment."

"Why, Davy," reproved his mother. "Yo' wouldn't want yo'r Pa to do nothin' 'twa'n't honest, would yo', an' him an elder in the U. P. Chu'ch?"

" 'Pears to me like honest folks don't git nothin'," grumbled David, with the cynicism of twenty-one.

"I'd ought to had a pension, an' had it honest, too," resumed the invalid. "Lafe Pom'roy, when he run fur Gen'l Assembly two year ago, 'lowed if he was 'lected he'd see to it that every one o' the squirrel hunters what protected the homes of Ohio'd git his rights. He got 'lected, but I aint seen no pension."

"Lafe's runnin' ag'in this year," remarked David. "He's likely to git beat, though. Everyone says the county'll go Democrat this year, 'cause the Democrats got the most money."

"Wa'n't no Democrat votes in the hull county till they begun to buy 'em," commented his father. "Now half the county sells their votes every 'lection. That's what makes it so close. Lem Roberts offered me five dollars to vote Democrat last 'lection time. Republicans does the same thing, but I aint never sold my vote yet to no one, an' I don't aim to."

"Five dollars! Golly, that's a deal o' money fur one vote, Pappy. Aint it, Ma?" David turned an eager face toward his mother, who noted, with troubled eyes, his evident interest in the possibilities the huge sum suggested.

"That aint nothin' to what they paid down in Winchester when the local option 'lection was on," replied his father. "Them whisky fellers down to Cinc'nati sent money up in bar'ls, they told me, to try to vote the county wet."

"Well, I reckon nobody'll offer me nothin' fur my vote to-morrow anyway," said David, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and stretching himself. "I'm goin' to bed." He lit a candle and shuffled, stocking-footed, up the stairs to his little cubby-hole under the pole rafters. In five minutes he was sound asleep, dreaming that Ben Anderson had offered him a pile of "Cure-e-na" bottles as high as his head if he would sign his name to a pension paper, while Lem Roberts was breaking the bottles with five-dollar bills as fast as Ben could pile them up. But Martha rocked to and fro in the dark kitchen until the fire went out, and then knelt at the side of the bed in the little room and prayed to the just and awful God of her Scotch-Irish forbears to keep the last of her brood, her Benjamin, out of temptation.

II

His mother's voice calling him to breakfast broke into David's dream, just as Lem Roberts had smashed the pile of "Cure-e-na" bottles for the millionth time. As he sat down to the fried pork and corn-bread, his mother took his dinner-bucket from the shelf.

"Needn't put nothin' up fur me today, Ma," he said. "I'll stop in an' git

a snack as I come by, on my way to vote. Maybe I'll bring yo' up something f'm the Fork when I come back." He glanced at his mother as he spoke. She turned quickly and faced him.

"Davy," she said, appealingly, "be a good boy to-day. Don't let them politicians tempt yo'. Ef they offers yo' a drink, tell 'em yo'r temp'rance an' proud of it. An' ef anyone tries to buy yo'r vote, tell 'em yo' may be pore, but yo'r an honest man, like yo'r Pa. Be good, an' make yo'r old Ma proud o' yo', Davy, boy."

It was the nearest approach to tenderness David had ever known his mother to display, and it embarassed him, as it did Martha.

"I'll be good, Ma," he said, shamefacedly, as he slipped out of the door. Martha went about "redding up" the little house with an unaccustomed wrinkle in her forehead. Her household tasks done, she sat down to spell out the words of the "Cure-e-na" advertisement again.

"It cert'n'y does read just like what Andrew's got," she mused. "I've got a feelin' 't would cure him."

The sound of a vehicle stopping in front of the house interrupted her meditations. Throwing a shawl over her head, she hurried to the gate. A smart-looking buggy with red wheels was drawn up there.

"Is Mr. Ferguson at home?" asked the driver, a sleek-looking, black-mustached man, wearing unmistakable "store clothes."

"He's sick abed," replied Martha. "What d' yo' want to see him about?"

"Aint able to get up at all?" asked the stranger.

"No. He's been bedrid these three weeks."

"Well, then, Dave'll do," said the man in the buggy. "That's your son's name, aint it?"

"He aint to home neither," said Martha. "He's cuttin' ties fur Ben Anderson, over to Langdon's woods. Who be yo' an' what do yo' want ter see him about?"

"My name's Roberts," said the visitor. "I'll see him, though. I'm driving over that way now." He chirruped to his horse, but Martha laid a detaining hand on the wheel. Her mother-instinct scented danger to her young in this sleek stranger's manner.

"Hold on a minute, mister. What did yo' want to see my boy about?"

"It's a personal matter," replied Roberts. The conversation of the evening before flashed through Martha's brain and she divined the stranger's errand.

" 'Taint no use yo' seein' Davy," she said. "He's Republican, like his Pa, an' he don't sell his vote, neither." The suddenness of the thrust took Roberts by surprise, and for a moment he was at a loss for an anwer.

"Who—who said I wanted to buy his vote?" he stammered, finally. "I never thought of such a thing."

"Yes yo' did, Lem Roberts. Yo' tried to buy Pa's vote last 'lection, an' now yo'r goin' to put temptation before his son. Don't try to lie to me about it. I know it's true."

"Why, Mrs. Ferguson," replied Roberts suavely, his composure recovered. "You put too harsh a name on things. It's only right, when a man has to take time from his work to vote, that he should be paid fair compensation by those in whose interest he is voting. Everybody in the county expects it."

Martha hardly heard him. A new idea, a thought that made her tremble, but that overpowered her with the completeness of its solution of her immediate troubles, had flashed upon her.

"See here, Lem Roberts," she said, fixing him with a commanding eye. "Yo' keep away f'm my Davy an' I'll see to it he votes the Democrat ticket fur yo'. But yo' got to pay *me* fur it."

Roberts laughed. "I'm not buying votes from women," he said. "How do I know David isn't going to vote the Democrat ticket anyway?" He chirruped again to his horse, but Martha shouted, "Whoa!" and the animal stopped in its first stride.

"Look at me, Lem Roberts, an' see ef I look like a woman that'd lie." Roberts looked. There was something compelling about her gaunt, austere presence that held his eye and filled his skeptical soul with belief. "Now, I tell yo' my boy'll vote the Republican

ticket, 'lest I tell him not to. Yo' pay me fur his vote an' I'll make him vote Democrat. But don't yo' go pesterin' my boy an' makin' him dishonest, like all yo' politicians be."

"All right, Mrs. Ferguson," replied Roberts, with a short laugh. "I'll take your word for it. You get David to vote the Democratic ticket and I'll come by to-morrow and give you a dollar."

"A dollar!" exclaimed Martha. "Aint Davy's vote wu'th as much as his Pa's was two year ago? Yo' offered my husband five dollars."

"We aint paying so much this year," said Roberts.

"Yo'r payin' *me* jest as much," insisted Martha. "It's five dollars or nothin.' Five dollars, an' Davy votes Democrat. Ef yo' don't, I'll send word all over the county how yo' come 'round tryin' to buy votes f'm women fur a dollar a vote."

The politician wriggled uneasily in the buggy-seat. "All right, Mrs. Ferguson," he said presently. "Five dollars goes. I'll bring the money around in the morning, after your son's vote has been counted."

"I kin trust yo', I reckon," replied Martha. "Yo' wouldn't like to have it tol' all over the county that yo'd bought a vote f'm a woman an' not paid."

Unconsciously, Martha had attacked Roberts in his weakest spot, his fear of ridicule, and he had no intention of trying to "hold out on her," as he would have expressed it.

"I don't want none o' yo'r dirty money, though," continued the woman at the wheel. "I want yo' to fetch me six bottles o' Cure-e-na."

"All right, I'll have Blackburn send them up, first wagon that's coming this way," replied Roberts, touching his horse with his whip and chuckling as he drove on. For Blackburn, the storekeeper at the Fork, was under obligation to the sleek little politician for getting the polling-place located in the store, and Roberts knew he could take anything he wanted off the shelves without payment. "Here's where I charge the county committee five dollars and credit it to Lemuel E. Roberts," he thought.

Martha stood in the road until the sound of the buggy wheels had died out over the hilltop. Then she walked thoughtfully around the house to the vacant barn and knelt beside the empty feed-box.

"O, good Lord," she prayed, aloud. "I don't rightly know whether it was Yo' or the Devil tol' me to do what I done. But Yo' know, Lord, an' ef it's Yo'r will to make me the humble instrument in Yo'r hands to cure Andrew an' keep Davy out o' temptation, Yo'll do it. An' ef it was the Devil tempted me, good Lord, let Yo'r jedgment fall on me an' not on them."

David came whistling over the hill at noontime. His father was sleeping and he ate his dinner in silence. When he came out of the house he found his mother standing at the gate. "Davy," she said, "yo'r a man now, not a boy no longer, an' yo' got a right to do as yo' please."

David flushed slightly. "I aint aimin' to do nothin' 't aint right, Ma," he said.

"I know yo' aint, Davy. I didn't mean that. I mean, yo' don't have to vote Republican just 'cause yo'r Pa always did. Yo' kin vote Democrat ef yo' want to."

"Why, Ma!" exclaimed David. "Don't yo' want me to vote Republican?"

"Don't seem like it ever done yo'r Pa no good to vote Republican," his mother replied. "Look at Lafe Pom'roy. He's Republican, an' didn't he promise to git a pension fur yo' Pa an' then not do nothin' about it? I don't know's the Democrats is any better, but 't wouldn't hurt none, seems to me, to have the Republicans know thar's some Fergusons wont stand by 'em 'less they do the right thing."

"Why, Ma, yo' talk like a reg'lar politician." David's blue eyes opened wide and stared at his mother in surprise. "I never thought of it none that-a-way, but mebbe yo'r right. Taint no odds to me, one way or t' other."

Martha was gaining an easier victory than she had anticipated. "S'pose yo' vote Democrat to-day, Davy, an' let them Republicans know the Fergusons aint aimin' to be trompled on none."

"All right, Ma, I'll do it!" exclaimed David, secretly jubilating over the sensation he knew it would make when it became known that a "Jeff Township Ferguson" had deserted the Republican party. As he spoke, a red-wheeled buggy hove in sight over the crest of the hill. Mrs. Ferguson recognized the rig and stepped out into the road to hail the driver.

"This is my boy, Davy," she said, as Roberts drew his horse down to a standstill. "He's goin' down to the Fork to vote the Democrat ticket."

"That so? Thought all you Fergusons were Republicans," said Roberts, in well-simulated surprise.

"Well, I'm not," spoke up David, inwardly pleased at having aroused even so much interest in the well-dressed stranger. And when Roberts invited him to a seat in the buggy, remarking that "all us good Democrats must help each other along," David felt that he was at last a recognized and important member of society.

III

The anticipated sensation did not fail to materialize when David and Roberts reached the Fork. The little knots of idlers and political workers gathered near the polling places looked up to see whom Lem Roberts had brought in. Several of them recognized David, and those of both parties were surprised.

"Yo' aint goin' to vote the Democrat ticket, be yo'?" asked one.

"Mr. Ferguson is going to vote the straight Democratic ticket," said Roberts, before David could reply. It was the first time David had ever been called "Mister" and he thrilled with a new pride as he alighted from the buggy, nodding his head in confirmation of the politician's statement.

"Aw, how much 'd yo' pay him, Lem?" called the rude voice of a Republican worker.

"I don't have to buy Democratic votes," was Roberts' response. "Mr. Ferguson is a Democrat from principle. Tell him why yo'r voting the Democratic ticket, Dave."

"Yes, tell us," cried half a dozen voices, derisively. Finding himself thus the center of attraction, what self- possession David had deserted him. "I'm goin' to vote Democrat," he began, "because—because—" He couldn't for the life of him remember his mother's argument.

"Tell us why," demanded a voice.

"Because I done promised my Ma I would," blurted out David, truthfully. He had expected to create a sensation at the Fork, but nothing like this. The Gargantuan laughter that went up was wholly unforced. It brought men running from the blacksmith shop and the lumber yard to share in the joke. David looked about for a place to hide, his red-faced embarrassment, becoming momentarily more confusing. A friendly face appeared on the edge of the crowd.

"Hello, Dave," said his employer, Ben Anderson. "Boys been trying to kid you a bit? Come in and have a cigar." He took the youth by the arm and led him into the little office by the corner of the lumber yard. "What's this about you voting the Democratic ticket?" he asked.

"Why, it's this-a-way, Mr. Anderson," stammered David. "Us Fergusons has always been Republicans, but Ma, she thought it was time to show our independence, so she told me to vote Democrat, an' I 'lowed I would."

"You're not going to vote against me, are you?" asked Anderson. "I'm running for Sheriff, you know, on the Republican ticket."

"Honest, Mr. Anderson, I plumb forgot all about yo' when I said I'd vote Democrat. I'd like to vote fur yo', but I don't know what Ma'd say ef I didn't do what she told me to."

Roberts, having hitched his horse, was looking around for David. Anderson called him into the office.

"How much are you paying David for his vote, Lem?" he asked.

"He aint payin' me a cent," interposed David. "It's jest like I told yo'. Ma, she said—"

Roberts nodded to Anderson behind David's back, and winked.

"All right, David," interrupted Anderson. "I understand. Now, Lem," he

said to the Democratic politician, "David works for me, and he wants to vote for me for Sheriff. Are they opening the ballots in there?" He inclined his head toward Blackburn's store.

"No, they're afraid to unfold 'em—there's one or two strangers been around and we don't rightly know who they are. They're just peeking in the top of 'em."

"Well, then, why can't David vote for me—my name's below the fold—and you get the credit for his vote just the same?"

"That'll be all right, Ben," replied Roberts. "We couldn't beat you if we tried." He glanced out of the window. "There goes a feller I want to see," he exclaimed. "You show Dave how to mark the ballot, will you?"

"I thought all you' politicians hated each other like pizen ef yo' didn't belong to the same party," said David, bewildered, as Roberts rushed out.

"Well, we do, sometimes," replied Anderson, smiling, "but sometimes we have a little gentleman's agreement behind the scenes."

David didn't know what a "gentleman's agreement" might be, but it sounded important, and he was duly impressed and attentive when Anderson took a sample ballot from his desk and spread it out before him.

"Now, David, when they give you your ballot—never voted before, have you?—you mark it the way I show you here. A big, black cross-mark in this circle under the rooster, at the top of the first column. That votes the Democratic ticket. Then down here in the second column—see if you can find my name there? You can read, can't you?"

"Ef the words aint too long, I kin," replied David. "Here 't is, 'Fur Sheriff, Benjamin E. Anderson.'"

"Well, you mark a cross right in front of my name there, and that'll be a vote for me."

David made no immediate response. A grand new idea had begun to form itself in his slow brain. When he spoke the words came slowly and cautiously.

"Ef I votes fur yo', Mr Anderson, how much'll yo' gi' me?"

Buying votes was no new experience for Anderson. He had personally bought a dozen that morning and had mortgaged the salary of the Sheriff's office to furnish funds for his workers all over the county. But he had expected to get this one for nothing. Still, he thought, why shouldn't David be paid as well as anyone else?

"How much do you want, Dave?" he asked.

"I don't want no money," replied David. "I want some—" He could not think of the word. A newspaper lay on the desk. He picked it up and unfolded it.

"Here 't is," he replied, pointing to the same advertisement his mother had shown him. "I want some 'o that stuff."

"Cure-e-na?" replied Anderson. "What do you want with that? I thought you were temperance."

"Co'se I'm temp'rance," said David. "That aint nothin' to drink. It's medicine. I wants it fur Pappy."

Anderson could detect no sign of humorous intent in the boy's serious face. "All right," he said, smiling. "How many bottles do you want?"

"Ma 'lowed how six bottles might put Pappy on his feet again," said David timidly. Six bottles, he knew, cost five dollars—but then, hadn't Lem Roberts offered his father five dollars? And wasn't his vote as good as his father's?

"Six bottles it is," replied Anderson, making a note in a pocket memorandum book. "Now, so we can tell you voted right, you'll have to mark your ballot to identify it." He consulted the memorandum book again. "Here," he continued, pointing to the sample ballot. "You mark the way I told you, and make another cross, a light one, in front of where it says 'Secretary of State' over here, in the Socialist-labor column. Nobody else will mark his ballot that way, and we can tell when we count them whether you did as you agreed."

The cleverness and simplicity of the plan for identifying his ballot appealed to David. He rehearsed his lesson with surprising accuracy and lighted the cigar Anderson handed him as Roberts returned. Escorted by the little politician, David proudly entered Blackburn's store to exercise for the first

time the highest privilege of a free and untrammeled democracy. He had no trouble marking his ballot, and smiled shrewdly as he saw the official to whom he handed it squeeze the folded edges enough to let Roberts see the big, black cross-mark in the circle under the rooster. David joined the crowd in the front of the store with a feeling that he was not only a man at last, but something of a politician as well. He had discovered that he had a commodity for which there was at least an annual market, and resolved to make the most of it in future.

Trade was brisk at Blackburn's store. David saw several shelves piled high with large, yellow-labeled bottles. Every few minutes a clerk would take one from the shelf and hand it to a customer, receiving in exchange a dollar bill or a handful of silver. David edged toward the shelf to study the printing on the label. "Cure-e-na" he read, in bold, black letters.

"That must be right good medicine," he remarked, affably. "Yo' seems to be sellin' a heap of it."

"Can't sell nothin' else since the county went dry," responded the clerk with a wink that was lost on David. The semi-official confirmation of his mother's judgment of the virtues of "Cure-e-na" convinced David that he had driven a shrewd bargain indeed. As he walked slowly out of the store an old man staggered against him.

"Whee!" exclaimed the unsteady one, whom David recognized as "Uncle Billy" Baker, an itinerant merchant known from one end of the county to the other. "Whee! I'm goin' to vote the Democrat ticket. Lem Roberts gi' me twenty-five dollars. Whee!"

As Uncle Billy staggered past him, David noticed that the peddler was clutching a roll of money. "Doggone it, I might 'a' had that much myself—leastways ten dollars—ef Ma hadn't 'a' told Mr. Roberts I was goin' to vote Democrat anyhow," thought David as he regretfully threw the stump of his cigar into the gutter and turned his face homeward. As he passed the blacksmith shop, he heard Roberts explaining something to a group of workers.

"I did it for the moral effect," Roberts was saying. "You know how talkative Uncle Billy is when he's full? Well, the Republicans were circulating a report that we didn't have any money left—they were trying to get the stragglers cheap. I knew Uncle Billy'd tell everyone what we paid him, and we'd get all the late comers. But don't any of you fellows offer any such price—ten dollars is the limit."

As David trudged the ten miles to the hillside cabin he wondered how he would account to his mother for the six bottles of "Cure-e-na" that Anderson had promised to send up. By the time he came within sight of the light in the kitchen window he had decided that the best plan would be to say nothing about it at all and let his mother think what she pleased when the medicine arrived. "Maybe she'll think some one's givin' it to us fur a present," he thought.

"How's Pappy to-night?" was his first question as he entered the kitchen.

"He's been right porely ag'in to-day," replied his mother, setting the supper on the table before him. "Did yo' vote the way I tol' yo' to, Davy?"

She scanned her son's face closely as she asked the question. David, his mouth full of corn-bread, nodded affirmatively. "Right under the rooster, Ma, at the top o' the Democrat ticket," he said, after he had swallowed. His manner was so perfectly guileless that his mother's last fear was allayed. That night she offered a prayer of thanksgiving that her son had been kept out of temptation.

IV

"Got a box here fur yo' f'm Blackburn's said a neighbor, pulling up his horses in front of the Ferguson home the next morning, as he lifted a big wooden case from his wagon. "Whar'll I put it?"

"Back in the barn," said Martha. She had decided on the empty feed-box as the best place in which to conceal the "Cure-e-na." When the wagon had driven on, she pried the cover off the box and gazed at its contents in surprise.

"They've give me the wrong box," was her first thought. She counted the bottles again. There were certainly twelve of them. "I reckon Lem Roberts has got some o' the milk o' human kindness in him, after all," she mused, coming to the conclusion that the politician had been better than his word. Carefully taking one bottle from the case, she packed the rest with corn-husks to keep it from freezing and went back to the house, to study the directions on the yellow label. She noted with satisfaction the legend "Guaranteed under the U. S. Pure Food and Drug Act."

"Dose for an adult, one to five tablespoonfuls, repeated as often as desired," was the way the instructions read. "I reckon I'll give Andrew two tablespoonfuls to start with," she said. Measuring the precious medicine carefully into a cracked teacup, she concealed the bottle with its tell-tale label behind the pickle jar in the pantry and went into the little room.

"This mis'ry in my back is the wu'st I've had yet," said her husband, as she came in.

"I got somethin' here 't 'll cure yo,' Andrew," replied Martha, advancing toward the bed.

"What is it? Thoroughwort tea?" asked the sick man.

"It's some stuff Mis' Blackburn sent up," said Martha, not daring to arouse her husband's prejudice against "doctor's medicine" and salving her conscience with the half-truth.

Andrew sniffed at the cup. "Smells good," he said. He drained it. "Tastes good, too. I aint had a drink—" he caught himself quickly—"I aint had nothin' like that in a long time." He glanced at his wife to see if she had noticed the slip of his tongue, but she was too thankful that he had taken the medicine without more of a fuss, to note his words carefully. "Got any more of it?" he asked after a minute.

"Thar's some more in the bottle," she admitted, "but yo' better not take too much to onct."

"I reckon a little mite wouldn't hurt me none," pleaded the sick man.

"All right, I'll give yo' another dose," replied Martha, remembering that the directions stated that five tablespoonfuls could be taken with impunity. She measured three more into the cup and brought it back to the little room. Already a faint flush was noticeable on the invalid's face. He took the second dose eagerly and fell back on the pillow with a sigh of contentment.

"I b'lieve that's just what I needed," he said, speaking rapidly. Half an hour later he was asleep.

"'D anyone bring yo' anything f'm the store to-day, Ma?" asked David, when he reached home that evening.

"Some truck I sent fur," she answered, trembling lest his curiosity lead her into a false statement.

"Didn't send yo' nothin' yo' wa'n't lookin' fur, did they?"

Martha's relief at the form the question took made her unsuspicious of the motive for its asking. "No, on'y what I was expectin'," she replied, calmly.

David ate his supper in silence, pondering deeply. "How's Pappy?" he asked, as he pushed his chair back from the table.

"He's feelin' a lot better, 'pears like," was his mother's answer. "He's been sleepin' most all day, an' he 'lowed he didn't feel the mis'ry in his back like de did yestiddy."

"Marthy," came the voice from the little room. "Aint yo' got no more o' that stuff?"

"I'll git yo' some right away, Andrew," replied his wife, as she opened the pantry door.

"What's that Pappy's takin'?" asked David, peeking over his mother's shoulder and catching a glimpse of the yellow "Cure-e-na" label in the dim light of the pantry.

"Somethin' Mis' Blackburn sent up," she answered. David felt a sense of relief. Evidently his mother had taken the medicine as a gift from her friend, the storekeeper's wife. He smoked his pipe in silence; then he went to bed and to a dreamless sleep.

Andrew Ferguson began to show the effects of "Cure-e-na" in a way that convinced Martha that the medicine had, indeed, wonderful curative powers. The following morning he called for water, of which he drank a whole dipperful. Then he asked for some

more of "Mis' Blackburn's medicine." Martha gave him a carefully measured dose, and followed with another a little later.

"I b'lieve I'll git up, Marthy," said Andrew, in mid-forenoon. He felt the "mis'ry" in his back as his wife helped him out of bed, but it did not seem nearly as important as it had a couple of days before. He was dizzy as he stumbled into the kitchen, but Martha's heart sang jubilantly. Her housework done, she went out to feed the chickens and the scrawny pig. As the door closed behind her, Andrew peered craftily about the room. No bottle was in sight. He rose painfully and hobbled to the pantry. Groping about the shelves he found the bottle of Cure-e-na.

When Martha came in again her husband welcomed her effusely, not to say gaily. His eyes were bright; his face was flushed; and his tongue, though thick, wagged volubly. "Good shtuf," he exclaimed, raising from his chair, and attempting to embrace his astonished wife. "Mish' Blackburn's good frien'. Yo'r good frien'. Feelin' better'n I been sence—sence—sence long-time." He took a couple of staggering steps toward Martha, waving his arms and uttering a joyous whoop as he clutched at her sleeve. Martha, terrified, seized him and kept him from falling. As she did so, the empty "Cure-e-na" bottle caught her eye. With agonizing fear in her heart, she helped her husband into the little room. He fell back on the bed and was snoring before she relaxed her hold.

Terrified, Martha tried to remember all she had ever heard about antidotes for poison. An overdose of such powerful medicine as "Cure-e-na" had proved itself to be might easily be fatal. Some one, she remembered, had told her that warm salt water was a sovereign remedy. She pulled the tea-kettle over to the front of the stove, emptied a double handful of salt into the china pitcher, and filled it from the kettle. Rousing her husband with difficulty, she poured down his throat cupful after cupful of the nauseating mixture. Its efficiency was quickly apparent; and it was a pale, sweating Andrew who dropped back on the pillow and fell into the sleep of pure exhaustion when the ordeal was over.

All the long afternoon Martha watched over her husband, her fear diminishing as she noted his regular breathing, and vanishing entirely when he awoke, soon after dark, and called clamorously for food.

V

Whetner from the stimulating effect of the "Cure-e-na" or from the general cleaning-out of his system by the emetic, Andrew did seem to improve as the weeks went on. He was more cheerful, at any rate. Martha found a new hiding-place for the previous bottles as she brought them in, one by one, from the feed-box, but her husband showed no further disposition to take more than the regular two tablespoonfuls which she doled out to him several times a day.

One snowy night, after winter had fairly set in, Uncle Billy Baker knocked at the kitchen door and asked permission to stable his horse and wagon in the empty barn for the night.

"Yo' kin come in an' sleep in the kitchen, ef yo' want to," said Martha.

"No. I'll sleep in the wagon, same's I always do," replied the peddler.

When Martha went out after breakfast to feed the pig, she found the wagon still in the barn. Stertorous rumblings from its interior told her that Uncle Billy was still asleep. She seized the wheel and rattled the vehicle vigorously. "Wake up, Uncle Billy—it's long past sun-up," she cried.

It was the work of several minutes to arouse the old peddler. When at last he emerged, he was disheveled and his eyes were bloodshot. He swayed a little as he contemplated Martha solemnly. Then without a word, he staggered out to the pump, filled the bucket and plunged his head into the icy water. Twice he drained the big dipper that hung at the pump-side before he spoke. Then he turned to Martha, who was watching him with amazement from the barn door.

"I reckon I owe yo' 'bout a dollar, Mis' Ferguson," he said thickly, digging a roll of money from his trousers pocket.

"I didn't 'low to make no charge fur the use o' the barn," replied Martha.

"'Taint that," said Uncle Billy, "but I must 'a' drank the hull o' one o' them bottles in the feed box. I was lookin' fur oats when I found it, an' as I was all out o' licker an' layin' out to git some when I got down to the river, I—"

"Licker!" interrupted Martha, in genuine alarm. "Oh, Uncle Billy, come in the house, quick. Yo'r pizened! That's Andrew's medicine!"

"Pizened?" Uncle Billy echoed, as his features spread into a sickly grin. "By Cure-e-na? Not me! I've drank too much o' that stuff before. Taint as good whisky as they sell on the flatboats off Po'tsmo'th, but it'll give a feller a mighty good jag. Golly, how my head aches." He pressed his hands to his temples while Martha stared, trying to understand the import of his words. As the horrifying truth dawned upon her, she sought in vain to deny it:

"Yo' don't mean to tell me, Billy Baker, that this 'Cure-e-na's' got whisky in it?" she demanded.

"Taint got much o' anything else in it, I reckon," replied Uucle Billy. "That's why they sells so much of it in dry counties."

Martha wrung her hands in agony of soul. The weight that had been lifted from her on election day descended again with doubly-depressing force. She opened the feed-box and counted the bottles that remained. There were seven of them.

"I'll give you seventy-five cents a bottle fur what yo' got left," said Uncle Billy, as he backed his wagon out of the barn.

"Thar'd be a cu'se on the money ef I took it," replied Martha. " 'Woe unto him who giveth his neighbor drink,' " she quoted solemnly, as Uncle Billy drove away, swaying unsteadily on the wagon seat. As the peddler disappeared, Martha reached a decision. Taking the precious bottles by their necks she smashed them, one by one, on the grindstone by the barn door. The tinkling of the shattered glass sounded in her ears like a musical accompaniment to some sacrificial rite, while the sight of the flowing "Cure-e-na" had a vague suggestion of something Biblical, she could not tell exactly what. As she cast from her the last bottle-neck, its cork still sealed in place, she shuddered and turned away.

"It's God A'mighty's jedgment on me," she said. "I lis'ened to the voice o' Satan an' now my punishment's come." But Providence had yet more to mete out.

Picking up a newspaper Uncle Billy had dropped, she turned dispiritedly toward the house.

"Got any more o' that stuff o' Mis' Blackburn's, Marthy?" asked her husband as she entered.

"It's all gone, Andrew," she replied, determining to add the fragments of the bottle she had hidden under the sink to the pile by the grindstone.

"Better ask her to send yo' up some more," said her husband. "'Pears like 't was doin' me a pow'ful sight o' good."

Martha sat quietly until Andrew dozed again. Then she looked at the paper in her hand, the latest issue of the county-seat weekly. She scanned the headlines carelessly. One caught her eye.

"Vote-Sellers Disfranchised," it read.

Moving closer to the window, she read the item eagerly. With the curt brevity of the rural press, facts of momentous import had been crowded into the smallest possible compass. It read:

> Judge Cameron summoned a special grand jury last Monday and directed them to investigate the purchase and sale of votes in the county. Several politicians who bought votes at the last election have given evidence, on which indictments have been returned against more than two hundred persons, at the hour of going to press. It is understood that some two thousand persons, including some of our most prominent citizens, will be involved. Over a hundred have been arraigned and pleaded guilty to selling their votes. Judge Cameron fined each of them $5 and sentenced them to six months in the work-house and disfranchisement for five years, suspending the work-house sentence. In another part of the paper will be found Judge Cameron's

proclamation calling on all persons who have knowledge of the purchase or sale of votes in the county to appear before him at the court-house in Unionville. He says he will impose the same penalty on all who confess, but will deal rigorously with those who attempt to escape the consequences of their crime.

The paper shook in Martha's hands so she could hardly spell out the words, as the import of the item gradually unfolded itself to her. Disfranchisement! The word held her fascinated. She turned her eyes to it again, spelling it out, letter by letter. It had a terrifying aspect. She had heard that hanging had been abolished in favor of some new-fangled method of putting criminals to death, and she shuddered again. She read the sentence over. No, it would not be a death-penalty, for it was for five years. There was a Bible word that sounded something like it, she was sure. Now she remembered—it was *chastisement*. And chastisement, she knew, meant punishment—the fearful punishment that an angry God meted out to those who disobeyed His commands. She groaned aloud. The sound awoke the sick man in the middle room.

"What's the matter, Marthy?" asked the invalid.

"What does d-i-s-f-r-a-n-c-h-i-s-e-m-e-n-t mean?" she asked, spelling the word out slowly.

"I don't know," replied Andrew. "Never heard it before, that I kin remember. What yo' want to know fur?"

"I jest seen it in the paper," said Martha, rocking to and fro in terror, as she thought of the awful consequences of what she had done.

VI

By the time David returned from the woods, her resolution was taken. No other thought occurred to her but that she must take the consequences of her sin, but she could not bring herself to make oral confession to her husband and son. The evening was broken by the fitful complaints of the sick man, who, deprived of the stimulant to which he had become accustomed, tossed uneasily on his bed. After David had gone upstairs and Andrew had finally composed himself to sleep, Martha softly closed the door of the little room and took from the shelf a treasured stub of lead pencil and a scrap of wrapping paper. For an hour she labored in the toilsome effort of unaccustomed writing. Then, moving swiftly, she slipped into the damp "best room," and took her Sunday dress from its hook.

A full moon lighted the snow-covered landscape as Martha, her black skirt pinned up to keep it dry and her gray shawl thrown over her old-fashioned bonnet, slipped out of the house and turned up the hill road. Unionville, she knew, lay twenty-four miles to the west. She ought to reach it by sun-up, she thought, though she had not been over the hill road in twenty years. As she plodded along between the frozen ruts, the awful word *disfranchisement*, danced before her. She had given up speculating as to what form of punishment it might be. She only knew she had earned it and was going to take it.

It was hard work for old bones, the long, steep climb up the hill. She paused, breathless, at the summit, and shivered as a cold wind struck her thin clothing. The descent into the valley was easier, but her feet began to ache and her hands grew numb. As she passed through a sleeping hamlet by the creek, dogs bayed at her from door-yards. Once she slipped on an icy spot and fell heavily, tearing her skirt and jarring her so she could hardly rise. When she got to her feet she found one knee was bruised and lame. With never a thought of turning back, she limped and hobbled on. She had no idea of the time nor of the distance she had come. She did not even ask her God for mercy, but once she paused and offered a prayer of thanks that it was she, and not Davy, who was the guilty one.

A slow-moving ox-team overtook her just as the eastern sky began to lighten with approaching dawn.

"Goin' fur, ma'am?" asked the driver, as he drew up alongside.

"Over to Unionville," she replied. "Is it fur?"

"Matter o' ten miles," responded the driver. "Better climb in an' I'll give yo' a lift. I'm goin' most thar myself."

Martha clambered into the bed of the springless wagon, and in spite of its jolting soon fell asleep on a pile of sacks. She was awakened by the voice of the driver.

"Unionville's right over that-a-way, ma'am," he said, pointing. "Yo'll have plenty o' comp'ny rest o' the way. 'Taint but a mile or so."

As Martha stood up in the wagon she saw that the road was filled with a strange procession that cast long shadows ahead of it as it moved westward. Dozens of mud-spattered buggies and scores of men on horseback were moving at varying speeds toward the county-seat. Two or three ox-teams hugged the side of the road to let the faster-moving vehicles pass. Half a dozen men in a big farm wagon were passing a bottle of whisky from one to the other. Every vehicle was filled to its capacity and there were still more walking.

"Goin' to confession, sister?" shouted one of the men in the big wagon as they passed her, and his companions laughed boisterously, as at some rural joke.

"Whar be they all a-goin'?" she asked the ox-driver.

"Bound fur Judge Cameron's co't, most of 'em, to plead guilty to sellin' their votes," was the reply, as Martha clambered out of the vehicle and joined the hurrying throng, augmented by fresh arrivals from the cross-road. Her bruised knee was stiff, but she could limp along without falling.

As she reached the center of the village the scene was even more strange than the procession on the highway. Massed three or four deep about the court-house were the buggies and saddle-horses of penitents who had come from every corner of the county to own up to selling their votes, hoping thus to escape the dire penalties at which the judge had as yet barely hinted, that awaited those who strove to evade the clutches of the law. In front of the court-house a crowd that numbered hundreds was already gathered, while the sheriff and his deputies were busy forming them into a line that moved slowly up the steps and into the building.

"I aint seen no sech crowd sence camp-meetin' days, when I was a girl," said Martha to a Civil War veteran, who had limped close ahead of her.

"It's some like it," he responded. "It's a revival, but a different kind. There's some holds it's puttin' a stain on the good name o' the county, but I say the stain was in the buyin' an' sellin' o' votes, an' Judge Cameron ought to have a monument fur what he's doin' to clear things up."

Martha wanted to ask the veteran if he were one of the penitents, but the question seemed impertinent. The old soldier noticed her curious glance and answered it.

"I'm goin' to plead guilty, myself," he said. "I took money fur my vote, same as everyone else in my neighborhood did. I know'd 't was wrong when I done it, too, an' that's more'n lots o' the young fellers did. Why, it's got so half o' them wont vote at all 'less they're paid fur it."

Martha wanted to ask him another question—she wanted to know what this fearful punishment of "disfranchisement" might be, that the old soldier was going so bravely to face it. But she shrank from the possible horror of the revelation. Suspense, agonizing as it was, was better than the awful certainty.

The crowd in front of the court-house eyed her curiously as she approached. There was no attempt to stop her as she ascended the steps and made her way to the head of the waiting line, for none guessed that her errand was the same as that of the ever-increasing crowd. A deputy sheriff directed her to an upper floor. Her knees trembled as the deputy opened the door of the little room where Judge Cameron was holding court. She saw the judge seated at a plain table, his clerk on the other side. It did not look at all what she had imagined a court-room to be. Perhaps, she thought, the ordeal would not be so hard, after all. Then she heard the judge's voice, as she took her seat in the single row of chairs against the wall.

"There's no excuse for you, Doctor," she heard the judge say, in low but decisive tones, to a well-dressed man who

was fumbling with his hat on his knees. "You knew it was wrong, and your position in the community is such that you ought to be an example for good. But you've confessed like a man, and I'll not be as severe on you as I might be. I sentence you to pay a fine of fifty dollars and be disfranchised for five years."

Within reach at last of the hand of punishment, hearing that awful sentence pronounced in her very presence, Martha's fortitude gave way at last. Her head reeled, the court-room swam before her dizzy old eyes, and she slipped sideways from her chair, fainting.

"Get some water, quick!" commanded the man who had just been sentenced, addressing a court officer. The deputy ran down stairs and out to the well in the court-house yard. As he turned back with a brimming dipper a spent, foam-flecked horse galloped wearily into the square. Its rider slipped off the animal's back, hardly less exhausted than his steed. He ran toward the door, almost colliding with the water-bearing officer.

"What's your hurry, young fellow?" growled the deputy.

"My mother," he gasped. "Has she—has she—"

"Maybe it's her upstairs. Come on and see," said the officer.

"Simple case of exhaustion, looks like," the doctor was saying as they entered the court-room. Martha opened her eyes and saw her son.

"Davy!" she cried, stretching out her arms. "I done it to keep yo' out o' temptation."

"I don't know what yo' mean, Ma," replied David, as his mother revived under the influence of the stimulating dose the physician had administered. "What did yo' come here fur?"

"I come to plead guilty an' take my punishment," replied Martha, turning toward Judge Cameron. "Be yo' the jedge?" Without waiting for a reply, she plunged into the midst of her confession.

"I sold my boy's vote to Lem Roberts, Jedge," she said, "an' God's cu'se has fallen on me an' mine. I've made my husband a drunkard an' lost my hope o' salvation. But I done it to save my Davy, Jedge, to keep him out o' temptation. I'm an old woman, Jedge, an' I aint got many years to go, but if five years aint enough, I'll try to bear it longer—only let me begin right now."

"Taint so, judge," broke in David. "I sold my vote my own self, to Ben Anderson, fur six bottles o' Cur-e-na."

"That's what Lem Roberts give me," spoke up his mother, turning on him in amazement, "but he sent me twelve."

"I reckon we're both guilty, judge," said David, suddenly realizing the truth. "But I didn't know nothin' about what Ma had done till just now. Yo' might 's well sentence me, now I'm here, but yo' ought to let Ma off easy, 'cayse she done it to make Pappy well."

"This is the most curious situation I have encountered yet," said the judge, silencing them both with a wave of his hand. Then with infinite patience and tact, he drew Martha's story from her. There was a suspicion of moisture behind Judge Cameron's thick spectacles as she told of her faith in the curative powers of the wonderful medicine and her fear that her boy would go wrong. When she told of the sacrifice at the grindstone the judge found it necessary to interrupt the proceedings long enough to take out his bandanna handkerchief and blow the judicial nose vigorously

"I think you have been punished enough, Mrs. Ferguson," he said, after David had told of his own guilt. "I shall have to enter a fine on record, but I will suspend sentence until"—his blue eyes twinkled—"until you do it again."

"As for you, David," he continued, "you have saved the county the expense of a trial by pleading guilty and I shall be lenient with you. You are fined five dollars and you are disfranchised for five years."

"We aint got a cent—" began David, when a cry from Martha interrupted him.

"Five years!" she wailed. "Oh, jedge, let me go in place o' him. I aint got long to live, nohow, an' he's jest a boy. He didn't know he was doin' wrong, jedge. Don't send him away fur five years, jedge. Let me take the dis—disfranchisin' 'stead o' him."

She stumbled badly over the long word as she held out her hands, pleadingly, to the judge. The clerk, across the table found it necessary to turn his back suddenly, while his shoulders shook as though they were suppressing some strong emotion. But if Judge Cameron smiled, even inwardly, an opportune cough concealed it.

"That is impossible, Mrs. Ferguson," he said, gravely. "We can't disfranchise a woman in the present state of the law. Ten years from now, maybe—"

He did not finish the sentence, for Martha had read the hopelessness of her plea in the judge's face, and if David had not caught her she would have fallen again from her chair.

"Here!" cried the judge to the bailiff. "Run down and see if Doc Lee's got away yet. This woman's sick."

The bailiff found the physician waiting in line in the clerk's office to pay his fine. "Looks to me as though she needed rest and food more than anything else, judge," he said, as he revived Martha for the second time.

"You haven't any money, you said?" asked the judge. David shook his head.

"How did you come to town?"

"Ma walked. I rode ho'seback."

"Walked?" echoed the judge. "No wonder she's exhausted. Mr. Sheriff take these people over to the hotel and get them a good breakfast and let Mrs. Ferguson have a chance to rest." He slipped something from his pocket into the deputy's hand. "When she's able to move on, get one of these farmers to take her home. Where do you live?" he asked David.

"Over in Jeff township, 'bout ten mile f'm Rocky Fork."

"What, you aren't Andy Ferguson's son, are you?" asked the judge. "I knew him when I was a boy."

"He's my Pappy," said David, assisting his mother to rise.

"Then you must be Martha Mackenzie," said the judge, turning to her "Don't you remember me? You were my first sweetheart, when I was a first-reader boy in the old Rocky Fork school and you were a big girl, just getting through."

"Yo' aint little Jimmy Cameron?" said Martha, incredulously, a faint flush illuminating her faded cheek. "I remember yo'. Yo' give me a ring made out o' ho'seshoe nails an' Andy Ferguson took it away f'm me—him that I married aft'wa'ds."

"The same Jimmy Cameron," smiled the judge. "How's Andy getting along?"

"He don't reelly seem to git no better," replied Martha.

"Doctor," said Judge Cameron, turning to the physician, "have you paid your fine yet?"

"I was just going to when the bailiff called me in here."

"Well, I want you to go over to Jefferson township and see what's the matter with Andy Ferguson. Put him on his feet if possible. Mr. Clerk enter a suspended sentence on the record for Dr. Lee."

"But my patients are all in the other end of the county and I can't leave them," protested the physician.

"Go on, now, before I increase your fine to a hundred dollars and make you pay every cent of it," retorted the judge.

"But I don't know how we're goin' to git on without Davy, jedge," pleaded Martha. She dared not address the majesty of the law as "Jimmy."

"You mean—" began the judge, somewhat puzzled.

"I mean that five years dis—dis—"

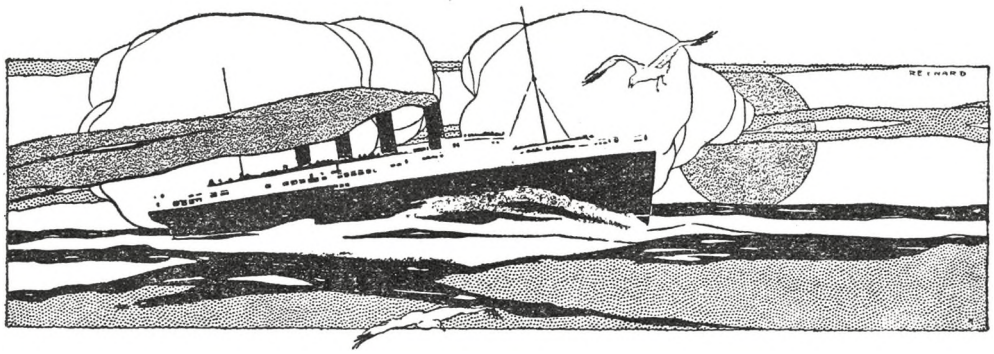
"Don't worry about that, Martha," replied Judge Cameron, solemnly. "For old times' sake I'll let David serve out his sentence at home."

"Thank yo'—Jimmy," faltered Martha, as David led her out of the court room.

Judge Cameron resumed his seat on the bench of justice. He sat there so long without speaking that the clerk wondered.

"There's a crowd waiting to enter their pleas," suggested the clerk.

"So there is. So there is," said the judge. "Bailiff, call the next case."



Mysteries of the Sea

By CULPEPER ZANDTT

WOULD YOU BELIEVE that, in these days, a big steamship could be successfully stolen? Yet it is a fact that such a thing has occurred; and those intimate with recent maritime happenings will realize that the following dramatic story is based on actual events—events of the most tensely exciting character, and which will give you a glimpse of sea-life from a new angle.

No. VIII—THE STEALING OF THE "ROUMANIAN QUEEN"

AN ADVENTURE of Satterlee's in the West Indies had taken him to New York—where he had booked on the *Prinz Joachim*, at the Hamburg-American office, to Kingston. Just why—he could not have explained. In fact, the man generally did things upon the impulse of the moment, in obedience to what he would have described as a "hunch." Three months before he had sailed for Colon upon the Royal Mailer, *Trent*—stumbling into an unlooked-for proposition which increased his bank account by many thousands and gave him plenty of excitement. It was beyond all rules of chance or probability that he should have a similar experience in the same locality—but the spring had been chilly and backward in New York. He wanted to get into a more bearable climate—and he made congenial acquaintances, as usual, before the ship passed Barnegat.

Among these, was a Captain Derringforth, running down to assume command of a six-thousand-ton "tramp" at Kingston as per cabled instructions from her owners. The man's face seemed vaguely familiar to Satterlee, but he couldn't place it. When they were smoking their after-dinner cigars in a secluded corner of the boat-deck, he asked if they'd ever met—and Derringforth searched his own memory for some hint of previous acquaintance.

"I did know a man of your name, Mr. Satterlee—out in Mauritius, and at the Cape. But he was lost on the *Brudiana*—the 'British India' boat that turned up missing a few years ago—and you've too strong a grip in your fist for a dead man. Perhaps he was a relative of yours? Without that mustache I fancy you'd look a good deal like him—family resemblance, I suppose. Is that it? Was John Satterlee related to you?"

"Very closely. That's my name—and I was in Mauritius when the *Brudiana* left port on her last voyage. I suppose it hasn't occurred to you that a man might receive cabled information which

changed his plans at the last moment—or that possibly I left the *Brudiana* just as she weighed anchor, in order to sail on a Union-Castle boat instead? She left for Durban two hours later as you may remember."

"I ought to—because I sailed on her myself."

"And didn't see me aboard, eh? But how about the Messageries boat? It's evident that I wasn't drowned on the *Brudiana,* or I couldn't be here now—so I must have gotten away on something else. That's logical, isn't it?"

"Quite so. An' I'm too glad you're alive to bother my head over the *how* of it! No idea of pryin' into your affairs, ye know—none of my business. Jolly odd, runnin' across you like this—when I've been thinkin' of you as down there in Davy Jones', all this time. The world's small after all. No use my askin' how things are goin' with you—ye look too jolly fit. An' you were said to have all kinds of money, I remember."

"More than I can ever spend. It's the risk and excitement in a bit of adventure that represent the spice of life to me. I like to play the game in any old shape I find it—like to match my wits against the other chap's and win out in spite of anything he can put up. Ordinarily, I'm a law-abiding citizen—but I'm not bigoted upon that point. How about *you,* Derringforth? The last time we met, you were mate of a sugar-boat, but you were shifting into the passenger service to the best of my recollection. And wasn't there an uncle of yours who put you down for a bit of money in his will?"

"Oh, aye—decent old beggar—one of the right sort. He died soon afterward, an' left me ten thousand pounds. I'd just obtained command of an eight-thousand-ton cargo-boat, with accomodations for twenty passengers—in the Burma trade. Owners were puttin' on several new ships—seemed to be doin' well. Their shares were payin' no dividends, but they promised to, very shortly. So, at their suggestion I turned over my ten thousand pounds and took some of their shares—fancied my berth would be secure at all events an' I'd be helpin' to earn dividends for myself. I was an ass, you know—just a plain bally ass! Those sharks have never paid a penny in dividends from that day to this—an' their shares are hawked about for the half of what I gave for mine."

"But how the devil do they manage to keep running their ships, if they're in as bad shape as all that? They're not only running, but you say they're building new boats!"

"Aye, that's one of the reasons they give for payin' nothin'—puttin' the profits in new boats. As for the runnin' along—man dear, you've knowledge enough of shippin' matters to answer that question yourself, have ye not? For example, Banciman and Comp'ny—my owners—take four hundred pounds a year for managin' each steamer of their fleet, an' two an' a half per cent on gross freight. They are directors in a big dock comp'ny—of course, their boats are docked there whenever possible. An they own a three-fourths interest in a patent-pant—used on all their steamers. So you can see how well pleased *they* are to keep their boats runnin'.

"Now, as for the other share-holders: Each of our boats cost about forty-five thousand pounds to build. Of this, Banciman an' Comp'ny—as managin' owners—contribute no more than, say, five thousand. At least thirty-five thousand is contributed by ship-chandlers, butchers, provision-dealers, chemists an' coal-dealers—an' the remainin' five thousand is taken up by private investors with spare cash who know nothin' as to the inside workin's of the proposition. The biggest lot of the share-holders naturally makes a profit on supplyin' the ship with their commodities, so *they* wouldn't raise a howl if the ship never paid a penny. An' the innocent investors—too small a minority to be considered—always hope for better things an' hang on to their shares because they'll lose money if they sell out. They read the published reports of the big comp'nies payin' seven—ten—even twelve per cent dividends, an' see no reason why a well-managed smaller comp'ny shouldn't pay at least five per cent. If it were not for the matters beside competition in deep-water freights, our ships could pay much better than that. But each one of them is charged thousands of pounds, each year, for paint which is never used—also for

similar docking-extras—all of which the owners pocket. And fancy prices for merely average supplies of all kinds—which go to the ship-chandlers and provision-dealers."

"I'd a general idea the proposition amounted to something like that, but I didn't know exactly how it was done. There's some flim-flamming on insurance also, I understand?"

"Rather! It works out like this: The customary insurance in Lloyd's applies only upon total loss—collision, or stranding. If a ship loses five thousand pounds in damage from stress of weather, she recovers nothin' from Lloyd's. So the owners get up 'insurance clubs' among themselves to cover ordinary losses at sea. Even from collision, the damage must amount to eight hundred pounds or more before you can recover from Lloyd's. In these 'clubs,' a deck-loss of two hundred pounds and three hundred in the engine-room would constitute a claim. But there are minor losses constantly occurrin' on which nothin' can be legally collected.

"So the log is faked to show 'em all as occurrin' durin' one voyage. Suppose you're in the Bay of Biscay—you enter in the log. 'Breeze freshenin' to gale—heavy cross-sea runnin'—barometer fallin'.' 'Hurricane—mountainous seas comin' aboard—No. 2 Port Life-Boat an' two ventilators carried away—engines racin' badly—headway eccentric-sheave burst.' An' so on—till the log shows five hundred pounds in damage to have occurred on the last voyage. Captain wants a new three-inch wire cable an' reel—enter in log as 'washed overboard in gale.' Two of the other boats are old—get rid of them, an' enter up in log, the same way. I have myself, in Hartlepool—actually in port, alongside the quay—smashed up old boats with fire-bars. We got new ones, of course. This is all pure swindling, an' the other members of the 'club' are by no means blind to it. But if they protest in any one case, they get no opportunity for tryin' it themselves. Each one thinks he'll come out ahead in the long run—some of them do, of course at the expense of the others.

"Take that matter of patent-paint in which the Bancimans are interested. Whenever a ship touches bottom or scrapes a rock—no matter how lightly—Lloyd's insist upon havin' her docked at the next port in order to see whether their risk has been increased. When she's docked, her bottom is covered with anti-fouling paint. Well—her captain enters in his log that he scraped a rock on the edge of the Scillys—comin' home, an' that settled it. When her cargo's discharged, she goes into Bancimans' dock an' is coated with Banciman's paint—an' young Tod Banciman gets the new motor-car which happened to catch his eye. Gad! What the traveling public don't know about the shippin' business would fill a lib'ry. I knew but little more when I put my ten thousand pounds into Banciman's shares—an' Ted Galloway an' Sandy McPhee were in the same position. They're comin' out to Kingston on my boat as mate an' engineer—with every penny they own tied up in those same shares!"

"How does it happen you're taking charge of her out here? Where are you bound, from Kingston?"

"She's takin' eight thousand tons of Cardiff coal to the Isthmus, unless Banciman has found a better market elsewhere since she cleared. Puttin' in to Kingston for orders—an' to pick me up. I told you of that Rangoon 'half-an'-half boat' I had? Well, I grazed her bottom on the no'th-west ledge of Socotra in the Gulf of Aden, through 'error' in my compass, an' barely got her into a Bombay dock without sinkin'. Banciman suspended me, of course—kept me 'on the beach' for three months, and then gave me a mate's berth on a measly cargo-boat in the African-New York trade. I've been on her for nearly a year—dischargin' at the Bush Terminal when I left. You see, the rule of suspendin' a master after a marine casualty is more Lloyd's idea than the owners'. The underwriters keep a ledger history of every master an' mate an' engineer in the mercantile service: anything plucky or brilliant goes down on one side along with his years of reliable service, an' whatever happens to his ships is entered against it. When a master appears to be unlucky or shows poor judgment, the rates go up on any ship he commands—so it's a question of

pounds an' pence for his owners to suspend him. But a strandin' through 'error' in compass is no evidence of bad navigatin', an' they've given me a master's berth again, on a temporary collier. They should have done better by me—an' I'm sore against their whole board—but what can I do? I've my living to make—an' a wife to support, God bless her! Banciman cabled me to quit the other boat in New York an' take over the *Roumanian Queen* in Kingston when she put in for orders. Danby is to leave her there an' go to another boat due in Havana."

"Suppose you don't turn up?"

"Then Ted Galloway, the mate, would keep on with her in temporary command, I suppose. He's passed for his master's ticket."

"Didn't you say he invested his money in the Banciman shares, also? And the engineer, McPhee?"

"Aye—both of 'em. Ted put in seven thousand pounds an' Sandy a bit over that."

"Then I should imagine they might be willing to back you up in any scheme to get their money back?"

"*Willing?* We've had many a talk over it; they shipped with me for six months, an' we've tried our blamedest to think up some way of breakin' even—gettin' out merely the cash we put in, or two-thirds of it, an' callin' quits. But there is no way. If we sold our shares for about half of what we invested, the board would trace them, an' we'd stand to lose our berths at any moment."

Satterlee was somewhat amused that his friend appeared to sense no hint in his question—but he refrained from making it more pointed just then. He wanted time for consideration. An idea was forming in his brain that here might be a seed of adventure which promised all the excitement a reasonable man could wish, and, if successful, would prove highly remunerative. It was certainly illegal—glaringly so. And yet—the ultimate result would be no more than just, in the broad ethical sense. Here was a firm of swindling ship-owners reaching out for the savings of their own employees in the form of a presumably legitimate investment upon which dividends were promised in a very short time—taking the money with an evident intention of never paying a penny for its use or maintaining the shares at their purchase price—holding the possibility of dismissal over the heads of these helpless share-holders to prevent their selling out. Ethically, any procedure by which the investors might recover their money, intact, seemed no more than fair. And—shifting the shoe to the other foot—if it came to making a profit on the transaction, it would be no more than the owners themselves were doing. Putting it briefly—if it was fair for them to swindle their employees out of hard-saved money and use it to their own advantage, why was it not equally fair for the said employees to swindle those same owners out of anything which might be recovered? Q. E. D.?

Of course, neither maritime nor common law sanctions anything of the sort. What the employer does is usually judged to be right—by the courts—and the employee should submit with the best possible grace. If he attempts to act upon his own crude idea of imitating his employer's methods, the courts hold him to be in the wrong—very much so—and furnish him with board and lodgings not suited to his temperament or requirements. Of course it doesn't invariably work out that way—but the exceptions aren't as noticeable as they should be.

Satterlee made no further reference to the subject until the following evening, when he found a corner upon the boat-deck, where no one could overhear them, and kept the conversation upon general topics until Derringforth's cigar was drawing freely.

"I say, old chap—I've been thinking all the afternoon of those shares in which you and your chums invested your money, and I'll be hanged if I wouldn't make some kind of a play to break even with the Bancimans, were I in your places. In fact, I'll go further than that. I'll stand in and take a hand, if you like."

"Mighty white of you, Satterlee—but I'm blessed if I see any way to go about it. I'm game for anything—but you'll have to 'show me,' as your Missourians say."

"Well, let's consider a bit. This boat of yours, now—you say she's about six thousand tons, gross? That would make her approximately four thousand, net —carrying about nine thousand, deadweight, when she's loaded down to her Plimsoll. And you've something over eight thousand tons of Cardiff coal—worth fifty-five to sixty shillings, I suppose? For this voyage, at least, she'll be painted black—eh?"

"Oh, aye—she's black, an' pretty well streaked with rust, I fancy. Patent-paint she pays for but doesn't get, ye know. An' the Banciman boats aren't o'erwell found, either."

"I suppose that means their names *aren't* in copper letters, screwed on to their stems and sterns—just *painted* on—eh?"

"Precisely. Copper letters would come under the head of 'sinful waste' in old Banciman's mind."

"About how much of a crew—at a rough guess?"

"Oh—nine men for the deck, includin' carpenter an' two bo's'ns. Two assistant engineers, two oilers who act as donkey-men in port, an' six stokers. Cook an' two helpers—chief, an' two room stewards."

"About twenty men and seven petty officers—twenty-seven men to be accounted for in any proposition relating to the ship. And, coming right down to cases, that's about the only serious obstacle to doing most anything you pleased with her. It would require some planning—but not, perhaps, as much as one might think. I know some of the boarding masters alongshore, in Kingston."

"Man—man—what crazy notion have ye in mind? Are ye clean daffy? Ye talk as though ye meant runnin' off with the ship an' cargo!" Satterly calmly lighted a fresh cigar.

"That's exactly what I mean."

"But—but—damn it all, man—that's *piracy!*"

"In a legal sense, it certainly is. What you've been telling me about some of the Banciman methods rather comes under that head too, I think."

"Oh, I say, old chap—if ye were a bit more of a seaman, now! I say—have ye an idea of the fakin' ye'd have to do? The yards an' miles of *fakin'!* Cookin' up this, that an' the other thing, until there's no end to it! An' the chance of bein' caught on each partic'lar bit of it? Faith! I was just fool enough to think over the possibility of such a thing—runnin' across from the Ivory Coast. Oh, I'll not deny it tempted me! But, none but crazy men would attempt it!"

"Ever hear of the *Ferret* case—twenty years ago? She loaded coal for a Mediterranean port, and cleared with two passengers—a broker's clerk and the captain's wife. In the Bay, they chucked over some deck-rubbish and a couple of life-preservers, painted a new name on her fore and aft, cut a new name into her bell, signed on the crew again under fresh articles—and went down to Rio. Sold their coal and bought coffee, giving drafts on owner's account. Went across to the Cape, where they sold the coffee. Went around to Mauritius in ballast and loaded sugar for Melbourne. They were finally caught in Sydney, where the captain, mate and clerk got five years each—*but they cleaned up over two hundred thousand pounds—and never disgorged a penny of it.*

"The thing has been done since then, two or three times. Once, to my knowledge, the crowd got away with it. Their ship was sold under another name before any suspicion was aroused and Bank of England notes for her full insurance were sent anonymously by registered post to the Underwriters some months afterward. Of course, there was much less risk in that affair than if they'd tried to do business with her. This proposition appears to present insuperable difficulties at first glance—though less so with a cargo-boat than one in the mail and passenger service. But when you tackle them, one by one, it's ridiculous to find how easily they may be overcome."

Derringforth smoked in silence for several moments. In his exasperation at the way his little inheritance had been appropriated upon representations which his swindling owners had no intention of making good, he *had* considered the proposition. And back in his brain was the insistent belief that such a thing *might* be done, under favorable

circumstances. Of course detection meant certain imprisonment and as certain an end to his career as master. On the other hand, if his identity were not too definitely implicated—and they managed to pull it off—?

"You say the accountin' for those twenty-seven men would be the most serious obstacle—do you care to make any suggestion on that point? Any idea how you might get around it?"

"Well, let me think a bit. The signing-on of that old crew was a fatal mistake in the *Ferret* case. Some of 'em got ashore and blabbed when they were drunk—naturally. Suppose it worked out something like this: Your boat'll be lying pretty well out in Kingston harbor—half-way to Port Royal—and the master who brought her over wont know just how long he may have to wait for you. Suppose you don't show up when the *Prinz Joachim* gets in? He'll naturally suppose you missed her and are coming down on the next United Fruit boat to Port Antonio—say two or three days at least. He'll be ashore most of that time enjoying himself, of course—or, if he crosses at once to Santiago and Havana, the mate will.

"Suppose a bum-boat drops alongside, the first evening, and passes up a few bottles of rum with a hint that there's to be a lively dance over back of the town, next night, with a lot of handsome quadroons for partners? *Some* of the crew are sure to ask the mate for shore-leave in the afternoon. Suppose he acts as if he were sore at the owners and captain—says the whole crew can go to the devil for all *he* cares—if they signal their own boat from the shore and get back aboard by sunrise, before the 'old man' returns, or hears of it? With that sort of inducement ahead of them, how many do you suppose would stay aboard that night? In that climate? With the lights of Kingston twinkling across the water and faint echoes of music? I'll bet a hundred dollars the mate and engineer would be the only ones left! Yes, I guess that would be almost certain to work—and I know a man who'd get the entire lot so drunk they'd be dead to the world for a good forty-eight hours. Now let's consider Danby: what sort of a chap is he? Middle-aged man with a lot of experience as master?"

"No, he's not over thirty; this is his first command. He passed for his ticket in January. Nephew of a 'swell' that Banciman is rather keen on pleasin'."

"Then there are two things he'll *not* do. He'll not leave the boat until you come, if possible—and he wont question anything you may suggest. There's sure to be a lot of Banciman's patent-paint aboard. If you were to hint, the day before sailing, that you expect to pick up a more valuable return cargo in Progreso or New Orleans and think a decent appearance might favorably impress the shippers, he'd consider it reasonable enough to start the men painting ship before she left, beginning at the stem and stern. Then you want to run up and spend the night with friends in Mandeville, leaving him to clear the ship in his own name, next morning, in case you're delayed. Tell him to leave the 'Register' and 'Clearance' with Galloway at the boat-landing, so that it'll take you but ten minutes to step into the Custom House and have your name endorsed upon them as the succeeding master. Of course you'll forget to do that. He will have regularly cleared the ship in his own name, and have left on the morning train for the Santiago boat at Port Antonio. As far as actual records go, there will be no proof that you sailed on the ship at all. And it wont do *him* any harm, because he'll be in command of another boat at Havana—you say Galloway takes her over if you don't show up. So it's merely neglect upon your or his part to register as Commander at the last moment before sailing—no very serious matter—probably a small fine or a mere reprimand at the worst."

"By Jove, old chap—that's pretty cleverly worked out. An' what'll ye be doin' about my drunken crew, the while?"

"In the afternoon, before they come ashore, you or I will be shipping a fresh crew at the Commissioner's office—for a steamer we've chartered, due to arrive in ballast that night."

"Tut, tut man! Who ever heard of signin'-on a crew for a ship that's not in port!"

"I don't know and don't care! I'm simply gambling that it *can* be done—this way: I've a personal friend on the governor's staff. Suppose you shave off your beard and I introduce you as 'Captain Shadway.' Tell him you've found an exceptional crew if you can only *hold* 'em till your boat arrives. Once signed-on, the boarding master'll be responsible for them, and you can arrest 'em if they desert. If my friend goes to the Commissioner with you, he'll waive formalities to accommodate one of the staff. Bring him a nice box of cigars next day, to show your appreciation."

"Why not come out flat-footed, next morning, and say my crew has deserted—then ship a fresh crew regularly?"

"Because you'd have the police rooting out your deserters from the dance-halls and dives—which is the very last thing you want. Because you want the fresh crew shipped under the ship's and your own new name—which would be impossible in the other case. When no such boat is reported as having arrived, your boarding master can say you didn't show up and gave him no instructions, so he let the men go. That's exactly what would happen if your expected ship turned up missing, you know—foundered after leaving her last port."

"Faith—you're not far out. But how about the old crew—when they sober-up?"

"The boarding master who soused them at the dance must agree to give each man fifty dollars and ship him on some good boat within a few weeks if he keeps his mouth shut. By the time they sober-up, that boarding master will have the lot pretty well scattered—some at Montego Bay—some at Port Antonio—some across in Sanitago. Then, if the few remaining ones say anything about being left by the *Roumanian Queen*, it will merely look as if she cleared a bit short-handed, and give all the more color to any disaster which may be reported concerning her."

"Well—go on. You send the new crew aboard, the same night the old one comes ashore. What then?"

"By evening, there'll be a good deal of fresh paint on the boat's hull—for'ard and aft. The minute the crew get away, Galloway and McPhee will be over the side on the scaffolding, painting out her name on the stem and stern—then upon the boats and life-preservers, excepting only the raft on the deck-house, one boat and a few life-preservers which you'll cover with tarpaulins, to be thrown overboard afterward. In Santiago, on the way down, we'll pick up a second-hand ship's bell with the new name cut into it—that'll be substituted for the other one, and a new 'builders' plate' will be screwed up in place of the old one in the engine-room—also, a new plate on the capstan. We've time enough to get all three before we reach Kingston. While Galloway and McPhee are at work, you and I will be faking the names in the framed certificates which I presume are screwed up in the pilot-house, as usual. At any stationer's we can get chemicals for removing ink without destroying the surface of the paper. It will be merely necessary to change the names in the 'Free-Board Certificate,' the 'Suez Certificate,' the regular and 'Official Logs.' As we'll be trading on 'owner's account,' we'll need no 'Charter Party' and no 'Victualling Bill,' I suppose—as a Banciman cargo-boat would take nothing from bonded stores. Carrying no passengers, it wouldn't be necessary."

"We'll be rather close to Port Royal goin' out, y'know. There'll be remarks passed about her name bein' painted over."

"No, I don't think so. The channel is farther out from the Point than it looks, and we'll report our number in the flag code as we pass. We'll have a couple of men over the side, painting, as we go by—that's a self-evident reason for the name being covered up. The supposition is that we'll letter it on again as soon as the black paint is dry—and we're reporting quite openly by flags—no attempt at concealment. The bo's'n, who bends on the flags as we give him the number, will have no access to Lloyd's Register—*he'll* never know what ship the letters stand for—or even remember what flags they were, two hours afterward."

There were several moments of silence. Derringforth was testing the proposition this way and that, in search of weak points. According to the law

of probability, there *were* none. The plan *might* balk and tangle up at any point—very true—but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, it *wouldn't*.

"Look here, Satterlee—aren't you putting an awful lot of confidence in that boarding master?"

"In the first place, I once saved his life. Next—I could have him imprisoned for twenty years if I cared to tell what I know about him and his right-hand man—and I've always paid them liberally for whatever services I've needed. But the point which most impresses them is that they believe me to be an 'Obeah Man.' I was told a few things by an old Voodoo woman in Martinique, once, which have been of great service to me in every part of the West Indies. Those two mulattoes are thoroughly convinced it's not possible to double-cross me without my knowledge—and what I might do to them is something no Jamaica negro would risk for any amount of money."

"Hmph! I'm beginning to think you're about the only man in this part of the world who could put through a proposition like this with any chance of success."

"Oh, that's going too far! All the circumstances are very much in your favor. But I happen to be in rather a good position to help you out—and I've enough sporting blood to enjoy seeing you put one over on swindlers like the Bancimans."

On Wednesday morning, the *Prinz Joachim* stopped at Fortune Island in the Bahamas to pick up the colored 'longshoremen required to handle her cargo at the West Indian ports—and her genial captain made good his promise of landing his Santiago passengers by noon on Thursday. Having but a few hours in port, Satterlee was unable to have the "bell" and "plates" lettered in time to bring them aboard, but the ship-chandlers who undertook the job promised to forward them by the Port Antonio boat leaving next morning, so they would be delivered in Kingston within forty-eight hours. And, before leaving Santiago, Derringforth mailed a letter to Galloway, mate of the *Roumanian Queen*, asking him to bring McPhee ashore when they reached port and call at the Myrtle Bank Hotel without mentioning to the captain that his successor was in Kingston. This letter, addressed upon a typewriter, was sent in care of the ship's agents—and within six hours after her arrival, two days later, the mate and engineer were locked in Satterlee's room at the hotel where, after sounding them cautiously, the proposition was laid before them. They appreciated the risk involved—thoroughly. But they were men in the prime of life, getting on to the years where one should have made a little money if he is ever going to make it, and, testing Satterlee's details, point by point, they gradually became enthusiastic. Then a look of supreme disgust suddenly appeared in the mate's face.

"Oh, I say! We're forgetting all about the women!'

"*Women! What* women?"

"Miss Cadbury—she's the sister of Tod Banciman's pal. And the stewardess they signed-on to look after her."

"For the love of Mike, how far are they going with you?"

"Colon, anyhow—and back again, if we load for a home port. Even if we load Mediterranean, they're to stick with us."

"Hmph! That'll make a pretty mess of complications! We might jolly up *one* of them until she lost track of what was being done, but two is quite another matter. You never can tell what a woman is going to do or how she'll look at a proposition—and the element of jealousy is something which has never been handled yet. Suppose both of them happened to get stuck on one of us? That stewardess is ready to eat out of Cap'n Danby's hand, now—and he's promised to show the two of 'em around this place every day we're in port."

"Bully! That removes the only real difficulty with them. If they'd happened to be rather soft on Galloway or McPhee, they'd stick to the boat no matter what happened. But they know Danby's going to leave, here—and they'll feel more as if they were among strangers when the ship clears without him." They looked at Satterlee in complete bewilderment. At first thought, the

presence of the women aboard seemed to render the whole proposition impossibly dangerous—and neither of the others could see how Satterlee proposed to eliminate the risk.

"That's all true enough, old chap—but if you think they'll transfer with him to that other boat at Havana, you're quite mistaken. She's taking cotton an' tobacco to Buenos Aires—expects to load wheat there for India. It's one thing to let a couple of youngish women run out an' home on a boat that's returnin' directly—but it's another matter to have 'em kitin' all over the seven seas where their folks can't keep track of 'em."

"Oh, I'd no idea of their leaving the ship with Danby—*it's the wishing they could, with propriety,* that I'm counting upon. Look here, you chaps: the *Roumanian Queen* is going to *founder,* a few hours out of Kingston, isn't she? And women are sent away in the first boat, aren't they? If there's a noise like a big explosion from somewhere below, and they're hustled into a boat at midnight, with their dunnage and a third mate, you couldn't have much better proof of her going down, could you?"

"By gad! Satterlee, you're a corker!"

"Hold on a bit! There's one little complication, though! That mate, and the couple of men to row the boat? When they get ashore, they're bound to let out that the whole crew were signed on here in Kingston—*for a ship of another name.* Bimeby, some one is going to think it's kinda funny. The more they inquire, the fishier the thing's goin' to look."

"Well, there's a way of getting around that—and it will help us in the other direction, too. Galloway can take ashore the *Roumanian Queen's* regular 'Articles' the morning she clears—telling Danby he's shy a third mate and two men—afraid they're sleeping off a drunk and can't be found. He'll wait until the last minute, when Derringforth shows up to go aboard. The boarding master'll have those three men all ready to sign-on—and Galloway'll ship 'em in a perfectly open and regular way. On board, he'll put the men in the deck-watch and the mate in the other. When the explosion occurs, he's below in his bunk. Galloway'll rout him out to go in the boat and take charge of the women. In the darkness and confusion, he'll be darned glad of the chance. And when those men get ashore, their stories will give color to whatever any of the old crew may tell about being left behind. Plain case of 'souse' with the old crew—captain had to fill their places at the last moment or go out short-handed. The new men wont know how many were shipped besides themselves. The old crew—being considerably scattered—wont know how many of *them* were left ashore. The captain's side of the story is entirely plausible and reasonable all the way through and every one of the shore-crowd will be glad they're alive."

"That's right—plausible all through. But say, what sort of stories will your new crew tell in the next port—about that mix-up, and the getting rid of the women?"

"There's a slight element of risk in that—but only a slight one. Your crew will get no shore leave, for one thing, at that first port—and sailors take things pretty much as they come, without bothering their heads concerning this incident or that. Then again, they'll all come aboard half-full in Kingston—just about pickled—the boarding master'll see to that. Most of 'em wont notice the women at all; no one but the stewards and mates'll be quite sure they're not merely seeing the captain off—we'll make it well toward sunset when we leave. Aside from that, all stewards and mates know the master of a cargo-boat hates the responsibility of carrying women passengers and would take it for granted, when they found nothing serious was the matter, that the master availed himself of a good excuse for getting rid of them—within easy rowing distance of land.

"The real situation will be about like this: Those men will be new to the ship and somewhat confused, from whisky and their recent experiences in port. Hardly one of them will be quite clear next morning just what did happen—and they'll be on the steamer *Carlton Hall.* If three or four months later they read in some newspaper about the foundering of the *Roumanian Queen,*

the name will convey no direct association to them. *Their* ship was built by Rokenall & Co., Stockton-on-Tees, in 1899. There's no such boat afloat, now—but one of that name and the *Roumanian Queen's* tonnage *was* built by that company in that year. She's now the *Firdunzi*—but purchasers of second-hand tonnage frequently change back to a boat's original name—and anyone looking up the *Carlton Hall* in Lloyd's would find no proof that she hadn't been recently purchased and shifted back to her old 'Register.'"

"Oh, that's done every day. Pretty cute idea, to think of workin' out the scheme that way. I say, though—suppose one of your engineers an' some of the old crew don't care about goin' ashore to that dance? Suppose you find some of 'em aboard when you get outside of Port Royal?"

"Take mighty good care they're sent off in the boat with the women! We'll not screw up that plate in the engine-room or fix the capstan until morning, and they'll have no time to notice the bell."

"Hmph! I pass. You seem to nail every objection."

To describe the events of the next forty-eight hours, concerning the steamer *Roumanian Queen,* would be mostly a repetition of what has been already indicated in Satterlee's planning. Every detail was carried out exactly as it had been arranged—Captain Derringforth shaving off his beard in order that possible subsequent inquiries might disclose an appearance which did not tally with his, as known to the Bancimans. And by the mail steamer which left for Southampton, letters were despatched to the nearest surviving relatives of Galloway and McPhee which, giving no hint of anything likely to occur, kept them from accepting the subsequent reports of their death as conclusive. In Derringforth's case, he cabled his wife to close up their rented house and move to Plymouth without leaving any word in the neighborhood as to where she'd gone—also to be under no anxiety, as he should write her within a month, care General Delivery, Plymouth—the message being signed with his first name only. As the ship actually cleared in Captain Danby's name, it was never positively known who had taken her out.

The supposititious "accident" was the result of considerable thought upon the part of McPhee and Satterlee—who showed a surprising knowledge of marine detail for a landsman. It must be remembered that there were on duty at the time an assistant engineer; an oiler and three stokers—to be hoodwinked sufficiently to make the subsequent proceedings appear such as would naturally occur. And it was Satterlee who suggested that sudden darkness all over the ship would add immensely to the effect. That was all the hint McPhee needed. The dynamos of the lighting circuit were in a bilge-alcove, just off the lower grating—and the valves controlling the sea-cocks were but a dozen feet aft of them. McPhee had fetched aboard with him . couple of cannon fire-crackers, and had taken the precaution of bringing in an ash-can from the stoke-hold—also of connecting-up a six-inch valve to the condenser in such a way that the sea-water discharged into the engine-room when the valve was opened. The ash-can he placed just inside the shaft-alley where it could do no harm to the moving machinery when the cannon-cracker exploded.

The course from Kingston to Colon was approximately S. S. W. ¼-S.—but McPhee ran his engines slowly to warm up, and they didn't lose the Plum Point Light until after two bells, when Galloway came into the wheel-house and apparently found something wrong with the compass, judging by the position of the disappearing light. For nearly two hours longer he made various tests for "deviation" or "error"—during which, the ship boxed the compass three times and drifted toward the shore of Jamaica some twenty miles west of Port Royal. Then they headed off on the Colon track for half an hour.

Just before midnight, when the oiler and assistant engineer were making a locker fast upon the upper grating, McPhee lighted the stems of the two cannon-crackers—put them at the bottom of the ash-can in the shaft-alley—and walked quickly back to the dynamos.

When the explosion came and the boom shook the engine-room with a deafening report—he instantly shut off the motors so that every incandescent aboard faded to a cherry-red and then went out completely. Before the first startled shouts came from different parts of the ship, he opened the sea-cocks and the condenser-valve to their full capacity. Inside of two minutes some of the water trickled through the bulkhead door into the stoke-hold, where, flowing upon live coals among the cinders, it began to fill the place with steam. That was enough for the stokers. They rushed through the pitch-black engine-room, ankle-deep in water, and swarmed up the ladder—preventing the assistant engineer from venturing below. On deck, everything was in confusion—the stokers spreading panic among the watch—but the officers had little difficulty in quieting them to a semblance of order. In less than ten minutes, Miss Cadbury and the stewardess had been roused from their berths, their steamer-trunks carried hastily on deck and stowed in the only life-boat upon which the name *Roumanian Queen* had not been painted out and *in* which the second mate, assistant engineer and three of the old crew had already taken their places with a compass, sextant, cask of water and several tins of biscuits. The engines had stopped—it being supposed that someone had managed to shut off the steam in his flight—but a torrent of water rushing in from somewhere, could be distinctly heard through the engine-room skylight.

Fortune was upon the side of the adventurers, for a light fog had been gathering upon the surface of the ocean. And when the falls were unhooked from the life-boat, it disappeared immediately upon the smooth water—Derringforth shouting after it: "Pull due north—you'll make the shore by daylight!" When the answering voice came faintly from some distance, he stepped along to the engine-room skylight, and shouted down:

"McPhee! Oh-h-h, McPhee! What in hell's the matter down there? Are you hurt?" The chief's voice boomed upward.

"Must ha' been coal-gas in tha bilges, Ah'm thinkin'! Do ye no' let onyone coom below 'til Ah mak' a bit test, Derringforth! Ah'll no' be lightin' onything 'til Ah've sniffed aboot a bit. Stay ye on deck, tha while."

McPhee considered that a foot of water over the lower grating was sufficient for his purpose, and shut off the valves. As it was still some distance below the grate bars, there was a good head of steam in the boilers—and knowing the second mate's boat was by that time some distance away in the fog, he started his engines turning slowly over, which naturally increased the distance with every revolution. In half an hour the dynamos being well above water—he started them up, and the incandescents sprang into life all over the ship. Then he searched for the fragments of the fire-crackers and tossed them into the furnaces—after which he shouted for his assistants and stokers.

Derringforth had been listening intently for the fog signals of approaching steamers, but as long as he heard none, he took the risk of remaining silent with his own whistle. In the confusion after the explosion, he'd ordered the crew to launch the life-raft over the side, and had thrown upon it two life-preservers, with a few old coats—but when reports from the engine-room showed the damage to be apparently not serious, it was left towing at the end of a two-inch line which he presently cast off when no one was looking. Getting two of the hatches open, he set the bo's'n and all of the deck-watch to searching the cargo-space for signs of fire—Galloway relieving the man at the wheel, which left no one else in the pilot-house. And the captain improved this opportunity to screw the framed certificates upon the walls when none of the crew were about to notice or comment upon the proceeding. As the former assistant engineer had gone off in the boat and the new one was attending to the pumps below, McPhee screwed up the faked "builders' plate" without being observed—and Satterlee fixed the capstan while the watch were below or around the after-hatch.

While in Kingston, Satterlee had cabled several of the Brazilian ports for quotations upon Welsh coal, and had

learned of a temporary scarcity at Santos—where the coffee market happened to be lower than it had been in several months. So the newly christened *Carlton Hall* was put about on a course E. S. E. for the windward passage between Tobago and Trinidad—the testing for "deviation," earlier in the night, having so confused the first helmsman that he'd entirely forgotten the original course steered when they left Port Royal.

Satterlee was known aboard as "Mr. Brown"—supercargo for the owners—and Derringforth, as "Captain Shadley." As they steamed along at a comfortable twelve knots, down through the Caribbean and along the coast of Brazil, there was nothing in the ship's appearance or the actions of the people aboard to arouse the least suspicion that the modern, well-found "tramp" was a flaunting example of marine embezzlement. As the steamer approached Santos, three of the four adventurers owned up to an occasional twinge of nervous apprehension, but the affable supercargo, "Mr. Brown," apparently had omitted nerves in his complex organization. On the first day out, he installed a four-strand "grid" of aerials and turned Miss Cadbury's former stateroom into the operating station of a high-powered wireless outfit. Before they rounded Point Galera, on Trinidad, he had caught most of the Caribbean gossip concerning the ill-fated *Roumanian Queen*. The second mate had arrived with the women at Kingston and told his story. Incoming vessels were requested by wireless to search for and report upon the hapless "tramp." Then the life-raft was found, with the old coats wedged in between its slats—also, at some distance, the life-preservers and a steamer-chair. The evidence that she had foundered seemed conclusive—all down the Brazilian coast occasional references were made to her probable accident and fate. To the maritime world, the *Roumanian Queen* was now but a memory; it remained to be seen whether the *Carlton Hall* could make good her claim to respectable existence. The first and most severe test would come when they entered the port of Santos and sold their cargo—the necessary alteration of ship's papers having been left to Satterlee. And the evening before they reached port, he submitted them for their examination.

"There are six documents, gentlemen, which must be taken ashore—and I think they'll pass inspection. Here's the 'Register'—you can't see that any change has been made in the ship's or captain's names unless you take a magnifying glass—and even then, you couldn't swear to it. For that matter, I never yet saw a customs official who made any attempt to verify a ship's 'Register' by comparing it with Lloyd's. Next come the two 'Bills of Health'—one from Cardiff and the other from Kingston. *That* one, we'll be careful *not* to present. Can't see any changes in those either, can you? The 'Manifest' and the 'Clearance' from Cardiff presented no difficulties at all. Fortunately, they were both on good paper. The 'Lights Bill' from Cardiff—omitting the Kingston one—was on cheaper paper, but the blots of ink I left on the names look natural enough, and the document is much cleaner than the average. There is one necessary document missing—and we've got to leave it missing, too—the 'Consular Manifest,' *viséd* by the Brazilian consular agent in Cardiff. Danby got one from the American consul, expecting that we would discharge at Christobal, for the Canal Commission—but that is worthless to us in Brazil. Now, I don't just remember whether there's a fine in Brazil for the omission. How about it, Derringforth?"

"Well, it's a graft proposition, anyhow," answered that officer. "But we'll be soaked for about twenty-five hundred milreis if we haven't it."

"That's about two hundred pounds—and the *Administrador* of customs grabs a third for himself. He's the only man we deal with, isn't he? Suppose you let me go along with you and handle him, Derringforth—will you?"

"Charmed! If we get out of Santos without landing in the carçel, I'll present you with a thousand high-grade cigars."

"Oh, buck up. There's no earthly reason why we *should*. By the way, do we leave our 'Register' with the British consul and present his receipt to the customs—as in New York?"

"Well, the consul is supposed to see the 'Register' of every British ship entering port, but he frequently *doesn't*. He is paid a governm'nt salary, without fees, so he's rather indifferent on that point, an' it saves a bit of their grafting red-tape if the *Administrador* gets *all* the papers in a bunch."

Next day, they anchored off the custom house at Santos and were given *pratique* after the *Commandante* of the port had been aboard and consumed two bottles of champagne in the leisurely Brazilian manner. They didn't locate the *Administrador* of customs until along toward evening, when it was cooler—and to his surprise they showed themselves familiar with local observances by discussing everything under the sun except business. Satterlee, who did most of the talking, asked after his health—the health of his family and all his relatives—and answered similar questions concerning his own. Derringforth pressed upon him long black cigars which could not be purchased in Brazil at any price. Then came propositions for a pleasant evening in his company—but still no word of business. In fact, they proved themselves comrades after his own heart, and the three of them were put to bed at two in the morning in luxurious rooms at the famous club. Next day, after a two-hour breakfast, the trio were driven amiably down to the *Administrador's* offices and, an hour or so later, produced their documents—over which he glanced while stamping them with his official seal. Afterward, with a smiling but reproachful look, he said:

"There ees one leetle document, *Senhors,* w'ich I see mus' 'ave become los' seence you come ashore, las' night. But eet ees no matter—I will 'ave search for heem at ze club."

"Your Excellency refers to the 'consular manifest,' I suppose. The fact is, we—er—purposely forgot to get that in Cardiff. I will explain! Your consular agent in Cardiff charges several different fees not customary with other countries. We figured that some of the fine for omission would go to your good self as a perquisite, and preferred spending our money that way. If—er—if you feel disposed to overlook the fine and clear us with all our documents in good order, it would give us great pleasure to make you a small present—for yourself alone." (Satterlee held out, smilingly, two bank of England notes for one hundred pounds each.) "If—er—if you could put us in the way of selling our coal to advantage, and shipping a cargo of coffee at rock-bottom figures, we'd like to make it *three* of these."

Derringforth and Galloway afterward claimed it was Satterlee's irresistable geniality and knowledge of the Brazilian character that worked the miracle—as the Captain had seen *five* hundred pounds offered in a Brazilian port without producing results worth mentioning. At all events, there was no question as to the ship's papers. Their coal brought a better price than could have been obtained elsewhere, and they loaded with choice Santos coffee at fifteen per cent lower cost than the last purchasers had paid. The crop had been unusually heavy, and some of the smaller planters were in a panic to sell at any price they could get. This cargo was paid for with three-months' drafts upon the house of Banciman & Co., Ltd.—South Shields, owners of the ship—the coffee being purchased for "owners' account." As the Banciman ships were known in most of the world's ports, no question whatever was raised. Derringforth had thought to handle their business through the house of "Larrinha y Cia," who had been the Banciman agents in Santos and Rio for some years, but Satterlee overruled the idea.

"Ten to one, they'd be writing home about something else and mention us before those drafts have time to mature. By doing business through some one else, we make them sore and jealous—very much disinclined to bother their heads with any communication regarding us."

From Santos, the adventurers cleared for Cape Town—where, the market being a good deal stronger, they sold their cargo for a heavy profit. While in Santos, Derringforth and Satterlee had opened up a pleasant acquaintance with a merchant whose main house was in Buenos Aires, and who described at length the political grafting which kept

vessels lying one or two months off the port before they were able to discharge—also the amount of blindness produced among the customs officials by the sight of five hundred *"pesos-fuerte"* in hand. In the opinion of this merchant, nothing was easier than to smuggle a small cargo—of, say, ostrich-feathers—into lighters alongside, on a dark night, and have the stuff landed at some designated spot upon the river bank a few miles above the city. In fact, he agreed to take a hundred thousand *pesos'* worth of feathers—at ten per cent over the Cape price, payment upon delivery to the lighters alongside—and guaranteed that if the item were erased from the manifest, no questions would be asked by the customs people. The more they considered this suggestion, the better it looked to them. So, after discharging in Cape Town, they took on the cases of ostrich feathers and cleared for Buenos Aires, where they arrived ostensibly in ballast, all mention of the feathers being erased from the ship's papers. Their friend had run down to Argentina in the meantime, and was as good as his word, getting the shipment cannily away one dark night and paying the stipulated price in Bank of England notes.

Derringforth then told his officers and crew that, owing to the prevalent confusion and delay which had made that port notorious for the past year, there was every prospect of their lying there for months before they got a cargo and managed to clear—giving them the option of being paid off and having their transportation guaranteed to one of the British West Indies upon a Lamport & Holt steamer. After some consultation, they accepted his proposition in a body—as he had been quite sure they would. Then, with but the four of them aboard, they carried out another substitution of bell, capstan and builder's plates, another leisurely job of repainting the ship, in the midst of which their smuggling friend, with his grafting custom house connections, got together for them another crew which they shipped in regular form at the British Consultate—none of the men noticing, after the manner of sailors, the name of the ship upon which they had just signed.

The new name, *Devon Boy,* was duly painted upon stem and stern as they steamed up the coast in ballast—also, upon boats, life-preservers, etc. Some of the derricks upon fore and mainmast were removed, and around the black funnel was painted a broad red band upon which appeared, in white, the silhouetted running figure of a boy.

Upon the third night out, the four adventurers sat down in the captain's room for a consultation.

"One thing that's been on my conscience a good deal is the fear those innocent merchants in Santos and Cape Town will never be able to collect our drafts on the Bancimans. I went into this thing to soak the owners, because they swindled all three of us, but I haven't got the make-up of a thief, and if those people get stung, I'm going to see their money is remitted to them, anonymously."

"That suits *me!* We'll all agree to that without a kick, though the proceeds from the coal and legitimate *profits* on the other cargoes, we'll *keep*. But you needn't be afraid that Banciman wont be compelled to pay those drafts. Consider a bit. All those merchants examined our papers before they put their stuff aboard. They saw that our record was perfectly straight with the customs people in Santos and Cape Town. True, they didn't cable any inquiries to Banciman, but they weren't obliged or supposed to. They put their stuff aboard a Banciman ship and received their drafts from the Bancimans' duly authorized supercargo—according to every paper submitted to them. Of course, the Bancimans will stand a law-suit for collection, but they'll lose it."

"Fancy you're right, now I come to think of all the facts. But, what are we going to do next?"

"We're going to *duck*—get from under just the minute we can! Those chaps in the *Ferret* made three glaring mistakes: They let their crew get on to what they were doing; they kept putting into British ports; and they stuck to the game about two months too long. I wouldn't take a hundred thousand dollars to enter another British port on this ship! The first of those drafts matures next month. Before that, we must get

rid of this boat and skip in a way that leaves no trace as to our identity. We cleared the *Carlton Hall* in ballast for Santos—to load coffee for London—but we aren't going into Santos if I know it. There are two men in Rio whom I happen to know are born speculators. If some third party suggests that this ship isn't paying us the big profits we thought she would, and that we'd sell for less than she's worth if carefully approached, they'll feel like taking her off our hands—and one little hint of dissatisfaction through Sam Wotherspoon will reach them inside of twenty-four hours. Sam hasn't seen me for several years, and this beard will fool him. I've altered the papers again, as you see, representing the boat as owned by the 'Devon Boy Company, Limited,' of South Shields. Lloyd's Register is full of owning companies like that, who run a single ship as an investment or speculation. I've changed her destination to Rio, and altered her name in the proper places." They examined the papers critically—dubiously.

"I say, old chap, if anyone *should* examine those documents closely, they'd have a suspicion we'd tampered with them!"

"I've discounted all that, Galloway: just watch the way I'll get around it." Filling the wash-basin, he held each of the documents under water for the fraction of a second—then laid it flat upon the chart table, threw a towel upon it in such a way that it absorbed the wet unevenly, leaving some of the written words a trifle blurred and others quite sharp. "There you are! Derringforth had those papers in his pocket and the boatman upset him at the quay when he was coming aboard—soaked to his skin, of course, perfectly natural explanation of how the papers got wet, and all trace of previous tampering removed."

"By gad, Satterlee, I don't wonder you've more money than you can spend! You never lose a trick! Was that why you had rubber stamps made for the certificates in the wheel-house?

"Exactly. A stationer in the Avenida de Mayo turned out those stamps for me in a few hours, and when the old names were erased, the stamped impressions covered up all evidence of tampering. There's something convincing about a rubber stamp—it gives an official appearance very difficult to get away from. If we get rid of this boat in Rio, as I confidently expect, we'll clean up a good bit over half a million—out of which, a hundred thousand must be deducted for the underwriters, who have, before this, paid over the insurance on the *Roumanian Queen*. We've nothing against them, you know, and we can't see them hurt. But the way it looks now, we stand to clean up in the neighborhood of a hundred and twenty thousand dollars each. That ought to pay you chaps for the loss of your certificates, as *dead men*."

Three weeks later—Satterlee clean-shaved again, and the others with short beards—they were lounging on the deck of the Lamport & Holt Liner *Vassari*, twelve hours out of Barbadoes, for New York, when the captain happened along.

"I say, you gentlemen were ashore all day, weren't you. Did you happen to hear anything about the great swindle pulled off on Banciman an' Comp'ny, of South Shields? No? I fancied the agents were chaffing me when they began tellin' about it. Seems that a lot of nervy chaps, with a boat which no one seems to know about, picked up some rawther valuable cargoes an' paid for 'em with bills on the Bancimans which have just come due—first the firm ever heard of 'em, don't you know. Pirates had their papers all in order, boat was registered as a Banciman ship, an' the owners'll have to pay the bills, by gad! No gettin' out of it, you know."

"Whew! That's going some! Why, Cap'n—I didn't suppose it was possible to pull off a deal like that! Why don't the Bancimans libel that ship and imprison those chaps in the next port?"

"Because nobody knows where the ship *is*! She cleared from Buenos Aires for Santos—but she's nearly four weeks overdue. Of course they'll nab her the minute she enters port. Those chaps cawn't keep at sea forever, you know!"

"Be a joke if they managed to get clean away, wouldn't it!"

"Rather! But of course, you know, that's impossible."

"Oh—of course."

A Writ of Replevin

By CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

IT WAS certainly annoying; not even Edgeworth's warmest apologist could have denied that! To Edith it was more than annoying; it was exasperating in the very highest degree. To inform one's *fiancé* that she would return home by a certain train after a long visit; to arrange with him that he and he alone should meet her; to have everything planned for a long blissful afternoon—and then to be met on arrival by a protesting young brother and informed that "Edgeworth 'phoned me to meet you. Said he was busy with an important case and couldn't come. Would explain to-night!" was enough to make any girl angry. And to learn after dinner that evening that the "case"—which had engrossed him all day—was that of an old negro mammy, involving at the most $500, was not calculated to soothe her.

Nor, to Edith's mind, did Edgeworth show half enough regret for his delinquency. He had won the case, and he was so happy over it that he insisted that she should be happy too, forgetting that the edge of his disappointment had been dulled while hers was as keen as ever.

"But, Edith," he protested, "I couldn't come! Really I couldn't! It was a scoundrelly piece of business and it would probably have gone through if I had lost a minute. There was just so much time and no more, and—"

"And as you had to disappoint some one, you decided to disappoint me!" interrupted Edith, stormily.

"Not at all. I had no choice." Edgeworth was bewildered by the girl's unexpected anger. Again he tried to explain, though he might have guessed the situation could best be met by something very different from explanations. "I am an officer of the court, you know," he pleaded. "I am sworn to use my best efforts for my client. If I had let old Sophy's business suffer rather than give up my own pleasure, I would be unworthy to be a lawyer. Every lawyer is sworn to—"

"And you are sworn—at least you were going to be sworn in a few days—to do everything for me. I suppose it would have made no difference if I had been waiting at the church for you. Your duty to your clients would have kept you away!"

Edith knew she was speaking both foolishly and unfairly. But she was tired from her long railway ride, disappointed and hurt at her lover's defection, and angered by his aggrieved tones, which somehow seemed to insinuate that she was unreasonable. She knew, herself, that she was unreasonable, but that only made it the more unbearable that he should think so.

Edgeworth stared at her helplessly, wondering whether he really knew the girl he was going to marry. Certainly, he had never seen this side of her before. Fatuously he tried to make light of the situation. "Oh! No!" he declared, in as merry a tone as he could summon up on short notice. "Oh, no! I can get a day off to be married all right. If you would let me tell you about this case you would see—"

"Thank you! I am not interested in Judy—or is it Susan or—or—" A wave of anger swept over her as she saw him wince. "Oh!" she cried. "I won't play second fiddle to Jane, Jess, and Jinny!

I've got to be considered first—first, do you hear?"

"Of course! But this is my life—my profession!" Edgeworth's temper was stirring within him and gave an edge to his voice.

"Then if it's your life, you don't need me." Edith scarcely knew what she was saying, but she drove on impetuously. "You don't need me!" she reiterated. "Go to your 'life' and let me alone."

"What do you mean?" Edgeworth's tone had changed. It frightened Edith. In reality she did not know what she did mean. She was not sure that she had meant anything. But she would not recede now.

She moved slightly, averting her face and turning a mutinous shoulder on her lover. She was on the verge of tears, but she would not—*would* not give way to them. "I—I mean that I've got to be first or nothing," she gasped. "I mean that you don't consider me as I thought you would—and I—I don't want to be engaged to you any longer. I don't want to marry you, and I wont! I wont!"

"Oh!" For a full minute Edgeworth stood and looked at her, probably hoping to see some sign of relenting.

But he saw none. Edith stood still, fingering an ornament on the table, not looking at him. The truth was that she was afraid to look. With the utterance of her last words her anger had vanished, leaving her only a sick sense of terror. If Edgeworth had been a little wiser he would have taken her in his arms and the trouble would have ended then and there.

But he only stood waiting for a moment and then turned away. At the door he paused. "Good-by!" he said, distantly.

Edith shot a glance at him. "I—I'll send you the ring to-morrow," she blundered.

"Confound the ring. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" Edith's voice was very small and weak, and it was lost in the swish of the portières as the man passed through them.

Then Edith gave way. Why, oh! why, had she let it come to this? Why, oh! why had Frank taken her at her word? Didn't he know—know— The tears came, too freely to be wiped away by the wisp of cambric that she carried.

But, at the sound of a step in the hall she choked them down. Could Frank be coming back? Oh! if he were—

But it was only the maid to announce that old Sophy had come with the wash and wanted to see Miss Edith.

Edith snatched at the chance to get away from herself. Sophy had been her nurse, years before, and she was very fond of her. Up the stairs she raced and burst into the room in a gust of feverish gayety that would have deceived all men and most women.

"Hello! Sophy!" she called. "How did you know I was back? How are you?"

The old black woman's keen eyes rested on the girl's flushed face and her smile grew perceptibly dimmer.

"I'm well, Miss Edith! Bless the Lord!" she answered. "You'se lookin' mighty well, honey! But you aint seemin' over and above happy. What's the matter, chile?"

Edith's sensitive lips quivered. "Nothing's the matter," she insisted. "Guess what I've brought you from New York?" She turned to where her trunk stood against the wall. "You're looking mighty happy yourself, Sophy!"

Sophy abandoned her questioning for the time. Later she would return to it. "And aint I got cause to be happy!" she jubilated. "Aint I got cause? Aint Mr. Frank done put everything right for me, jes' when everything was all wrong? You'se mighty lucky to have a beau like him, Miss Edith."

Edith's eyes widened. Involuntarily she caught at her breast. "What in the world do you mean, Sophy?" she gasped. "What Mr. Frank do you mean?"

Sophy chuckled. "Aw! G'way with you, chile! You knows what Mr. Frank I mean. Aint but one Mr. Frank round this house. I mean Mr. Frank Edgeworth, the lawyer-man you're a-goin' to marry; that's who I means."

"What has Mr. Edgeworth done for you?" Edith's tones were level. If Frank had been kept away by Sophy's affairs, why hadn't he told her? In that case, of course—with a qualm she remembered that she had refused to let him tell her about his "case."

"He done save my home, that's what he's done!" answered the black woman, promptly. "That white trash Ferguson done try to cheat me out of my place what I been payin' him for for years and years. Soon's I found it out I went to Mr. Frank and told him I wanted a lawyer an' that I was yo' old nurse, and soon's he heard that he got mighty in-t'rusted an—"

"Sophy! What are you talking about?" Edith was desperate. "What had Mr. Ferguson done? Begin at the beginning?"

"Aint I a-doin' it, honey?" Sophy's tone was injured. "You know I been buyin' my house from that Ferguson for five years, don't you, Miss Edith? An' you know I done paid the last money six months ago and got a writin' sayin' the place was mine? You know that, don't you?"

"Yes! I know. You showed me the deed."

"That's the truth I did. Well! I been washin' for that Ferguson man for a year or more, an' two months ago I give that writin' back to him to keep for me in his big safe. Las' week he done sent me word he'd got somebody else to do his washin'—and de Lord knows he was welcome, 'cause there never was enough of it to hurt—and yesterday a man comes 'round and says he's come from Mr. Carter to collect the rent."

"The rent? Mr. Carter? What claim had Mr. Carter on you for rent?"

"Yas'm. That what I tol' him. Says I: 'Young man, don't you come to me for no rent. I owns this place, I does, and I don't know nothin' about no Mr. Carter.' But he says Mr. Carter done bought the place from that Mr. Ferguson and that if I don't pay three months back rent in twenty-four hours he gwine put me out."

"Put you out! How dared he? Why didn't you tell him Mr. Ferguson had your deed and—"

"Yas'm! I did tell him. I tells him plenty and often. But it aint no use. He only laugh and say 'twenty-four hours' and tromps away. Then I figgers out that that Ferguson is fixin' to do me, and I remembers that your beau is a lawyer and I goes straight to him."

"Oh!" Edith, who had been engrossed in Sophy's mishaps, suddenly remembered that her own affairs were heavily involved. "What did he say?"

"He sho' is a mighty nice man, Mr. Frank is. He understands niggers, he does. He listens mighty patient and then he asks me if I done had the writin' recorded. 'No suh!' says I. 'I reckon not! What do you mean by recorded?' He shakes his head. 'That's bad!' he says. 'Did you show it to anyone?' I told him I showed it to a passel of niggers. 'No white folks?' says he, and I tells him nobody but you."

Edith nodded. "Of course!" she agreed. "Go on, Sophy. Go on!"

"Well, Mr. Frank says he's got to go to the co'thouse for a minit to look up things, and for me to wait. Putty soon he comes back, lookin' mighty mad. 'Sophy!' says he, 'you're certain you gave that writin' to Ferguson just to keep safe for you? He didn't buy the place back from you or anything?' I told him 'No, I'd kiss the book to that.' Then he says, says he: 'Sophy, Ferguson sold your house to Mr. Carter yesterday, and the deed has been recorded. Yours was not, and it's plain that Mr. Ferguson has taken advantage of your trusting him, to swindle you. I guess he'll deny that he ever sold the place to you at all. He'll say you've just been paying rent or something. 'Now,' says he, 'your Miss Edith has spoken to me about you often, an' I remember she said some months ago that you'd done finished payin' for your place and that she had seen the deed. So I guess we can sue Carter and Ferguson and get the property back. But,' he says, 'that'll be mighty slow and expensive; and I guess we'll just take a short cut. Ferguson's a cheap scoundrel and he's mighty apt to overlook things. I reckon he sold the place on the spur of the moment and it's just possible he aint destroyed the deed yet, though of course he intends to later. It's just the sort of thing he would put off doing. I'm going to chance his havin' it in his possession now and I'm going to try to get it. I've sued out a writ of rep'evin—' "

"A what?" Edith was puzzled.

" 'A writ of rep'evin.' That's what he said. 'An',' says he, 'I've got a search warrant and I'll have a deputy sheriff

here in a minute an' we'll just call on Mr. Ferguson and see if we can't surprise him a little.' "

Sophy paused and drew a long breath. She possessed to the full, the negro love of keeping her auditors waiting on the brink of a climax.

"Sophy! Go on! Go on!" clamored Edith.

"Yes, ma'am! I'm a-going on. In a minute that depity come in and we was about to start when Mr. Frank stops and looks at his watch and scratches his head and hesitates and then he sets down at the desk and telephones to your brother Tom an' tells him he's got a mighty important case on and can't meet you at the train, and for Mr. Tom to be sure and do it. He didn't say nothin' to me but I knowed by his look it come mighty hard on him to let you get home without him meetin' you, an' I sot it to myself to come and tell you erbout it quick's I could. But I reckon he done got here befo' me?"

Edith nodded. Her face was white. "Yes! He got here before you," she agreed dully. "But go on!"

"Yes'm. We goes to that Ferguson's office an' bulls in— the whole passel of us—without knocking. Ferguson was sittin' at his desk. When he sees me he turns white and jumps up and runs to the safe what was standin' open and tried to shut it, but Mr. Frank he gets there first an' jabs his foot in the door an' stops him. Then the deputy pulls out some papers and reads 'em, and Mr. Frank tells him he's come to rep'evin a certain deed confided to his care by Sophy Mason. Ferguson argifies something awful, but Mr. Frank shuts him up. 'Maybe a writ of rep'evin is kinder unusual in such a case,' he says, 'but it's legal,' he says, 'an' it's going to be executed right now with the aid of this here search warrant. Give up Sophy's deed or we'll search till we find it, and that's flat!" he says.

"An' after he'd done speechified a while, that Ferguson takes my writin' out of the safe and gives it to Mr. Frank, an' says somethin' erbout it all bein' a mistake.

" 'It's a mistake that will land you in jail, all right,' says Mr. Frank, mighty sharp.

"When we gets out he tells me he'll attend to things and that everything'll be all right now, and for me to run along home. An' when I asks him what I owes him he laughs and says he'll collect from you! Land 'er Goshen! Honey! What's the matter?"

Edith had collapsed in a damp and crumpled heap on the bed.

In consternation, the black woman bent over her. "Honey! Honey!" she cried. "What's the matter with my li'l honey bee? Don' take on so, honey. Tell ole Sophy what's the matter."

Edith's shoulders moved convulsively. "Sophy! Sophy!" she sobbed. "I'm so—so miserable."

"Yes, honey! Yes, honey! Tell ole Sophy all erbout it?"

Edith raised her streaming eyes. "I was so mean to him, Sophy! So mean! I was angry because he didn't meet me, and—and—" Sobs completed the sentence.

But after a while the tale was told, and after a still longer time a semblance of composure was restored, and the two women laid their heads together in a consultation that lasted till well into the night. At last the solution dawned, and troubled but hopeful, Sophy went home; and troubled but hopeful, Edith sought her bed.

Ten o'clock the next morning saw Edith mounting the steps of Frank Edgeworth's office. It had been hard to wait until ten o'clock, but she would not risk seeming too eager.

When she entered, Frank scrambled to his feet in amazement. "Edith!" he cried, rapturously. Then as he noticed the coldness of her glance, he hesitated. "Er—Miss Walton!" he finished blankly.

Edith bowed distantly. "Good-morning," she said, calmly enough, outwardly, though her heart was beating like a trip hammer. "I wish to consult you, l gally." Edith had decided on this speech as best to put herself on the proper footing. "A friend of mine has a case that requires very careful consideration, and I am informed that you are very particular to give personal attention to your clients' affairs."

"Certainly!" he answered, briefly, content to let her lead the conversation.

"Thank you!" Edith took her seat across the table from him. "As I say, I want to consult you in the interest of a friend. I would rather not tell you who she is just now. She was recently possessed of some valuable property—"

"What sort of property?"

Edith hesitated. "Do you have to know?" she asked. "I don't think my friend would like me to tell."

"Well—perhaps it doesn't matter at this stage, though of course one can't say much about a law case without the fullest details. Is it real property?"

"Real property." For some reason Edith's face flamed. "I—I don't know. That is, I don't know what you mean!"

"Real property consists of houses and lands; personal property of all sorts of other things." Edgeworth was speaking in his best legal style.

"Oh!" Edith nodded. "I see. This was personal property. Some one gave it to her and one day she offered to give it back. She didn't really mean to give it back. She—she just offered it and he took it. And now she wants it back and is afraid he wont give it to her."

Frank nodded. If he saw whither the conversation was tending he made no sign. "Did she receive any consideration for her gift?"

"Consideration! Not a bit. He didn't consider her a—"

Edgeworth interrupted. "You don't understand," he declared. "I mean, did he give her anything—any good or valuable consideration for her gift?"

"Not a thing."

"I see!" Perhaps Edgeworth did see; perhaps he did not. "Well! your friend might sue."

"But that's just what she doesn't want to do." Edith was getting excited. "It would take too long. She is afraid he will give it away to someone else or something. Isn't there something quick—and—and summary—she can do—"

Edgeworth nodded. "She might sue out a writ of replevin," he suggested, in a voice as level as he could possibly make it.

"Replevin? What's that?" demanded the girl, innocently.

Edgeworth pressed a button. The office boy received instructions, and retired. Soon he returned with a legal-looking blank.

Edgeworth took it. "Here is a blank writ," he explained. "Perhaps you may care to look it over. I got some blanks yesterday for—er—another case." He kept his gaze averted with rather too marked unostentatiousness.

Edith took the paper with trembling fingers. Almost, her courage failed her. Surely he must understand. He—he—It could not be that he was glad to be free! But she would go on to the end.

The printed words in the blank danced before her eyes.

> The plaintiff, ..., sues the defendant, ..., for wrongfully detaining said plaintiff's goods, to wit: ....., of the value of ..... dollars. And the plaintiff prays that he be compelled to return same, or ..

Edgeworth's voice interrupted her. "Get your friend to fill in the blanks," he was saying. "Then I will have something to go on."

Edith took up her pen. "Like this?" she asked in strangled tones.

With trembling fingers she traced a few words, then handed the paper silently back. Her blood was chill and her fingers stiff and cold with fright. If he should fail her now! White as death, she waited for his next word.

She did not have long to wait. The paper fluttered to the floor and Edgeworth's chair went over with a crash. Dimly she saw him spring to his feet. Blindly she strove to rise, only to be folded in an embrace that almost crushed her slim body. "Edith! Edith! Do you mean it?" he cried.

The girl did not answer in words, but the look in her glistening eyes as she raised them was enough.

After a while they left the office together.

The paper, forgotten, lay unheeded on the floor, till the office boy picked it up and read it, and grew goggle-eyed over its mingled type and script:

> The plaintiff, *Edith Walton*, sues the defendant, *Frank Edgeworth*, for wrongfully detaining said plaintiff's property, to wit: *her heart and best love*, of the value of *uncountable dollars*. And the plaintiff prays that he be compelled to return same, or . . .

Green-Mufflered But A-1

By
IDA M. EVANS

WHEN old Harper called Ellis Burrant into his private office and bade him get ready at once to take charge of a salesroom about to be opened in Omaha by the Harper Millinery Company, that young man felt as if he had been ordered to get ready for his metallic-lined coffin.

Luckily, his employer was examining a batch of papers bearing on the projected opening, and so missed the blend of surprise, dismay and disgust that distorted Burrant's usually pleasant face. Luckily—because old Harper had as much use for a recalcitrant salesman as he had for a last year's job-lot of damaged flowers.

Now Burrant had been born in New York City. Before he knew the alphabet, he knew that North America had only one town. All places north, west and south helped fill the map, but were not really part of it. During the last three years, he had represented the Harper Millinery Company in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Subconsciously, he considered the two states in his debt.

Moreover, for two of the three years, he had been in love with Marjorie Harper. It was doubtful if Miss Harper had ever heard of Omaha. She would be more likely to visit the northern edge of Siberia.

And besides these two all-sufficient reasons for shuddering at his destination, there was another. The manager of the office in Paris was not making good. Everyone knew that the old man was furtively looking about for a substitute. Misled by a spasmodic geniality, Burrant for three months had been preparing clothes and an accent for Paris!

Paris would afford numerous opportunities for seeing the daughter of the president. Harper averaged eight trips each year, and she always accompanied him. Naturally it would be Burrant's lot to show her around while her father was busy.

And even without a single glimpse of her creamy oval face and lustrous big brown eyes, Paris would not be an utterly desolate spot. Burrant knew from hearsay that in Paris feminine solace might be found for any feminine lack.

But Omaha!

"I'm giving you the chance of your life," old Harper observed complacently. "We've got the cream of the eastern trade bottled and labeled. I want the west in the same condition. Carson, of course, has Iowa and Nebraska, but he doesn't seem to get in touch with the big buyers. So I've told him that Omaha belongs to you personally. There are two big stores there whose buyers come to New York, but so far they've two-stepped by us. I expect you to corral 'em."

Burrant held his lips sullenly, took his instructions in glum silence, and packed his trunk with the melancholy air of an habitual pall-bearer.

Then he went to make a last call on the girl of his dreams. Unfortunately, five other fellows had selected that same night to call. Their attitudes indicated that she was also the girl of their

dreams. To date, Miss Harper had refused to hear the dreams of others or relate her own.

For three hours, Burrant fumed. Miss Harper showed no emotion when she heard of his coming departure—merely extended a limp hand in careless good-by. And almost before Burrant had released her unresponsive fingers, she had turned gaily to one of the other men.

As the Flyer whirled him from the center of civilization to the uncouth edge, Burrant mourned. Through Pennsylvania, he wrote a volcanic resignation, read it over with bitter satisfaction—and tore it up. Through Ohio and Indiana, he built up a trade so magnificent that old Harper himself resigned, and gold-lettered the name of Burrant on the glass door of the president's office.

After ten hours of Iowa's corn stubbled prairies had maddened his eyes with their sameness, revolt and glorious visions gave way to plain, unvarnished ill-temper. He flounced into the Union depot and up Farnam Street with the spluttering wrath of a fighting gander.

Two weeks later, when the flurry of opening the campaign had somewhat calmed him, he spluttered again. For Ada Smith was sent out to assist him in corraling the Middle West.

In the cold gloom of the salesroom, as yet unwarmed by customer's foot, he snarled over the letter that announced her coming. The next morning, he gave curt greeting when she smiled pertly in the open door of his office.

"Anything doing?" she asked sociably as she flung gloves, bag, muff, coat and hat upon his desk. "I got in too late last night to 'phone you. And let me tell you that of all punk hotels, the one I struck is the limit! Carson recommended it. I telegraphed him—collect—what I thought of him and his favorite hostelry. When he pays for those sixty-three words, he'll have a hunch to go slow with his recommends in future. Omaha isn't much of a burg after New York—is it, my boy? And how is business?"

Burrant pulled a half-written letter from under her clutter of belongings, and pointedly smoothed the crumpled sheet. Icy disapproval of Miss Smith and her language frosted his eyes. "My boy!" smacked of familiarity and vulgarity—both of which would be soon suppressed. And the superfluous question concerning business annoyed him.

"*This* is the fifth of December!"—crushingly. "D'ye expect me to sell a carload of *lingerie* hats before people have paid the express charges on felt shapes?"

He spoke with an angry vigor that relieved feelings supercharged by a fourfold sense of ill-treatment, and that was calculated to rebuff any attempt at intimacy.

Miss Smith paused in the absorbing operation of powdering a nose red and shiny from the cold morning air. For a moment she stared. Then she nodded comprehension.

"I remember. You always do have a grouch at this time of day."

"Grouch!" Burrant rose haughtily, walked to the window and looked down at the passing throng. At that moment, the passing throng consisted of almost six people. But it served its purpose of enabling Burrant to get a grip on his vocal chords and choke some words that wouldn't sound well before a lady and couldn't be printed, and that he was afraid to utter.

Past experience warned him against a word conflict with Ada Smith. He had about as much chance of coming out victor as a seven-year-old boy has of thrashing his school teacher. There were times when Burrant considered himself a fairly bright young man. But those times were not when he and Ada Smith were in the same room.

Ada Smith was old Harper's most dependable aid. Officially, she was head stenographer. In reality, every errand boy knew that she was overseer of the salesmen.

Her history defines her: Before she was twelve, she could drop under a table while a factory inspector was stepping in the door. At sixteen, she was at the head of a table, and her voice was offensive with patronage when she spoke to the makers. At eighteen, she stunted a healthy appetite until she had saved enough to buy a dress whose lines

compensated for all that life had withheld from her.

When she wore it over to a high-class wholesale house, nine saleswomen abandoned their customers to inspect it. She asked for the manager, and announced that she would consider a position as head saleslady of the French room. The announcement was supercilious to the last possible degree of art. The manager, being a wise man—otherwise he wouldn't have been manager—realized that such effrontery was priceless, especially when accompanied by the dress and a face that would give an imported air to an untrimmed hat. The contract was flashed and signed before the saleswomen had finished their inspection of her gown.

When the three years of the contract were up, Ada Smith was known throughout eastern millinerydom. She decided that secretary sounded better than saleswoman, and allowed a more exciting spurt upward. So she sought a business college, discarded her tight-fitting gowns in favor of blue serge suits and tailored waists, and called upon old Harper. He himself had climbed from Ellis Island—he was quick to recognize a kindred spirit.

Within three months, even the stunted tow-headed youngsters who carried the hats from the copying room to the shipping department knew that Ada Smith stood a peg above any salesman. When a raw young drummer would have had one fired for impudence, the boy wasted no time with intermediaries, but scooted straight for the power behind old Harper's swiveled throne—and held his job.

Although every one admitted that she was clever, and although, in a sharp, pert way, she was handsome, few of the men admired her. Her shapely white chin was perked up at too insolent an angle. The keen, unblinking light in her big black eyes was unpleasantly suggestive of a glistening, sharp-pointed steel knife. And her little narrow red tongue could sizzle the air and send a salesman cringing from the office, abjectly conscious that he ought to be peddling bananas instead of trying to sell plumes.

Ellis Burrant would not admit that she was even passably good-looking. But then his eyes had been put out of focus by the languid beauty of Marjorie Harper.

Omaha itself was purgatory. But Omaha and Ada Smith were—unmentionable.

"Where you staying?" she demanded suddenly. "Anything fit to eat?"

"I'm staying at a very exclusive hotel," he told her stiffly. "A *bachelors'* hotel!"

Her black eyes twinkled mirthfully at the tone. "Don't worry," pleasantly. "I'm not coming. I merely asked—to fill a conversational gap. But if it's your desire that the gap shall be a long, chilly ravine—why, all right! Tell me when I intrude on your mental privacy."

Burrant flushed. It was uncanny—her trick of reading a man's thoughts; and it was brutal—her habit of voicing her readings. He was so exasperated that he forgot Marjorie Harper all that day.

December dragged out its slow length of cold days. Very dull days they were. The shining newness of shelves and glass cases accentuated the dullness. The half-dozen girls whom Miss Smith installed in the trimming-room sewed listlessly, waiting for the thrill of the busy season.

Burrant gloomed over the difference between Farnam Street and Fifth Avenue, and counted the weeks until May, when he would be allowed a whiff of Long Island air. Very leisurely he began his preliminary advertising, dropped in the big stores to see the buyers, and was not surprised when they sent out word that they wouldn't buy until January. About this time Burrant had an idea that the millinery trade of that part of the country was sitting with shy, downcast eyes and folded hands, waiting for the representative of the Harper Millinery Company to trim an Easter hat and place it above its fair young brow. So he waited calmly in the seclusion of his office for January.

When a week of January had lagged by, he took his order book and again sauntered over to the big buyers.

He got the shock of his life. For either they had left for Chicago and New York—or they were ready to leave. Those whom he overtook before they reached the depot were not bashful about telling him that a branch office was a paltry, no-account sort of place, and its manager an upstart. They shook off his detaining hands, angrily waved away the order book, and snorted when he begged them to look at his line.

With a large share of his suavity and assurance gone, Burrant took a long breath and started to make the round of the smaller stores. When he had finished, he felt as though he had been flattened against a brick wall.

He avoided Ada Smith's questioning eyes. But he was merely chastened, not alarmed. The city trade had slipped from him. But the country trade would be rushing in soon. And of course the two old houses in Omaha would be passed up for the Harper Millinery Company. So he wrote the old man that business was promising, and please send out a more complete line of models. Then he sat up alertly to greet the expected rush.

Three weeks later he hadn't greeted it, and his alert expectation had changed to apprehension. A scant dozen customers had appeared. Six asked for credit —and their names were not in the rating book.

"Elegant sales!" jeered Ada Smith. "Forty dollars — twenty-eight — thirty-seven! I bet old Harper is blistering the air in his office. If we can sell twenty dollars more, it will balance the postage item!"

Burrant scowled. He too had been adding.

"It's only the second week of February," he objected, more to bolster his own hope than to silence her. "We still have a chance—"

"We have a fat chance of losing our jobs!" she interrupted brusquely.

Burrant's scowl would have embellished a thunderstorm. Miss Smith's tone was too crisp for a man's comfort. But it crisped truth. Without doubt, old Harper was raging. Any explanation would be worse than useless. Harper despised explanations, loathed excuses, foamed at apologies. He cared only for results.

Nostalgia fell heavily upon Burrant —nostalgia for the sure established trade of the east. With sickening longing, he remembered the years of the nonchalant east—the orders that awaited his arrival, the respectful ways of eastern retailers toward the Harper Millinery Company.

The next week, eight customers stopped in on their way to Chicago, or to St. Louis, or to New York, or to the two houses down the street. They were merely looking—they didn't care to buy. With much perspiration and more cajolery than he knew himself capable of, Burrant induced one to take fifty dollars worth of flowers.

The same week brought five letters from the old man—and a telegram. It read:

> Are you dead? Get busy—or some one else can.

Burrant read it, and allowed his lower jaw to fall four inches before he noticed that Miss Smith's sharp eyes were turned toward him. Then he tried to cover his panic by whistling a jaunty little bar. But the bar broke in the middle.

He was glad to hustle out on the floor to a man with the crafty eyes and straight mouth of a heavy buyer. But the man, who was from Iowa, did not fancy the expensive patterns, nor the medium-priced hats, nor the cheap line. He listened without interest to Burrant's rock-bottom quotations on chiffons and braids. Finally he ordered two dozen Leghorns which were marked below cost as a leader. And then, "I always buy down the street," he observed. "Guess I can do just as good down there." He eluded Burrant's frantic efforts to detain him, and slid out.

Burrant sulkily lounged in the office while Miss Smith attended to a succession of shabby, haggling women who were frankly looking for bargains only. A group of well-dressed trimmers rustled in, tried on the imported hats, and registered for positions.

"Lonesome joint," commented one audibly as they left. "Nothin' doin' there!"

"Bright girl!" Miss Smith said tartly. "But there'll be something doing pretty quick—if I know the old man!"

Before Burrant could snap that he wished the old man would come out and batter his own head against a wall built, owned and guarded by western wholesalers, another man entered—a short, stocky man, middle-aged, slovenly dressed. His woolly overcoat was spattered with mud; his whiskers were as even as a bunch of yellowed weeds. Under the whiskers was knotted a bright green flannel muffler.

"I suppose," sighed Burrant, "that he wants a yard of mull and a bolt of No. 2 ribbon."

Burrant was mistaken. The man didn't care to buy a lonely package of needles. He was on his way to Chicago, and merely stopped in between trains. At that, Burrant lost all hope. He did not try to hold the man—abandoned all the usual tricks of selling. The man edged toward the door.

Before he reached it, Ada Smith was there, one hand on the knob, barring the way. She smiled as brightly and confidently as though a season of success instead of failure lay behind.

"We'll discount any price you can get in Chicago," she declared.

The man shook his head, and tried to edge past. He knew the people in Chicago—they always treated him square.

But she held the knob, and talked—talked with a furious speed that almost swamped her victim. He rallied, however, and shook his decisively.

Burrant walked to the window, and stared stonily at the people pass below. All wore hats. Now and then he glimpsed a brim or wing that bore the imprint of imported stuff. But there was never a hat from the Harper Company.

A queer little cry brought him around—Ada Smith had flung both arms about the green-mufflered neck and was excitedly babbling Teutonic gutturals. Burrant had a high-school smattering of the language. He pieced enough words together to learn that the man, Martin Schmidt, was her father's brother. Neither had known of the other's whereabouts.

Then Schmidt, after several reluctant glances at a silver watch, left. Ada Smith turned gaily to Burrant.

"That man," she cried in a tone that quivered with delight, "is my one and only living relative. And, believe me, it certainly is good to know that there's some one who'd chuck a flower at my tombstone!"

Burrant looked at her in surprise. Emotion had transfigured her small, sharp face. A flood of joyous color had flushed the angles into curves, and softened the unkindly gleam of her black eyes until they were as alluring as—Marjorie Harper's, for instance. For the first time, he conceded her beauty. Not in the same class as Marjorie, of course—but still—

"He's coming in to-morrow to buy his spring stock," she added as an afterthought.

"Treat him well," Burrant said cordially. It was impossible to feel the old antipathy when she smiled in that friendly fashion.

"I suppose you think I'm hard up for something to moon over when a bunch of alfalfa whiskers can give me a near-edition of D. T.'s. But—my mother died when I was nine, back in Germany. My father put me under one arm, and the rest of his belongings under the other, and hiked for the steerage. Two years after we got here, he died. Since then all the kin I had to cling to have been a landlady and a pay envelope."

"Who took care of you?" Burrant asked interestedly.

There was immeasurable derision in Miss Smith's stare. "Took care of me? I got a job!"

"At eleven years! nonsense—you couldn't!"

"Couldn't I? Say, this world's run by people doing things they can't! Anyway, that's all deadwood. Now, if old Harper hands me a bunch of wordy icicles and a farewell pay envelope, I wont have an altogether shattered feeling."

Burrant looked at her wonderingly. He was one of a large family. He was devoted to his parents, fond of his pretty sisters and a clever brother, and proud of a certain portly uncle who owned a bank, and whose influence had

wedged him into the Harper Millinery Company. But he did not understand how anyone, and particularly Ada Smith, could bubble joyously over the acquisition of a green-mufflered relative.

Next morning, Burrant lounged wearily in the office while Ada Smith tried on street hats for her new-found uncle. The utter wearisomeness drove him out for another whack at the retail stores.

No one would talk to him—no one would look at him. Birnt, the biggest, hardest, most desirable buyer, contemptuously waved him out of his way. Burrant stalked dismally down to Fourteenth Street, past the other two houses, impelled by the same horrible impulse that keeps a hungry beggar in front of a bakery window.

Into the doors of each house, a hurried, determined mob was pouring. Women with careful estimating eyes and hats whose slipshod trimming betrayed the wearers' surfeit; men with the quick, decisive walk of those to whom time is more than money. Burrant could have sat down on the curbstone and wept.

He went back to his own lonely domain. Ada Smith was showing the dress hats. Snatches of talk floated through the half-open door. "Can't you make that a mite less? Golly, Ada, that'll swamp me! I never paid over five cents a yard for mull in Chicago—"

"Old cheap-skate!" muttered Burrant, and wished he could go out and lambast him. He was in the humor to kick over all the ethics of salesmanship.

It was after six when the old man left—with a curt nod to Burrant, and a kindly smile at Ada. She dropped wearily into a chair beside Burrant and tossed over a batch of sales slips.

"He gets the special discount as well as the usual cash," she stated rather than asked.

Burrant's eyebrows went up. The special discount was allowed only to certain favored customers who bought heavily year after year, and whose rating was top-notch. Of course, a salesman was allowed great latitude in granting it, and new trade demanded concessions. And equally of course, the claims of relationship were strong.

Burrant flecked the thin pages over until he reached the last. Total—forty-eight dollars!

His lips curled scornfully, and then sagged. Somehow he had expected a fair bill. Not a monster, but at least a few hundred dollars. And the nerve to ask for a special discount!

At that moment of wrathful grief, Burrant saw the figures at another angle. Two small, crooked ones ran down at the side. And then he saw that the decimal point was between the second cipher and the crooked figures.

"Forty-eight hundred dollars!" he gasped.

"And sixty-five cents—about. I added it in a jiffy. He shied at five thousand." She perched herself on the edge of the desk and yawned. "And I never knew before what it was to be dog-tired. Believe me, I've hustled some to-day! That's some bill for eight hours! I'll bet you'd have taken four days! But I was afraid if he had a night to sleep over it, he'd skip to Chicago."

"The man's insane!" cried Burrant. "The house'll turn him down if he wants credit!"

"He hasn't asked for credit"—snappily. "He pays cash; that's why he gets the special. Although," proudly—"I rather think he could have a few feet of credit!"

She delved into a side drawer, pulled out a small red leather notebook, opened it and stuck it under Burrant's nose. He read:

> Martin Schmidt—A-1. Eight hundred thousand.

"He owns a department store in Beatrice," she added. "And a chain of small stores through the state. He'll likely duplicate this order the week after Easter."

Dazed, Burrant skimmed over the items. His nostrils twitched at the amount of tailored hats. Tailored hats were old Harper's hobby. He would rather see an order for one-twelfth of a dozen than for a gross of jeweled buckles. Next morning, Burrant was dazed again. It seemed that anything

connected with Martin Schmidt was important enough to demand a column and a half on the front page of the newspapers. And the old man was no tyro in self-advertising: he had allowed the reporters to infer that Ada Smith taught Parisian designers their trade.

Now, underneath Burrant's surface layre of grouchiness and temper was a thick stratum of decency. In his exultation over the luck that had come, there was not a shred of envy because he had had no hand in it. And when Ada Smith, with a matter-of-fact generosity, made it very plain that she took no especial credit to herself for the chance that had tossed an uncle and customer in her path, he was grateful, and abashed, and considerably ashamed.

In common delight, they were preparing a telegram for Harper when the door was opened, and a group of women, whose premature straw hats betrayed their calling, flounced in. Each had a morning paper—and each pair of sharp eyes instantly fastened on Ada's Smith's face, hair, shirtwaist, jabot, tailored skirt and pumps. At their heels came a troop. And another troop followed.

After that Burrant lost count. He only knew that during the remainder of the day, when he was so unwary as to raise a foot from the floor, he had difficulty finding a place to put it again.

It appeared that several hundred people thought enough of old Martin Schmidt's judgment to buy where he bought. Burrant estimated the number at several thousand. But that was because long emptiness had made the salesroom seem much larger than it really was.

Now, there is only one thing more contagious than smallpox. And that is buying millinery. Take the wariest old woman who ever paid for three farms with job lots and a few bottles of jettum; put her in a room where a dozen others, wild-eyed, reckless and enthusiastic, are buying their spring stock. In ten seconds, she will forget that her shelves are crammed; she will forget that she owes eight firms; she will forget what went out of style the season before. But she will buy—with a fury that will send the perspiration trickling down a salesman's spine.

There followed four days when Ada Smith and Burrant snatched bites of ham sandwiches while dodging between customers. Four nights, except for an hour or two of necessary sleep, were spent in mailing orders to New York, and telegraphing orders for immediate shipment.

At the end of the fourth day, when buyers and owners and trimmers had raced home, loaded with ideas and bills, Burrant had time to look at the accumulation of mail. Among many oblong blue-white envelopes gleamed a square, creamy white. He opened it carelessly—and read that James A. Harper announced the marriage of his daughter, Marjorie, to some one whom Burrant had never heard of.

He read it again carefully—and waited for the twinge of pain that ought to come. When it came, after an unaccountable loitering, it was so small and insignificant that he disgustedly refused to notice it.

Across the desk, Ada Smith smiled up from a monstrous row of figures. She had jumped at the first chance to add. "Some total, believe me!" she said emphatically. "I bet old Harper is patting himself on the back because of his gumption in sending us out here!"

Burrant flipped the announcement card away. There was a dreamy light in his eyes. But when he spoke, his voice was as hard as nails and granite and buyers and all the other flinty things of a flinty old world.

"Next July," he said viciously. "Birnt and a few of his kind will come into this room and look at this line if I have to sandbag 'em, and bring 'em in on a stretcher!"

Dorothy's Dolls

By FRED JACKSON

A NEW EXPLOIT OF THE MAN IN THE CHAIR

DURING the hot months, Mr. Kristian White found to his astonishment that he would be unable to leave town. He had planned a sea-trip—the exceeding fatness of the family purse promising all sorts of extravagances—but Crime takes no vacations; and Mr. White, having declared himself her implacable enemy and Nemesis, watching from day to day for a break in the endless stream of cases and, finding none, resigned himself with a sigh to the inevitable, and contented himself at home. Mrs. White made the place fresh with cool linens, and the height of the building raised them above the noise and dust and flying pests, and so they were comfortable enough.

Girton, however, the office attendant, was granted a holiday, Ruth volunteering to take his place. And it was due to all this that Mr. White was able to solve the mystery that was worrying little Dorothy Allen and disturbing her parents too. For Girton had an unbreakable rule of "first come, first served." If he had been in charge that day, the other clients who appeared before little Dorothy would have been given precedence, but Ruth was more sympathetic, and the little girl, hugging her dolly convulsively, her blue eyes still swimming in tears, received instant attention.

Mrs. Allen later admitted that if they had been compelled to wait, her impulse to consult the detective would have weakened, and—everything would have ended differently.

Mrs. Allen was with Dorothy, you see—Mrs. Allen looking rather wistful, a little hesitant and shamefaced; and behind her was a governess who seemed to find only amusement in the situation. The varying expressions of the three would have excited anyone's interest—even in that anteroom where everyone came under stress of some unusual emotion; but what attracted Ruth's attention instantly, was that little Dorothy was in tears.

"Is Mr. White very busy?" asked Mrs. Allen, as the trio advanced. "Shall we be forced to wait long?"

Ruth looked thoughtful.

"Is it a very important case upon which you have come?" she asked. "Is it dangerous to waste time?"

"Well," said Mrs. Allen, flushing, "We hardly know. Its such a very curious matter."

Ruth looked at the child. "Concerning the baby?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Allen. "This is really Dorothy's case entirely."

"Then," said Ruth, "we shall have to make an exception in Dorothy's favor and have Mr. White see her next."

She spoke a few words to the elderly lady who was being defrauded—then she took up one of the announcement slips from the desk and wrote:

"Miss Dorothy—?"

"Allen," said the older of the trio. "I am Mrs. Spencer Allen."

Ruth carried in the card to her husband. He was just dismissing the client with whom he had been in consultation, and he took the card with a mischievous smile.

"Is Miss Allen a *young* lady?" he asked.

"Very young," said Ruth gravely.

"Pretty?"

"Very pretty," said Ruth, "and very much upset."

"I'll see her at once," said he. "I have always been eager to aid young, pretty ladies in distress."

"Indeed," said Ruth. "Well, I mean to stay and chaperone you this time. For once, I find myself in danger of being jealous."

Then she moved to the door and nodded, and little Dorothy came in with a business-like tread, still hugging her doll. Mrs. Allen and the governess followed.

"Well, well!" cried Mr. White, smiling. "I did not expect such a very young client."

And he held out his hand. Dorothy—seeming to find something trustworthy about the tall, dark-eyed man in white—advanced and put her moist little fat hand in his. Mrs. Allen smiled. The governess giggled foolishly. And all three found seats. Dorothy took the footstool that Ruth usually occupied at her husband's side.

"Now, Miss Allen," said White. "What can I do for you?"

"I want my dollies," said Dorothy.

"Your dollies?" repeated White, and looked up at Mrs. Allen. She was slightly flushed—a little ill at ease.

"Has someone been taking her dollies?" he asked.

Mrs. Allen nodded.

"It must sound absurd to you—my coming here on such an errand," she began with difficulty, "but I confess the thing is so extraordinary it has begun to get on my nerves. And Dorothy is quite heart-broken."

She drew a long breath. Dorothy looked from her mother to White, with anxious eyes—still hugging the little pink and white bisque baby. The governess still grinned foolishly.

"Yes?" said White. "Perhaps you had better fill in the details just as briefly as you can—but omit nothing that seems to have any bearing on the matter that troubles you. The more details, the more chance I have of solving your problem, because details are clues. Everything leaves a trace of its existence or its occurrence. The law of cause and effect, you see. My method of solving riddles is simply working back from effect to cause. Now, about the little girl's dollies?"

Mrs. Allen nodded and smiled a little.

"To begin with, she had quite a collection. We've traveled rather a lot, and Dorothy has dolls of every nation—or perhaps I should say *had.* At the moment she has only the one in her arms—Cynthia Elizabeth. She might not have *that,* except that it is her favorite, and seldom leaves her, night or day.

"Three days ago, when the servants unlocked the house in the morning, they found evidences of its having been entered during the night. A pane of glass had been cut from a large rear window. On the buffet were signs of a hurried feast. But the silver was undisturbed. Nothing in fact, seemed to have been taken. My safe was not opened. My jewelry was safe. The first explanation that occurred to us was that some one—not a thief—maddened by hunger, perhaps, had effected entrance in order to eat. It seemed rather extraordinary, but not nearly so extraordinary as it seemed later. For when Dorothy was dressed and taken to her nursery, it developed that one of her dolls was missing."

"What sort of doll?" asked Mr. White quietly.

Mrs. Allen looked uncertainly at the governess. Then she asked a question in German, and translating the reply, said:

"A bisque doll that we got in Vienna. It was dressed in peasant costume, and was worth—possibly—a few dollars. It was by no means the most expensive of Dorothy's collection."

Mr. White nodded.

"We thought that the house-breaker might have taken it for a child. We thought it might be a man with a youngster to look out for—or that it might have been a young girl, to whom the doll had proven too great a temptation. So we did not report the matter to the police. Dorothy had dolls enough, anyway, we decided, and could easily spare one. We had the window repaired."

Dorothy was watching White's face, now, with concentrated appeal.

"Two nights ago—"

"That was the next night?" asked White.

"Yes. The same window was entered in the same way. The marauder had not stopped to feast this time, but had carried off five more dolls."

"Of what sort?" asked White.

Mrs. Allen asked the governess and she replied, "Various sorts."

"Dorothy cried that time," said her mother, "because she's very fond of the babies. But we still felt the matter hardly important enough to report. However, we had one of the footmen watch that window night before last. Nothing happened. No one tried to enter. No dolls were stolen. We thought the matter ended, so last night we did not stand guard—and all the rest of the dolls were stolen."

"How many were there?" asked White.

"About—a hundred and twenty-odd, I should think. Some were rather more like ornaments than toys. Not one was worth a really large sum of money. And there was so much silver about—there were so many more valuable things. Of course some of the dolls were unique. But I can't imagine anyone's taking them for the value of them. Indeed, to-day's occurrence leads me to conclude that it is rather to deprive Dorothy of them, the thieves aim—though why anyone should desire to hurt the child, I can't imagine."

"What was to-day's occurrence?"

"Naturally, Dorothy was heart-broken over the loss of all her children save one—Cynthia Elizabeth. As I said, Cynthia is her favorite. Cynthia sleeps with her, eats with her, and always plays with her. I promised that she should have them all back, meaning, so far as was possible, to replace them; and contented with this assurance, Dorothy was willing to go to the Park with Fraulein. As I glean the rest of it from Fraulein and the child herself, Dorothy played with another little girl named Helen Marlin, Fraulin talked with Mrs. Marlin's nurse. While the children were playing—and while Fraulein was not looking"—Mrs. Allen glanced severely at the governess—"a lady approached Dorothy and—"

"She said, 'What a pretty doll!'" said Dorothy, breaking in excitedly, "and I wouldn't let her take it—and she wanted to and I wouldn't *let* her. And she tried to pull Cynthia 'Lizabeth *right—o u t—o f—m y—arms!* And I—*yelled.*"

Dorothy looked defiant and hugged Cynthia Elizabeth.

"Dear me!" said Mr. White. "That is serious, isn't it? She asked you to let her take it, Dorothy?"

"Yes," said Dorothy, "and I wouldn't—and she said 'please' and I wouldn't—and she tried to *pull* her!"

"And you called your nurse," said White.

"Yes," said Dorothy.

"And then what?"

The governess burst into fluent German.

"Fraulein says she hurried to Dorothy's side and the lady departed."

"What is the description of the lady?" asked White.

Mrs. Allen repeated it for the governess. "The lady was tall, and slender, and beautifully dressed. She had earrings and rings. She had beautiful blond hair and dark eyes. And a motor-car was waiting for her."

"Your nurse didn't know the lady? And Dorothy didn't?"

"No," said Mrs. Allen.

White smiled at Dorothy.

"Will you let *me* see Cynthia 'Lizabeth?" he asked.

Dorothy hesitated—regarded him—looked speculatively at her mother—and again at White.

"He's going to find all the other dollies," said Mrs. Allen. "Let Mr. White see your dolly, Dorothy."

Dorothy walked slowly over to the big basket-chair and exhibited her chief treasure. It was a bisque doll, looking exactly like every other bisque doll. It had a smile, even pearly teeth, plump cheeks, blue eyes that closed, long, wonderfully blond curls. It was dressed in a marvelous embroidered baby-dress and baby-cap, made as well as Dorothy's own garments.

"There is nothing at all remarkable about this doll, is there?" asked White.

"Nothing. I dare say you could buy them by the dozen in any shop."

"Where did you buy Cynthia?"

"I didn't buy it. It was given to Dorothy in Paris."

"By whom, may I ask?"

"A traveling acquaintance—a Mrs. Bartlett of Chicago. She happened to occupy a compartment with us, going into Paris; and Dorothy was carrying Margery Jane, and the conversation started with dolls. Mrs. Bartlett had one in her bag that she had intended as a gift for another child—but she insisted on giving it to Dorothy."

"What sort of woman was Mrs. Bartlett?"

Mrs. Allen looked surprised.

"Apparently a cultured, amiable, wealthy lady. I did not know her well. We saw each other only that once, but she seemed to take a tremendous interest in Dorothy."

Mr. White looked thoughtful.

"I wonder," he said, "if Dorothy would leave Cynthia 'Lizabeth with me until to-morrow?"

"Leave it?" asked Mrs. Allen. Dorothy looked anxious.

"And to-morrow," said he, "we'll get all of her other dolls back. Could you trust her to me until to-morrow?" he added, drawing the child to his knee. "I'm a detective. She'd be quite safe with me!"

"Just until to-morrow?" asked Dorothy. "*Surely* to-morrow?"

"I think so," said White.

Dorothy sighed, hugged Cynthia desperately, and relinquished her. She was now entirely bereft.

Mr. White held Cynthia on his lap.

"I should advise, Mrs. Allen, that you keep the child indoors for the rest of the day, and until you hear from me to-morrow—just to be on the safe side. Watch her pretty closely."

Mrs. Allen turned pale.

"You think there's some danger threatening?"

"Maybe not. But taking precautions never does anyone any harm. No real cause for uneasiness, I think. Oh—and by the way—is this the way Cynthia was dressed when Mrs. Bartlett gave her to Dorothy?"

"No. Dorothy's children must all have complete wardrobes. I think she was in pink originally. Yes—I'm sure of it. The dress and hat must be still in Cynthia's locker."

"Will you send them to me, please?" he asked.

Mrs. Allen agreed—and then the nursemaid, mother and child were all ushered out by the big black servant at the door.

Mr. White was regarding the doll again. Ruth watched him curiously.

"What do you make of it, dear?" she asked.

He smiled at her.

"It's comparatively simple. Somebody wants this doll. From the unusual events surrounding the giving of it, I should assume that the original donor wants it. Possibly she was compelled to get rid of it in the train. She has not dared to get it herself lest the Allens recognize her, so she sends some one else; and the some one else got confused when confronted by all of Dorothy's dolls, for you will remember Cynthia has changed her dress. The thief was looking for a doll in a pink dress. He took the wrong one the first night—the second night he probably took all the ones in pink dresses—the third night he took them all. To Mrs. Bartlett's dismay, the right one was still not forthcoming. She watches Dorothy—probably from the cab—and sees that the child is carrying the doll she wants. So she sends a friend to coax it away or snatch it away from the child."

"But why should anyone go to such extremes for an ordinary doll?" breathed Ruth wonderingly.

He shrugged. "Nobody would. Therefore, this is *not* an ordinary doll."

"It looks ordinary enough," said Ruth.

"Quite true. Therefore the difference is hidden." He lifted the clothes and examined the bisque body.

"Could you put these back if I took them off?"

"Certainly," said Ruth, laughing. She took Cynthia from him and swiftly stripped her. He considered the clothes carelessly, laid them aside and turned his attention to the doll itself. It was molded and jointed in the usual fashion. There was no sign writing on the body.

"Could you get another doll exactly like this, do you suppose?" asked White, thoughtfully.

"I should think so. Why?"

He made no answer, but sat motionless an instant longer, his white brow wrinkled, his dark eyes fixed gravely on the object in his hands. Then with a shrug he caught Cynthia by the head and again by the torso—and wrenched! The head came off in his hand, and was swiftly laid aside. He looked into the body of the doll—turned it upside-down and shook. Nothing came out. He shook it again with the same result.

"You've spoilt it," said Ruth. "You'll break little Dorothy's heart!"

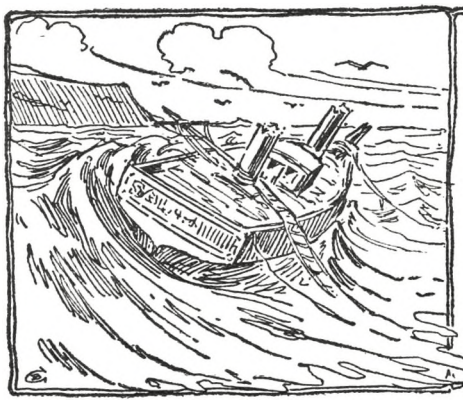
He thrust in his finger and drew out an end of cottony fabric. A thick, tight roll followed. Swiftly—Ruth bending over him—he unwound it. She uttered a little cry of astonishment; a quantity of unset gems lay before their eyes! Twinkling, scintillating, sparkling unset diamonds—beautifully cut and polished, snow-white, and of good size!

The customs had no knowledge of a Mrs. Bartlett, and Mr. White had small description of her to assist in his search, so Cynthia 'Lizabeth was sent to a doll-doctor, where her head was restored. Then, fully clothed again, she was given back to Dorothy—and that night, two of White's assistants were hidden in the little girl's room.

As White expected, the search for the right doll was not abandoned. Mrs. Bartlett's accomplice, convinced now that the jewels were in the doll Dorothy carried always with her, entered the child's sleeping room and stole Cynthia Elizabeth. White's men did not interfere. They merely followed, and in a house off Sixth avenue on Forty-ninth street, succeeded in taking a little band of smugglers numbering five—all of whom were suspects, and one of whom was Mrs. Bartlett of Chicago, alias "Kate Nast," alias "Lady Leighton" and many other names.

In the trial that followed, it developed that many children had met the kindly Chicago woman in Europe and had received dolls—which were afterward mysteriously lost or stolen. It was a very clever graft, as a child carrying an ordinary bisque doll was not apt to excite the suspicions of the customs men. It might never have been discovered but for an illness which overtook Mrs. Bartlett in Paris and prevented her forwarding information about the consignment in Cynthia until Cynthia had had new clothes.

All the rest of Dorothy's dolls were found in the Forty-ninth street house—and returned in safety. And Dorothy is a staunch friend and supporter, now, of Mr. Kristian White. She is firmly convinced that there is nothing he does not know.



Drift From the Sargasso

By RAY WYNN

I FIRST came across him one fine summer morning. He was seated upon one of the benches in Battery Park, sucking moodily upon a stubby, black clay pipe from which no smoke issued. An offer of tobacco, gratefully accepted upon his part, led to conversation between us.

"Yes, I'm a sailor," he said at last, in reply to a question of mine, "and likely always to be one, for I'm nearing sixty and at that time of life a man is not very apt to change his occupation. Once, I was something better. My family is a good one." He said this with an air of pride which his unkempt appearance strangely belied. "Our people are well-known in England and I'm an Oxford graduate, myself. My father was a rich manufacturer of Liverpool. I succeeded him in the business at the time he died. But I was wild—wild as a goshawk—and I drank, more or less, all the time; so the business was left to attend to itself. It went the way of most neglected businesses; there was no one there to look after my interests. Then my wife died—" he gulped a little as he spoke the words—"and the child. After that, I didn't much care what happened to me. At last I was a ruined man; and good old England's no place for a man who has had money and social position and lost both; there's nothing for him there.

"I had always wanted to travel, and I had always loved the sea; so I shipped before the mast aboard a clipper bound for Australia. I thought that I might settle there and, perhaps, make another fortune to take the place of the one which I had lost. I found that it was hard to leave the ship when we got to Melbourne, but I was still full of the idea of making that fortune, so I traveled up-country and worked for several years as a sheep-herder. It was the only thing that offered itself to do, after I got there."

"Then, one time, the boss sent me down to Melbourne with a 'drift' of sheep. Just as soon as I smelled the sea, I was wild to get afloat again. There was an American ship in the harbor—the clipper, *Queen,* and she needed men. That settled it. I delivered the 'drift' to the buyers, wrote a note to my employer, telling him what I meant to do, and asking him to hold the wages due me, until I called for them or wrote him telling him where to send them. Then I went down and shipped as a foremast hand. That was thirty years and more ago and I've never been back for them, and never wrote. But if the boss is still living, they're waiting for me, for he was an honest man and one of the salt of the earth. He knew my whole story and he always encouraged me to do what was right. He had learned some hard lessons, himself, for he was an ex-convict. You needn't start, sir. There's many a convict, doing time, who is more honest than many men upon whom the law has never laid its hand. But he's probably dead

and gone by now, for he was a middle-aged man then."

The Sailor's voice died away into silence and he sat, gazing moodily out over the sparkling waters of the Bay.

"So you shipped aboard the *Queen*," I said at last. I was eager to hear more of his tale. He roused himself with a sudden start.

"I never get to talking about Jamie Hempstead, that it doesn't set me to thinking of days gone by," he said, apologetically. "Yes, sir, I shipped, aboard the *Queen* and went to India in her; then from there to China; then round Cape Horn to New York. She was a good ship—well-found, well-officered, and a fast sailor. While I was aboard her, I never knew anything that sailed to beat her, and we had many a go with other ships—and some that were counted flyers, too. She could beat some of the steamships, even.

"I made three full voyages in her, besides my first trip from Melbourne to New York. Each of them was around the world. I came in time to think of her as my home." He sighed. "Well, when she was homeward-bound on her third voyage, a stiff nor'-easter, with heavy fog, drove her out of her course and upon the Jersey coast. She went to pieces within three hours after she struck. We got ashore somehow—all but the captain and two of the crew. The captain was old and weak; two of us did all that we could to keep him afloat until our feet could hit the beach; but the waves tore him away from us and we couldn't get back to him. He drowned within ten miles of his home, where his wife and his three girls were waiting the news of his safe arrival in New York.

"That was in the fall of '61. The Civil War was on. I enlisted in the navy. I was assigned to the sailing-sloop *Cumberland,* and I was still aboard her, when the *Merrimac* sunk her in Hampton Roads. Was I afraid? I certainly was. The ram came right at us; we gave her a broadside that would have sunk any wooden ship that ever floated—and the balls glanced off her plated sides like peas from a boy's pea-shooter. She fired one shot from her great pivot-gun that raked our spar deck with grape shot. Then she rammed us. She opened up a hole just abreast of the forechains that you could have driven a horse and cart through. After that, she backed off to a little distance and began firing, as though she felt that she hadn't done us damage enough already. It was awful, sir, to have to stand there, waiting your turn to be shot down, like cattle waiting for the butcher to knock them in the head. But not one of those fellows flinched. I've heard a deal of talk in my time about the bravery of the British sailors; but you can take it from me, sir, they're in no ways ahead of the Americans. It'll be a bad war, sir, if those two countries ever get at it, hammer and tongs."

He paused to relight his pipe.

"After we saw that the ship must sink in a few minutes," he continued, "several of us got away in one of the boats to the frigate *Minnesota.* From there we saw the ram destroy the *Congress,* the frigate that lay at anchor near the *Cumberland.* She was a pretty sight, as she burned far into the hours of the night.

"After the next day's fight, when the *Monitor* drove off the *Merrimac* and saved the rest of the Union fleet, those of us that were left from the crews of the two ships that the ram had destroyed were sent to the ships of the blockading squadrons. I landed in the Gulf Squadron, under Farragut, and aboard his flagship, the *Hartford.* Farragut was a great commander, sir. He was a fighter, every inch of him. We all looked up to him as the greatest man alive—greater than Lincoln, even. I was captain of a gun, aboard the *Hartford,* and I guess that my gun left as many marks upon the rebels as any.

"At the close of the war, I found myself in New York, with my pockets full of money. I soon found myself in good shape to ship again—nothing in my pockets and little more on my back. I shipped aboard the bark, *Mahanoy,* for the Mediterranean ports—Gibraltar, Naples and Valetta. We sailed in August of '65. I just got back a few weeks ago and soon I'll have to ship again, for my money is about gone. But not for drink this time—I don't drink any more."

"You just got back a few weeks ago?" I queried in astonishment. "Why, man, it was in '65 you shipped, and here it is in the middle eighties. Where have you been in the meantime?"

He hesitated in replying and I pressed him to fill his pipe again. He did not require any great amount of urging.

"This tobacco is good," he said, as he lighted up. "I might as well tell you where I've been, sir; though I suppose that, like all the rest, you'll call me a liar after I'm through. All these twenty years, I've been in the queerest place in the world—that port of dead ships, the Sargasso Sea."

Amazement held me silent.

"The Sargasso Sea, sir," he repeated. "I'm just 'Drift from the Sargasso,' like any other piece of wreckage that has escaped its clutch. What I'm going to tell you is the solemn truth, though it may sound to you like a lie. As I hope for mercy, hereafter, it's the truth."

His manner was more impressive than his words. Demented he might be—and probably was—although his actions were not those of a man mentally unbalanced; but it was evident that the things which he was about to relate were very real to him.

"The *Mahanoy* sailed from New York," he continued. "We were strong-handed—captain, two mates, two passengers and a crew of fifteen men, besides the cook and the cabin-boy. Everything went well until we were in mid-Atlantic. Then two of the men came down with a fever. We laid it to the condition of the bark's hold. I haven't mentioned to you that she was what seamen call a 'dirty ship.' She had just come in from Buenos Ayres, with a heavy cargo of bones and hides, and she had not been properly cleaned out after her cargo was discharged. I heard before we sailed that the owner was too mean to have the cleaning done right. If that was the case, on the Last Day he'll have a bill to settle for over a score of human lives.

"The first day or two we thought but little of this sickness. But the two men died the third day, and five others were taken down. Then the captain and the two passengers were taken. They all died, and others were taken down." He shuddered. "It's a tale that I don't much care to repeat," he said. "Everybody who has followed the sea very long knows what it means to be aboard a fever-infected ship. Thirteen days after the first man came down with the fever, I was alone—the last man left aboard that great bark, and she drifting helplessly at the mercy of the winds and waves. Why I didn't go crazy with the horror of it all, I can't to this day understand, sir. Neither can I explain why I didn't get the fever and go as my mates went, unless it was that I had had a touch of something like it, aboard the old *Queen*. It was only a light attack, but it may have left me proof against the disease, when it came my way again.

"The sails had been furled, one by one, as we grew short-handed—a lucky thing for me, for I could never have done it, alone—and the bark would surely have been dismasted in some of the blows, if they had been spread; she might even have been capsized.

"So the bark drifted. I was never much of a navigator, but I knew enough about the art to have some general idea of her location. She was a little east of mid-Atlantic and drifting south—south, out of the regular lanes of navigation—south, away from the chance of sighting some passing sail—south, so the charts told me, toward the Sargasso Sea.

"I did everything that I could think of to stop her drift. I got her head to wind and got out a sea-anchor, made out of the light extra spars that were stored upon deck and canvas that I routed out of the sailroom; I watched her night and day, tending and nursing her, like a child. I suppose that I checked her drift a little; but each day, at noon, found her farther and farther to the south.

"She drifted for a fortnight. Then there came a heavy gale from the nor'-east. It lasted for days. The third day, she tore loose from the sea-anchor, swung around, and headed away, dead before the wind. There was only one thing left for me to do—take the wheel and keep her there. For two days and

three nights, I stood at that wheel, so tired out at last, that I only managed to keep myself upon my feet by hanging onto the spokes.

"It was about the middle watch of the third night, that I noticed that she didn't have as much motion as before. The gale still blew as hard as ever, but she didn't roll and pitch as she had been doing. And there was a strange, swishing sound, as though something was dragging against her sides, as she drove ahead. Then the wind began to die away, and an hour later, it was no more than a full-sail breeze. Without any sail upon her, her headway was almost entirely deadened and she stood upright, with very little roll or pitch to her. I wondered at the sudden dying down of the waves, but was too completely worn-out to look into it at that time; instead, I made for the cabin, threw myself into a bunk and was asleep before my head touched the pillow.

"It was late the next afternoon when I awoke. The ship was lying as quietly as though tied up to a dock. I was nearly famished and my first care was to get something to eat. Then I went on deck.

"I nearly fell flat with astonishment at what I saw. The bark seemed to be standing upright in a green meadow. All around her were green fields—of seaweed. She was in the Sargasso Sea —a floating jail and I was a prisoner for life in that green waste.

"I think that for a time at least I must have been crazy. I cursed, I raved, I danced up and down upon the deck, with nothing but the echoes of my own voice and footsteps to respond to the things which I said and did. At last my frenzy wore itself out and I became calm—with the calmness of utter despair. By that time, it was nightfall. I ate my supper, but I could not sleep. All night long I paced up and down the deck, impatiently awaiting the coming of the dawn, that I might see and learn more of the green prison-walls which environed me.

"Day came at last. Upon all sides of me were leagues and leagues of the green weed. And there were other things, which I had failed to notice in my mad frenzy of the day before. Ahead and to starboard, not more than a cable's length away, was a great mass, dull gray in color, with three stumpy sticks rising from it and a fourth projecting from one end—the hulk of a great ship. I went below and secured the captain's spy-glass. Inch by inch, I studied every detail of the hulk, and at last I came to the conclusion that she had been a man-of-war—probably a large frigate, or small line-of-battle ship. From certain peculiarities of her build, I fancied that she might be French.

"Beyond her and nearly half a mile from the bark, was another hulk, high at bow and stern. The masts were gone, but I did not have much trouble in placing her as a ship of much more ancient build than the one nearest the bark. In my travels, I had seen pretty nearly every kind of ship that sails the seas, but never anything even remotely resembling her in build.

"Directly ahead of the bark was another and much smaller ship. Her three lower masts were standing and the main-yard was still in place, hanging at a heavy slant, held only by its iron. She was distant about a mile. I fancied that, like the ship nearest to me, she was a man-of-war, for I thought that I could trace the outlines of ports in the dull gray of her sides, and the main-yard was much too large for that of a merchant-man of her size.

"Upon the port beam and more than a mile away, was a fourth ship. She was a later arrival than the rest, for the paint was still black upon her sides and her masts were standing, though most of the rigging was gone and the lower sticks were blackened as though by smoke. She looked to me like an American.

"And that was all—the five ships, with the green seaweed upon all sides of them: this was my world, my kingdom over which I reigned supreme, without a soul to question my authority."

For several minutes, the Sailor was silent, lost in somber thought. From the expression upon his face, it was evident that he was living over again those bitter first ages—for such they must

have seemed to him—of his enforced and unasked-for sovereignty over the realm of weed. At last, he continued:

"I will pass briefly over the first few months of my existence there," he said. "I spent them in growing accustomed to my surroundings. I had recurrences of my fit of frenzy; but they grew milder as time passed, and finally vanished altogether, as I became more and more resigned to my fate. The prisoner who thinks that he has an opportunity of escape struggles to be free; he who has given up hope tries to satisfy himself with his surroundings. If he did not do so, he would go crazy. I neglected no chance, no move, that might lead to my escape. But even while I busied myself with them, something within me seemed to tell me that my efforts were all in vain.

"Among other things which I did, I fumigated the ship; I had no desire for a recurrence of the fever, with myself for the sole victim. Also, I went carefully over my store of provisions. There were enough of these to last me for the remainder of my natural days. The bark had been well-provisioned, and, in addition to that, she carried as part of her cargo a great lot of American foodstuffs for the markets in the Far East. In this respect, I was much better off than most men ashore—my living was provided for me—that and my lodging. True, if one went, the other went with it; but the sight of the hulks about me spoke well for the long existence of my habitation. The only thing concerning which I had any doubt was the water supply. And that question solved itself in the first few months that I lived there. There were occasional heavy rainstorms and, by arranging a funnel out of an old sail and shifting casks under it, I could gather enough water during one storm to last me a twelve-month for drinking purposes. It was, perhaps, not such drinking water as you are used to, sir, but it was fresh and sweet. I grew so used to it that when I finally got away from the Sargasso and tasted ordinary ship's water, its flavor seemed strange to me.

"I kept a diary. I read. The bark's cabin had a good library in it, most of the books having been the property of one of the passengers, a young man of considerable means, who had taken the voyage for his health. I busied myself with building a little skiff; sometimes, there were little stretches of clear water about the bark and a boat was handy. I fished—sometimes with a line and hook, sometimes with a net on a pole —for the fish and the small crustaceans which abounded in the green weed.

"About two months after I came there, I thought that I noticed that the bark and the hulk of the frigate were nearer to each other than they had been when I first saw the frigate. This interested me and I took the bearings of the hulk, by compass, to ascertain whether such was, indeed, the case. It took me over a week to make certain; but, at last, I was sure that they were drawing slowly together. The attraction between two large floating bodies is a strange thing. Here were two ships, a cable's length apart at the beginning, both without motive power of their own, yet ever drawing closer and closer together."

He paused, long enough to tap out the "heel" in his pipe and to fill and light it again.

"It took six months for them to do it, sir," he resumed. "That is, six months from the time that I first noticed that they were drawing together. At last, they were near enough, so that I could lay a plank across from one to the other.

"I went aboard the strange ship. She was a large frigate, as I had surmised; and she had been in action with some ship, or other. There were holes in her sides, where the cannon balls had gone through them, and her decks were splintered and torn. Some of the cannon were dismounted. Skeletons of men who had fallen in battle were lying upon her gun-deck and in the cockpit; but of her crew—that is, those who were alive and able to get about after the battle was over—there was no trace. From all appearances, she had been deserted, right after an action. If it had been later the poor fellows whose bones I found aboard her would not have been there.

"I went aft. Here, in the captain's cabin, I found the log-book. I had been

right in my guess as to her nationality in the first place. She was French and her name was *Insurgente*. I remembered reading, one time, about such a ship. She had been captured from the French by the Americans, about 1800, and taken into the service of the United States. She had sailed away shortly afterward and had never been heard from.

"The log-book was fairly well kept, but there was no record of her last engagement in it. I ransacked the cabin, but found nothing of value, save a few gold-pieces and this ring." He held up his finger to show an old-fashioned gold ring, with a bloodstone setting. "I found this in the drawer of the table in the captain's cabin," he added.

"After I had returned to the bark, I got to thinking, and, somehow or other, I didn't fancy the idea of having that floating charnel-house alongside me. I suppose that I was afraid that the ghosts of the dead might visit me." He laughed. "All sailors are more or less superstitious, sir—it's part of the life on the sea. Then too, if a gale should arise, the motion of the water might make the ships grind against each other. I thought that it might be a wise move to scuttle the frigate. But I didn't dare to do this, while the bark lay alongside her, and I didn't at first know how to get them apart. But at last, I hit upon a scheme. It was strange that I hadn't thought of it before, in getting the two ships together.

"There was quite a little breeze blowing and it came to us from nearly dead astern. I went forward, cast loose the lashings of the jib, and hoisted it as far as I was able. It was a heavy sail and I couldn't get it up very far; but it filled all right and did the work. In three hours' time, it had dragged the bark ahead, until her starboard quarter just overlapped the port forechains of the frigate. Then I lowered the sail and went aboard her, taking with me a long-bitted ship's auger, that would bore a two-inch hole.

"I went down into the frigate's hold. It was full of boxes and barrels of provisions. And there must have been at least a thousand cannon balls, all neatly laid away, down along the kelson, where they could serve as ballast, until they were needed in action. I picked out a spot in the frigate's side and began to bore. The timbers and planking were weak and rotten with age, and I soon had a hole through them and a stream of water spurting far out in the hold. I bored six of these holes, three upon each side, amidships. Then I returned to the bark and hoisted the jib, again. This time, I took the frigate's log-book with me.

"The bark drew slowly ahead. At sundown, she was more than her length away from the frigate's bow. Then the wind died away. It was a bright, moonlight night, and I sat on the quarter-rail, watching the frigate as she settled lower and lower in the water. At first, she settled very slowly; but a little later, some of the shot-holes in her sides came into account and then she went down fast enough. Her sides and upper works were pretty well shattered. It was after two in the morning when she finally went under. For some time she had laid there, her decks awash, and I had begun to fear that she was going to float, until she became waterlogged. Suddenly she gave a quick little roll to port, which I would never have noticed, had I not been looking intently at her, just at the moment; the pent-up air blew out her forward deck, with a report like a gun; then she pitched backward, her great bows rising high in the air as her stern settled, and plunged out of sight. A great, oily wave rolled through the seaweed and made the bark rock for a minute or two. And that was the last of the *Insurgente*.

"I can tell you, sir, I felt lonely after she was gone. Wrecked as she was, and with all those dreadful things lying about upon her decks, she was company for me—and you come to value company in a place like the Sargasso.

"Now that I had found out what the jib would do for me, I had an occupation—something to take up my time and attention. I made up my mind to visit all my neighbors. And I did, although it took me over three years to make the round. There were weeks at a time when there was no wind at all and other weeks when it blew dead ahead. Sometimes, I would lose in one

day all and more, than I had made in a week. But I kept at it, never allowing myself to become discouraged.

"The next ship I reached was the hulk with the high bow and stern. I dragged in alongside her one fine morning. And I spent that day and many others aboard her—but they came later. She was a Spanish ship— an old galleon. There were no traces of her crew aboard her. But, away down in her hold, were piles of bars of gold and silver. And in her main cabin hidden away in a little closet"—he drew from his tattered vest a little chamois bag, and, opening it, let me see the contents, about a score of pearls of large size and satiny luster—"these, and others like them. I took them—I do not know why, unless it was that they were pretty to look at. They have stood me in good stead a number of times since then, when I have needed money. I have never had any trouble to find buyers for them."

I looked at him in silent amazement. He was carrying a small fortune in that dirty little bag. He smiled faintly, as he noticed the expression upon my face.

"It's possible for a man to get so that he's indifferent to values," he said. "Gold and silver and precious stones mean nothing, when a man can't realize upon them—when he has no place to use them. There was enough of the gold and silver to make me a rich man—a millionaire, many times over, I expect —but I laughed at the bars of metal. Of what use were they to me—a man condemned to spend my life in that place, where there could be no changing of money? That place, where all the wealth in the world could not purchase for me an instant's companionship of one of my own kind, or the sound of another voice beside my own?

"I was tempted to keep the bark alongside the *San Ildefonso,* for that was her name, for several days, while I looked her over more thoroughly. But there were signs of a coming storm and I did not wish to take any chances. So I got clear of her. It was a good thing that I did, for the gale which followed was one of the worst that I ever saw, in all the years that I spent in the Sargasso. Had the two ships been side by side, they would have ground each other to pieces.

"This storm did me one good turn, though. It served to bring the big ship that I thought was an American down close to the bark. So, after the gale had blown itself out, I started to visit her. The weed was so thick about her that I could not get up alongside her, as I had done with the *Insurgente* and the *San Ildefonso.* But I managed to get near enough, astern of her, to shove the barks jib-boom over her quarter and I got upon her decks in this way. She was the ship *Mary Bradshaw* of Boston. Fire had been *her* trouble, although there had been no real need for her crew to desert her, for, after it had done its worst, she was still in condition to be navigated. She was pretty well burned-out, inside; but her hull was of iron, and beyond a little warping here and there, from the heat, was in fair shape. Old Captain Buckley of the *Queen* would have brought her back from China in that shape. Her logbook was gone—I suppose that the captain had taken it with him when he left—so that I couldn't learn just when and where she had been left to shift for herself. I didn't waste a very great deal of time aboard her, for there wasn't much left to see.

"That visit left me with just one other call to make." He smiled grimly. "I was inclined to be sociable, and I had no mind to slight the last one of my neighbors, even if she did lie a little outside of the circle in which I moved. I was a good while in making that last call—much longer than I had been in reaching the galleon. Sometimes, it seemed to me that I would never reach her. Once, I managed to get so near to her, that I could have thrown a stone and hit her. That was at nightfall. I left the jib set and during the night there was a shift of wind that amounted to a little gale. By morning, I was nearly half a mile away from her—the work of weeks undone in a single night. It was a bitter disappointment to me.

"When, at last, I did reach her, I found that she was a man-of-war, as I had supposed. She was the sloop-of-war, *Wasp.* You've heard of the *Wasp?*"

I confessed my total ignorance of the *Wasp* and her history. He seemed disappointed.

"I supposed that everyone had heard of the United States sloop-of-war, *Wasp,*" he rejoined. "I didn't think it likely that you knew about the *Insurgente;* but the *Wasp* was, in every way, a more noted ship. Her disappearance was a mighty strange thing. She sailed from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in April of 1814. She was a brand new ship and her captain, Blakely, was one of the best that ever trod a quarter-deck. She fought two actions—one with the *Reindeer,* the other with the *Avon,* both British sloops-of-war. She won both fights. About two months after the fight with the *Avon,* she met a ship that had aboard her two naval officers who had fought in the action between the *Essex* and two British men-of-war, at Valparaiso. These officers were then on their way home to the United States and they left the ship to take passage aboard her. From the time that she parted company with this ship, she was never heard from.

"Knowing what I did about her, you may imagine the interest with which I looked her over. Her bows were badly stove in and there was about four feet of water in her hold; but she seemed as tight as a bottle. There were no traces of officers or men, and her boats were gone. For a long time I pondered and puzzled over their strange desertion of her—a desertion without apparent cause. I laid alongside her for three days, during which there was scarcely a breath of air. The afternoon of the third day, I hit upon what I believed to be the true solution of the problem.

"I was bending over the main-hatch, when a little ground-swell—we often had them—made the ship roll a trifle and disturbed the stagnant water in her hold. Right afterward, I got a whiff of a peculiar odor. There was no need for me to smell it twice. It was the fever-smell and too recent in my recollections for me to be mistaken in it. I could see it all, now. The crew fever-stricken—men dying by scores—then those that were still alive taking to the boats and risking all the chances of the sea, rather than face the certain death which lurked aboard her. It was horrible to think about.

"I did not secure the *Wasp's* log-book. It was gone, as were all the ship's papers. I found a letter, written by one of the sailors, to his wife. It was in a drawer of the table in the captain's cabin, no doubt awaiting the chance to be placed aboard some ship bound for the States. This letter told that the *Wasp* had been in another action, after her fight with the *Avon,* this time with a ship much larger than herself. Her enemy blew up, when the action was at its height. Who, or what she was, they did not know, aboard the *Wasp,* save that she was British and seemed to be a large frigate. According to this letter, she put up a mighty stiff fight and things looked squally for the *Wasp,* at the time she blew up. I guess that the writer didn't stretch the truth very much, when he said this, for I counted over a hundred eighteen-pounder shot holes in the *Wasp's* hull, myself, besides half a dozen or so of light hits and gouges in the lower masts. All of the shot holes had been plugged and the mainmast had been braced near the deck, although the stick seemed to me to be sound enough for all ordinary purposes.

"As soon as I could get any wind, I spread all the sail that I cold hoist and drew away from the *Wasp.* I was not taking any chances with the fever; if I hung around where it was, I might get it yet. I felt much relieved when I had managed to put over a mile of clear weed between us.

"After my visit to the *Wasp,* over a year passed by before I felt any further desire to call upon my neighbors. Then I got the crazy notion of shifting all the gold and silver from the galleon to the bark. There was no sense in it, except that it gave me something to do. And, just then, I needed something to occupy my mind, for I had run out of tobacco and I couldn't find any more aboard the bark. I was almost wild for it. They say that if you deprive a man of his tobacco, he will learn, in time, to do without it—but I know better. They're wrong—dead wrong, sir. I went without it for over sixteen years. There was not a day, of

all that time, that I didn't think about it and want it. I used to sit and suck on my empty pipe by the hour. And I craved it just as much the day I was rescued as I did the day after I smoked my last pipeful.

"It took me about three months to get all the bars safely aboard the bark and stowed away. I didn't hurry about it—just worked along at any easy gait —took a day off whenever I felt like it, to read, or fish. I looked them over, after I had them all down in the hold. They made a great pile, along the kelson, where I had cleared away some of the cargo to make room for them. In the haunts of men, that pile, turned into money, would work wonders; here, it was just so much ballast for a dead ship—paving stones would have answered just as well.

"The other years of my stay in the Sargasso were monotonous and dull. I read and talked to myself, aloud, so that I might not forget the sound of my mother-tongue; I exercised, to keep myself in good physical condition; I worked at the rigging, replacing ropes that were weather-worn and keeping the standing rigging well tarred down, for if that went, I had not the strength to replace it; I made experiments in the line of trying to get the bark out of the seaweed and into the open water, but they were failures, because the wind did not blow long enough from a favorable quarter to carry her clear; I fished—mostly for sport—letting the fish go as I caught them; I tinkered about the bark. Among other things that I did in this line was to keep all her brasswork polished; it was clean and bright the day I left her.

"Strange as it may seem to you, sir, after what I have told you, I was fairly content with my lot. For the first five years or so, I used to go up to the maintruck every day, to look for the sight of a sail. A long, long ways to the northward, there was the glint of clear water. But my watch for a sail was a vain one, and at last I gave it up, going up only once or twice a month, and then rather for the purpose of trying to con out something in the nature of an open channel to the northward, than for any other purpose.

"But once, after a heavy storm, I went up to look about me. It had been a heavy gale from the northeast. The weed had been driven well down, about the bark, and the clear water could be plainly seen. Far to the northward, was a white object, which gleamed upon the surface of the sea. It was a sail. And the sight of it roused within me the hope which had slumbered, nearly dead, for years—an almost-forgotten thing.

"Like one in a dream, I clambered down from the truck, went to the cabin and secured the captain's glass; then I returned to the truck again. It took me some time to locate the object —my hands trembled so—but at last the glass bore upon it. It was a small schooner, all of two leagues distant from the bark, and running along the edge of the weed.

"I descended to the deck, my mind filled with but one idea— that I *must* get aboard that schooner. Every movement that I made was directed to that end. I got my little skiff overboard; I provisioned and watered her—it might be a long chase to catch up with the schooner. Then, like a wet blanket, the thought occurred to me, that the schooner would be gone, long before I could get out to her, unless I could find some means of attracting the attention of those aboard her. Fire would do it. But, crazy as I was to get away, I still had sense enough left to hesitate about destroying the bark. If I failed in my effort to reach the schooner, I must return to her as my only haven of refuge. Then I thought of the old galleon. She lay quite near the bark at that time, and she was a regular tinder-box. She would answer very well as a beacon to attract their attention.

"I rowed and shoved my little skiff through the weed, until I reached her side. I fired her in half a dozen different places. She burned freely from the first, giving off, too, great clouds of black smoke that rose in a great column, high into the air. They *must* see that, if they had eyes, and curiosity as to its cause would surely hold them in the neighborhood until it died away.

"Then I set out, across the weed, in the direction of the schooner. I rowed

—I paddled—I dragged the skiff across the places where it was thick enough to bear my weight, and they were many, for I am a small man. It was nightfall when I reached the open water, but I had been in sight of the schooner since four o'clock. As I left the weed, she was lying-to, not more than half a mile away.

"I rowed down to her and hailed her, my voice sounding strangely in my own ears. My hail was answered, and, a moment later, I was dragged aboard her by some of the crew. Once I felt sure that I was safe, I fainted. They told me afterward, that I lay for two hours, like one dead. I know that I was not good for much for days to come.

"When I came to my senses, they told me that I was aboard a yacht, belonging to a rich Englishman, who liked to cruise about in odd holes and corners of the sea. The gale had driven the yacht down into the very edge of the seaweed; in fact, she had driven into it, quite a little way, but they had managed to free her from it.

"Little by little, I told them my story. One thing, only, I left out. I didn't mention the gold and silver, or the pearls. Why didn't I? I was afraid that they would try to get in to the bark and that they might not be able to get out. I had no desire to spend any more of my life in the Sargasso. They cruised about the edge of it, for over two weeks, and every minute of that time I lived in dread that they might try to get in to it. It bothered me so that I couldn't sleep at nights. They were kind to me, though, and did all that they could to make me comfortable.

"Then the yacht squared away for Gibraltar. When she was within a day's run of her port, I told the Englishman, Mr. Erskine, about the gold and silver. I knew that he couldn't go back, then, for the yacht's provisions were running low. He listened to me, as though he believed what I told him, but I heard him tell the mate a little while afterward that the solitude of the Sargasso had driven me mad. I had told him about the treasure, because I wished to repay him for the good turn he had done me. I didn't want the stuff —one had to go to the Sargasso for it.

"They landed me at Gibraltar and I shipped aboard a British tramp, bound for Philadelphia. When I reached there, I took the first opportunity which offered to visit League Island and tell the naval men there what I had seen of the *Insurgente* and the *Wasp*. I thought that they ought to know about it. At any rate, the descendants of the men who had served aboard the two ships would be interested, and the only way in which they could be reached was through the Navy Department.

"They listened to my story—then told me that I was the liar of the century. One young sprig of a lieutenant told me that if Baron Munchausen were living in these times, he would yield his honors as a liar to me, without question. And they said these things to the man who had spent twenty of the best years of his life in that green hell, with only those dead ships for company. The best word that they had for was *liar*."

He paused for a moment, his eyes flashing, his indignation almost choking him. It was evident that with him, the sense of injury had grown with repeated thought. And no wonder!

"I was furious," he continued, after a time, "but I didn't let them see it. If I had raved, they would have said that I was a madman as well as a liar. I gave them the latitude and longitude, as I had worked them out, and told them that if they would despatch a cruiser there, they could soon find out whether I spoke the truth, or not. Then I left them—wise in their own conceit —a bunch of know-nothings.

"I came from Philadelphia to New York. And that about finishes my story, sir. I have knocked about the city, here, until my money is about gone. You have seen that I am out of tobacco this morning, and I don't care to sell any more of my pearls to raise money, just at present. So I must ship, to-day, if I can, and secure my advance. I wish to get aboard some ship, bound to the Far East, by way of the Mediterranean. Once I get into the Pacific, I'll never come back to the Atlantic, again. Why not? I'm afraid I'll land in the Sargasso, again, if I do. Sometimes I imagine that I can hear it calling to me to come

back—come back—and spend the rest of my days there. And sometimes, it seems to me that I *will* land there again, in spite of all that I can do to prevent it."

He rose to his feet.

"Thanks for your tobacco, sir," he said. "I fear that I've bored you with my story; but you seemed interested—so I went on with it."

I assured him that he had not. Then he left me. For a long time after he had gone, I meditated upon the story which he told—a weird tale. One might readily be pardoned for doubting it; yet his manner had impressed me with the feeling that he had told the truth.

I was down upon the Battery two days later. I found him sitting in the same place as before, puffing contentedly away upon his pipe. The supply of the weed was no longer low with him. I wondered whether he had sold another one of his pearls. He seemed glad to see me, smiling pleasantly, as he made room for me upon the bench beside him.

"What luck in your shipping?" I asked.

"I've shipped," he replied. "Got a berth as foremast hand, aboard the ship *Douglas Castle*, bound for Aden, by way of the Suez Canal. She sails tomorrow. Once we get to Aden, it's good-by to the Atlantic for me. I've shipped in such a way that I don't have to return in her."

We conversed for a time, about various places—the Far East—the Isles of the Pacific—Australia. At last, he rose to go.

"I must be leaving, sir," he said, quietly. "They'll be expecting me, aboard the ship. I asked off for a couple of hours, to run down here, upon the chance that I might meet you again." He fumbled for a moment at his vest, produced the little chamois bag and opened it, emptying its contents into his horny palm. "I wish that you'd take your choice of these, sir," he said. "It's yours, and welcome. Somehow or other, I feel that you believe the story that I told you the other day. And you're the first man I've told it to who has. It will not cramp me any, for I have but little need of money; and I'd like to make some return to you, for your faith in me."

I demurred, at first, offering, instead, to buy one of the pearls. But he insisted that I should take it as a gift. So I selected one.

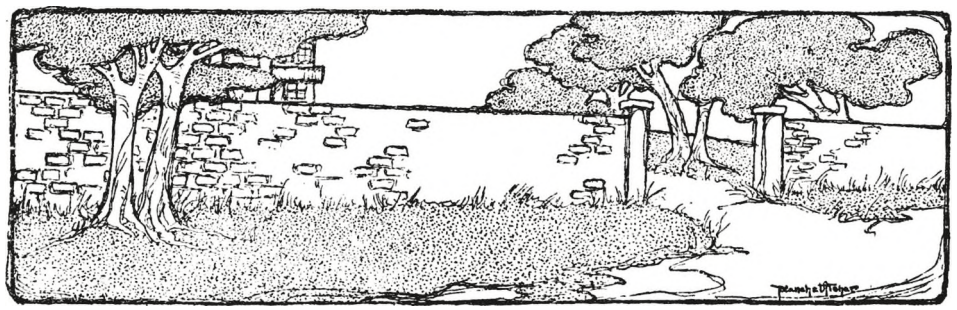
"It makes a man feel good to think that he's believed, sir," he said, simply, as he poured the pearls back into the bag and replaced it in his vest. "And now—good-by, sir."

We shook hands and he shambled away, an odd fragment of wreckage upon the great sea of humanity, leaving me staring alternately at his vanishing figure and at the pearl, lying in my hand.

The *Douglas Castle* sailed the next day, at noon. Standing upon the pier, I saw her leave. And I saw, too, the little sailor, busy at his work about the decks, just before she cast off and drew out into the stream.

The weeks passed by. Something, I know not what, made me scan the shipping-news daily. Later, the same thing caused me to haunt the Maritime Exchange, for news of the *Douglas Castle*. None came. At last, she was posted as "missing." No news ever came of her. There were heavy gales that year, soon after she sailed. At the Exchange, they think that she must have foundered in one of them, for she was deeply laden.

But, concerning her, there is a thought which recurs to me with painful persistency: the thought that the silent, weedy sea—the "green hell" of the little sailor—has claimed its own again—that to the Sargasso has returned the "Drift from the Sargasso."



A Marauder in the Manor

By HORACE HAZELTINE

MY FRIEND Hooley was the father of Malcolm Manor. Of the original pioneer dozen who bought lots there and built houses upon them, eleven did so, not so much because they liked the place and what Hooley told them about its future, as because they liked Hooley. The other one of the dozen—the first—was Hooley himself, who is really one of the finest fellows in my fine-fellow circle. He had such a sympathetic way with him! In telling your troubles to Hooley, you can always be sure not merely of his individual attention but of his multiplied interest and subtracted advice. I haven't always taken his advice, it is true, but I have always felt the better for it, and I have always felt nearer to Hooley because of it.

While building at Malcolm Manor I had a fresh trouble every day, and every day I unloaded upon Hooley. He never failed me once. And when I perversely acted contrary to his suggestions and came to grief in consequence, he never retorted with either rebuke or ridicule, as would only have been human. So Molly and I long ago agreed that Hooley is one man in ten thousand —a paragon, a brick, a trump, a veritable *ne plus ultra* of impeccancy.

I can see now that had I accepted each and all of Hooley's tips unquestioningly I should have saved money and should own to-day a far better designed and constructed suburban home than this composite mistake which now shelters my goods and chattels.

My business training was my undoing. Unfortunately, having occupied for some years the position of assistant purchasing agent of the New York and Tullytown Railroad Company, I was convinced that methods which worked so well there must work equally well here; and so, for whatever I required, from locust timbers to wire nails, I invited competitive bidding.

There is a wide difference, though, between specifications for railroad supplies and specifications for the component parts of a nine-room, detached frame villa, in the style of a Swiss chalet; and while I was thoroughly familiar with the one, I was, as events proved, utterly—yes, ludicrously—ignorant of the other. As a consequence, my kitchen range dropped into the cellar the second week after we moved in; my dividing partitions are of buckwheat cake consistency, and, when it rains, we must needs spread tarpaulin on the attic floor to protect the second-story ceiling from the inefficiency of a gossamer-shingled roof and resultant liver spots.

Of course I maintained a profound secrecy regarding the mistake of my employed method. My wife is not a nagger, but it would have been foolhardy to confess that my ignorance in framing the specifications was responsible for all

the disappointments she was called upon to suffer in a house so unlike the one she had all along imagined was to be ours. She is the dearest girl in the world, but —well, it just isn't possible for any woman to be a Hooley.

Having heard nothing but "multigraphed specifications" and "lowest bidders" for at least six months, it was perfectly natural, I suppose, that when it came to adding an old-fashioned garden to the little plot before the chalet, Molly should prove herself an apt pupil by specifying just how many feet of marigolds, and dahlias, and ageratum, and sweet-williams, and hollyhocks, and pinks, and a score or two more plain and garden variety of perennials she required, and by sending a typewritten copy to each of the two rival florists who were contending for the Manor's patronage, with instructions to return an estimate in writing, without delay.

The first intimation I had of her plan was when, at the breakfast table, one early May morning, she opened her bids.

"Mr. Bobbs gets the contract," she declared, holding out a penciled piece of brown paper in one hand and a postal card in the other, as if she were balancing them according to their weight. I observed that the postal card was held a trifle higher than the brown paper, and, with a ghastly attempt at facetiousness, I remarked that I presumed the brown-paper bid was Bobbs', since it was lowest.

"There's not much difference between them," she replied, ignoring my attempt. "Mr. Crimmins says he'll supply the flowers and plant them for twenty-four dollars and seventy-five cents, and Mr. Bobbs says he'll do the same for twenty-four fifty."

"But Crimmins is the better gardener," I hinted, remembering a point I had failed to take into consideration in my own experience.

"A gardener is a gardener," she returned with finality, "and I wouldn't think of going back on my word. I was very frank with them, and told each that I had requested a bid from the other, and that whichever was the lower should have the work. Under the circumstances, I couldn't conscientiously give it to Mr. Crimmins. Besides, twenty-five cents is worth considering. I shall need a trowel for loosening up the earth around the plants and that will just pay for it."

I felt sure that Crimmins would give us a much better quality of blooms than would Bobbs, who had only a small green-house and a limited custom, whereas, his competitor shipped flowers each day, the year round, to the New York florists from his imposing conservatories. Conscious, however, of the many occasions on which I had ignored similar conditions, and dreading lest I arouse Molly to a perception of the deadly parallel, and thus shift to my own sensitive head the blame which I had so unjustly permitted to fall upon the poor, low-bidding and inefficient artisans, I slyly held my peace.

To my surprise, however, Bobbs performed a very fair piece of work. I inspected it, myself, when, on my return from town, a few evenings later, I found him awaiting my approval and my check. To be perfectly honest, I doubted that Crimmins would have done better, if so well. The plants were not placed skimpily; they all appeared quite hale and hearty; and many of them were really luxuriantly in bloom.

"The garden certainly makes all the difference in the world in the appearance of the house from the street," Molly declared, enthusiastically. "I went out onto the sidewalk to get the effect just before you came, and it's lovely. It's too late now for you to see, but you must look at it to-morrow morning before you go to the station."

I was indeed glad to know that there was something which could, even in a measure, lift the curse from our misfit Swiss chalet. The idea, filling me with hope, took a deep hold upon me. It sort of surcharged my subconsciousness; and I dreamed all night of seeing our little suburban speck of boards and plaster magically magnified into an Aladdin-like palace, which made the Alcazar and the Taj Mahal seem cheap and tawdry architectural monstrosities by comparison. Moreover I was awake with the milkman and the newspaper boy, restless for my first glimpse of the glamour which redeems.

However, I did not get as far as the

sidewalk. It was not necessary. On the contrary, I returned to our twelve-by-fourteen bedchamber with what may be described as precipitancy. I had dressed very quietly in order not to disturb Molly, who loves her morning nap; but, unless one is particularly careful, our stairs make music like a Callethumpian band, and I was not particularly careful in remounting them.

I suppose Molly, aroused by the strident tune, fancied it a bravura, signifying delighted enthusiasm. She certainly must have guessed what I had been at, for she was up on her elbow with a smiling, questioning, yet didn't-I-tell-you-so expression on her pretty face as I dashed excitedly in.

It was a shame to cloud that sunburst of expectancy, but my face did it before I opened my mouth. I saw the light quenched. I saw the glow pale.

"Stephen!" she cried, in abrupt trepidation. "Stephen! What's the matter?"

The quicker the blow, sometimes, the more merciful. It would be so, I thought, in this instance. Therefore I delivered it, sharply, stunningly, without any preliminary feinting.

"Your flower garden is gone," I cried. "There's not a stalk, a leaf or a bud left."

Molly's arm seemed to crumple, and she fell back on the pillow with a prolonged moan. I sat down on the side of the bed, and after a minute or two brought her around by means of hotly stimulating applications to the seat of her curiosity and a vigorous verbal massage of her indignation.

"From the footprints in the soft earth," I told her, "it was evidently a freebooter who did the deed."

She did not speak, but she looked at me reproachfully, as if to say: "How cruel of you!" Quite ignoring the look, I added:

"It was not the work of an amateur."

Her lips moved this time and I noted a muscular quiver indicative of a tentative effort to regain the support of her elbow.

"For my part," I pursued, "I should not be at all surprised if Bobbs came back and took the things away himself. He must have quite depleted his greenhouse to put them in. What was he to do, poor man, if he should have another order?"

She rose at this, quite restored, her eyes flashing.

"I'll never believe such a thing," she declared, warmly. "It is unjust of you to suggest it. He was much too delighted with his work to undo it."

"All the same, my dear," I insisted, "I shall give an order to-day to Crimmins to duplicate it. It is no more than fair that he should have his share of the garden planting."

"And if the flowers are stolen again," she asked, "what shall we do?"

"Have Bobbs try it once more and take out a burglar insurance on the garden," I decided.

"Why not wait until Mr. Henderson gets over the grippe and comes on duty again?" Molly asked.

Mr. Henderson was our night watchman. When not invalided, he made the rounds of the twelve houses in the Manor at four-hour intervals during the night. His first round was made at ten o'clock; then he went home and slept until two, when he got up and walked around once more. His next shift in bed lasted until quarter of six, when he had his breakfast, looked us over again to see that we were still on our foundations, and went off to his regular day's work. There was a rumor that it was not the grippe which had interrupted Mr. Henderson in his arduous and perilous occupation, but brain fag, due to overstudy. It was gossiped that for a month past he had been taking a correspondence course in "How to Sleep-Walk Naturally," believing it would benefit him in his business.

I told Molly that I had something better in mind than waiting for Mr. Henderson. We would have Crimmins replant the garden at once and I would do the night-watching.

When the work was completed a second time, however, I found that the plan I had devised was made impracticable by reason of lunar and atmospheric conditions which I had failed to foresee. My idea had been to watch from one of our darkened living-room windows. But what with the unexpected absence of the moon and a heavily clouded sky into the bargain, such a program

became about as well fitted to my purpose as an elephant to provide the motor power for an aëroplane.

It was my wife who eventually came cleverly to the rescue. She was quite as determined as I that the garden should not be looted a second time; and when the situation was made clear to her, including the fact that I already had a cold and that I might catch my death if I attempted to hide behind the syringa bush on such a damp, chilly night as this in the frigid month of May, she distinguished herself as an inventive genius, then and there.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Stephen," she said, her eyes dancing. "Our gate opens outward, doesn't it?"

"It does," I answered,—"which it shouldn't." The gate was like more things about the place; it was put on upside down or inside out—one or the other; I didn't know which.

"Well," she continued, "we'll tie a string to the gate, run it along the walk, up the piazza steps, in under the front door and tie the end to—" And there she paused a moment in serious thought.

"My ankle," I suggested.

"No, no," she said, "your ankle doesn't make a noise." Then her gravity gave way. "I have it. We'll fill the celery glass with forks and spoons and tie the end of the string to the glass, near the top. When the gate is opened, over goes the glass, the forks and spoons fall out with a clatter, and out you rush and catch the thief red-handed."

I accepted the idea and applauded its inventor. Moreover I rewarded her with a fond embrace and a reverential kiss.

"What time do robbers usually rob?" she asked, presently.

"In the city," I answered, "I believe it is not *comme il faut* for them to call before two a. m.; but I am not sure as to whether in the rural districts so nice an adherence to etiquette is preserved. I should think, however, that we had best set our man-trap about eleven, which will be too late for callers and quite early enough for crawlers. In the meantime, I shall snatch what sleep I can, so as to be wide awake for Mr. Freebooter."

"And me, too," said Molly. "Do you imagine I shall sleep a wink after that celery glass burglar alarm is set? I'll tell Caroline we're going to lie down, and have her call us at eleven sharp."

It happened, however, that though Caroline was quite willing, her eyelids were quite weak; and when, at quarter of one, I sprang up in alarm, conscious even before widely awake, that I had overslept my limit, and rushed down stairs, it was to find Caroline snoring loudly beside the kitchen stove. I roused her, and, with dire misgivings, went around to the front of the house to investigate the whereabouts of the new twenty-four dollars and seventy-five cents worth of perennials. To my delighted surprise I found them still in their places and no sign of the invader.

When I got back to the kitchen, Molly and Caroline were having words.

"And I trusted you, implicitly," Molly was saying. "I told you how very important it was. Now, I shall never be able to trust you again."

The colored girl was abjectly penitent.

"Aint it scan'lous!" she was repeating. "Aint it scan'lous! Some'in' mighty cur'ous 'bout my eyes to-night. Dey jus' wouldn't stay open, no matta how hard I tried."

I believe that the fashionable celery glass of to-day is horizontal, but ours was of the perpendicular variety, and so better fitted to its office of burglar alarm. While I strung the twine, Molly filled the glass with kitchen spoons and forks. At the last moment I thought that we might possibly have trouble in passing the line beneath the front door, but the blunder-headed builder had built more wisely than we knew and had left a space of at least half an inch between the bottom of the door and the sill. This discovery afforded not only easy ingress for my burglar-alarm connection, but a thoroughly satisfactory explanation of why my feet were always freezing and why I had contracted a chronic cold in my head.

Molly and I, together, after rolling up the hall rug, selected a spot on the hardwood floor of the hall as possessing the necessary resonant qualities for the desired uproar, and carefully placed our bristling monitory improvisation upon it.

"Now," said she, "we'll both put wraps on, so that when we rush out into the night air, we wont get our deaths."

I was on the verge of suggesting that if the depredator was of the usual husky sort, steel armor might be preferable, but I am not an alarmist. I agreed with her, smilingly. I even refrained from mentioning the fact that I had already been out twice, clad in my smoking jacket and without a hat.

After we had enveloped ourselves in such makeshift outer garments as the hall closet afforded, I carefully selected a heavy niblick from my golf kit, and Molly armed herself with a poker from the fire irons in the living room. Then, very quietly and with fell purpose, we sat down together on a lower step of the front stairs, with our eyes eagerly and expectantly glued upon the celery glass.

When we had sat there in a sort of grim, uncanny silence for what seemed to me an eternity of waiting, I ventured to propound a question in a hoarse whisper.

"Don't you think, my dear," I asked, "that under the circumstances the noise of the overturning glass will be slightly superfluous?"

"Of course," she answered, close to my ear. "When I planned the thing, I thought we might sit in the living room, in the dark. Anyhow, we can't sit hunched up here all night. Only I would like to see the glass go over, if he should come in any reasonable time."

The words were scarcely uttered, when, with a terrific jerk, the contraption went spinning doorward, toppled over with a slam and a bang, and sent the kitchen plate jingling toward every point of the compass.

Molly screamed, and dropping her poker threw both arms about me.

"S—S—S t e p h e n!" she faltered. "You—you sha'n't go out there! You—you musn't! See how powerful he is. He might—Oh, he might kill you!"

"You silly child," I rebuked, kindly. "Fancy a flower thief, of all persons in the world being a desperado!" As I have already observed, I am *not* an alarmist.

Gently, but with determination, I disengaged myself from her encircling arms, and rose to my feet. My first action was to switch off the hall light. Then I crept stealthily forward, stepping on a spoon or a fork at every footfall. But before I reached the hall door, Molly overtook me.

"You shall not go alone, anyhow," she declared, loyally.

I turned the knob, with resolution, and drew the door inward, making no sound. I would spring upon the invader, unawares. Taken thus at a disadvantage, he would yield at once without time for a blow in return.

I strained my eyes into the pitch dark, but could discern nothing. The crunch of footsteps advancing over the gravel, however, was plainly audible. As I moved cautiously across the piazza, I felt Molly's deterring hand clutching my coat-tail.

"Let go," I murmured. "It is now or never!"

And then I sprang. Down I went in one wild leap, brandishing my niblick as the "veray parfit gentil knight" did his halberd. Before I quite expected it I came sharply into contact with a looming figure—far too close, indeed, to inflict a telling smash with my long-handled and clumsy weapon. Nevertheless I made a clutch for the marauder's throat, and flung all the weight of my one hundred and thirty-three pounds avoirdupois upon him. I felt him quiver. I felt him stagger backward.

"Villian!" I cried, vengefully. "I'll teach you to steal my ageratum!"

And with that we both fell in a heap.

I remember hearing Molly's shriek, but I never have been able to remember what immediately followed. My next recollection is of lying flat on the gravel, with a ponderous weight astride my chest, while a voice which I knew very well asked with quite unbelievable calmness:

"If that is you, Mrs. Simcox, maybe you can tell what sort of an animal it is I have beneath me."

The speaker was Hooley—good old Hooley!

Explanations, of course, began at once, out there in the dark. They were continued inside the house in the relighted hall, and they were further continued around the table in the dining-room, whither we dragged Hooley to a peace-offering of cold baked meats, potted

cheeses and ripe old ale. If I apologized once I apologized at least nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and Molly corroborated, endorsed, emphasized and *viséd* each and every apology.

During the earliest stage of the *apologia* Hooley had—oh, quite unconsciously, to be sure—made me feel an ass, by telling me that unless I wanted to be bankrupted by the electric light company, I had better turn out the lights in our front bedroom.

"You see," he began explanatorily, "I came out from town on the last train; and seeing those lights on full head, I fancied something was wrong—that maybe the missus was sick, or something like that, and so I thought I'd just stop and ask if I could be of any service."

The average man would have added: "How in Heaven's name did you expect any thief to venture into your front gate with your second-story illuminated in that fashion?" But Hooley, as I have said before, is different. He never says things intentionally to make you uncomfortable. However, the discovery made me mad at myself all over; and right then and there I ran up and turned out the lights, which Molly and I had left burning when we rushed downstairs on finding that Caroline had allowed us to oversleep.

"I'll tell you what it is," Hooley said, at length, after we had given him all the particulars of the robbery and our plan to circumvent a repetition. "Of course, the absence of police protection out here in the Manor is, in a way, a disadvantage. But a good night watchman does just as well. Nevertheless, a night watchman laid up with grippe hardly fills the bill. Now, if I were you, Simcox. I'd go over to-morrow morning and see Henderson and tell him that if he is not able to resume his duties, he must get a substitute—either that, or we'll fill his place. You can say that on my authority."

It was a tip from Hooley and I accepted it, unquestioningly. I told him I would positively see Henderson before going to the city.

When the last bottle of ale in the house had been disposed of, and the clock on the mantel shelf pointed out with horrified upraised hands that it was thirteen minutes of three, our pleasant little party broke up, and Molly and I saw Hooley out. We followed him to the piazza, leaving the door open to light him down the path.

"Good-night!" he called in final farewell, and I was echoing the words, when Molly seized my arm in a sudden, frenzied clutch.

"Look!" she gasped. And I looked.

Once again our garden was as bare of flowers as a shinnecock clam is of feathers. While we had apologized, the thief had done his work.

Hooley hadn't noticed it, and I was glad he hadn't. I couldn't have borne, just then, his poverty of reproachful phrases; I felt that I wanted someone to kick me at least as far as the station, and then back again.

By morning, however, my temper changed. Kicking was still in my thoughts, but I desired to be the kicker, with the garden robber posing within comfortably reachable distance.

I swallowed my breakfast in haste, gave Molly a perfunctory good-by kiss, and hurried away in the direction of Henderson's humble domicile. I remembered the little, old, tumble-down house very well. Though I had seen it only once, and that was several months back, I had been impressed by its utterly desolate aspect. The front yard was a waste of barren earth, unadorned by as much as a single shrub. But now, as I drew near, I observed that a transformation had taken place. The front yard was a glory of vernal bloom. Here were marigolds and dahlias, sweet william and ageratum, pinks and hollyhocks, scarlet verbenas and sunflowers.

As I entered the gate I saw a man's bent figure working among the flowers. Advancing toward him, I recognized Henderson.

"Ho, ho!" I cried to attract his attention. "So you're able to be about, eh?"

But he gave no sign that he heard me. I fancied the grippe might have impaired his hearing.

"Henderson!" I called, quite loudly. The result was the same. Undisturbed, he went on with his work. I noticed

then that he was setting out a row of scarlet verbenas, a wheelbarrow loaded with them standing beside him. The wheelbarrow had a familiar look, so I bent over and examined it; Henderson, meanwhile, apparently still oblivious. On the side of the wheelbarrow I discovered my own initials, S. S., in my own fine Spencerian hand.

When I am most angry, I am most deliberate.

I stepped across a border of marigolds and took a position of vantage behind Henderson. Then I rested my weight on my left leg, and drew my right foot very far back. When I swung it forward, it was with catapultian force and it caught Henderson's center of gravity in such powerfully propelling fashion that he shot forward twice his length and buried his face in the loam.

I did not go to my office that day. I went to Flushing, instead, and swore out a warrant for Henderson's arrest. He was arraigned in the afternoon, and I appeared against him. My testimony, given in a restrained yet convincing tone of voice, seemed to me quite adequate to conviction. Moreover, I indicated threatened further arrests on the charge of conspiracy, in that I had discovered since morning that both the gardeners, Bobbs and Crimmins, were Henderson's sons-in-law.

When I resumed my seat, however, the justice of the peace, who was a mild-mannered young man with weak eyes, asked the prisoner at the bar to make a few remarks as to his side of the controversy.

In response, Henderson, forced to his feet by a constable, emitted one long sterterous snore and started to walk to the door.

The constable started after him, but the court checked him.

"No, no," he said. "Let him go. I understand from a member of his family that the malady from which he suffers is not grippe, but the sleeping sickness. It is a disease quite common in his profession, and was no doubt contracted by him in the conscientious prosecution of his duty. The law provides no punishment for infractions of the penal code committed under such circumstances. Prisoner discharged."

My friend Hooley told me that evening that Henderson's third daughter, the youngest and the prettiest, is engaged to be married to the justice of the peace. The floral decorations at the wedding will, I doubt not, be superb.

The Miss and the Hit

By SIDNEY HODGES COLE

IF YOU have ever worked on a night-shift of stevedores, hustling cargo into a liner which has come in late and must depart on scheduled time, you will understand why Pokey Bannon, stumbling through the dock gate in the gray light of an early winter morning, made straight for the Eureka Café just across the street.

But when he had pushed open the door of the Eureka and stepped inside, Pokey stopped short and whistled under his breath as he took a swift understanding glance about the place.

Instead of the usual single early-morning gas-jet, the place was brilliantly illuminated; and moreover, instead of the usual lone sleepy bartender, who was generally to be found at this early hour, the whole force was pres-

ent; and dancing and sputtering about the place, gurgling throaty plaints and calling upon heaven to witness his misfortune, was Emil Schwartz, the proprietor.

Broken mirrors, shattered chairs, twisted gas-fixtures and a general accumulation of *dêbris,* which the white-coated figures under Mr. Schwartz's irritable direction were cleaning up, told their own story.

Pokey took it all in with a grim smile and stepped to Emil's side.

"Somethin' doin' last night, eh?" he inquired sympathetically.

Mr. Schwartz pressed his pudgy hands tight together, while an expression of infinite distress crossed his heavy features.

"Yah! Look at diss!" he wailed, waving a comprehensive arm about the disordered place. "Me? I wouldt run der quiet blace; I wouldt haff der no disturbances. But what do I get? Drouble, drouble—nothing but der drouble! Dese dock-handts, dey iss der badt ones. Dey iss ruin me—ruin me! I der no drouble wouldt haff, but dey stardt sombtings all der time.

"I hire der big mans to scare dem quiet, und does it work? Does it? Listen to me. Dese bouncer fellers is der game dey look for. To dem dey dond't do a dthing. Vun—dwo—dree—I hire dem, und dey sure look like der goodts; but when der drouble breaks loose—piff! dey iss run and hide. Yah! I know dem.

"Vun goodt man couldt to stop it all make. Lasdt night I dthink I haff him; he iss big; he iss der bad fighdter, I am toldt. I giff him fifteen py der week. It iss der goodt pay.

"Yah! He is der bad fighdter—not! Ven somdthings starts he iss dtry; I giff him der credits for dot. He iss not run like der odder fellers. But look vot dey done shust der same—and him? He in der hosbidle iss. If it goes on like diss, I der blace loses."

"It's a hard bunch wot comes here, all right, Emil," said Pokey knowingly. "Trouble is, yer aint found the right bouncer, yet. And yer goin' to have more trouble findin' him than yer think, believe *me.* Them bouncers is mostly just big bluffs, anyway. They'll tell yer what they can do, but when the pinch comes not one in fifty of 'em can deliver the goods. A good bouncer is somethin' yer can't pick up any old place, I'ave me tell yer; and yer sure need a top-notcher here, if yer goin' to have any at all. These stiffs yer've been havin' only makes things worse. They mixes in an' get the crowd goin' worse, but don't accomplish nothin', and that gives the joint a name of bein' easy—see?"

Pokey stood puckering his brows in thought for a moment.

"Say, I believe you're in wrong, Emil," he said at length. "I don't believe yer want no bouncer here at all—that is, not unless yer could find the real thing, and as I'm tellin' yer, yer aint goin' to pick him up off-handed. Naw, yer don't want no bouncer. Yer want somethin' to keep the bunch good-natured and make 'em forget all about startin' anything. Keep their minds occupied and you wouldn't have no fuss here.

"Looky, whyn't yer try some music on 'em. Give 'em a feller that could tickle the ivories good and turn 'em out a song, and yer trouble is over. That'll keep 'em in good spirits and they wont think of startin' nothin' then."

Emil Schwartz scratched his tow-colored hair. The argument appealed to him, but there were difficulties in the way.

"Der music—dot iss der goodt idea," said he at last, "but it vill cost me der too much money. Vunce I haff in here der flute and der violin and der harp. It costs me der thirty dollars by der week. Dot is der too much money. Ten dollars der man I pays dem—"

"Aw, you don't have to have nothin' like that," Pokey interrupted him. "Say, I know a feller that's just the guy you want. Out of a job now, he is. Yer can get him for twelve a week. Believe *me,* what that feller can't sing and play aint worth singin' or playin'. Say, every time he sings me 'Now Let Me Rest,' it fair gits me bawlin'. Whyn't yer give him a try? 'Twont do no hurt, anyway. Yer hire a pianny and put it in here and give him twelve a week to sing from six each evenin' till midnight, and I bet it'll do the trick. Of

course, a real A number one bouncer, if yer could get him, would be the best thing; but from the recent luck yer've had wit' that tribe, I should think yer'd be willin' to try another tack."

Mr. Schwartz pondered deeply.

"I pelieve I make der try," he agreed at last. "When couldt der feller come?"

"Aw, right off. I'll see him to-day and he could come down to-night. Yer get the pianny here before six and I'll see that he shows up."

"All righdt. Twelfe dollars by der week, you say?" questioned the cautious Schwartz. "Tell him to come down here to-nighdt and I giff him der try. If he makes goodt, I pay him dot twelfe effery Saturday."

Whereupon, being elated at this bit of good fortune which he had managed to engineer for his friend Ignatius Shea, Pokey Bannon hurried out of the café, quite forgetful of what he had originally come in for.

Boarding a car, he went uptown, and alighted at a certain shabby street. At one of the houses, all of which bore flaring placards: "Rooms To Rent," in their front windows, Bannon pulled the bell and asked the frowsy woman who opened the door for Mr. Shea. Being assured that that gentleman still occupied the same four-flights-back and that in all probability he would be found there at present, Mr. Bannon climbed the four flights of dark stairs and thumped lustily at the door at the top of them.

At his second onslaught a sleepy voice bade him come in, and he pushed open the door and entered a tiny room under the eaves of the house. It was lighted by one narrow dormer window, and its furnishings consisted of a rickety bed, a wooden chair and an old square piano, which took up so much of the scant space in the room that one must crawl over the foot of the bed to get to it.

In the bed was a huge bulk of a man, who sat up, blinking sleepily as Bannon entered.

"Say, Ignatius, set up and take notice," cried the latter exuberantly. "I got yer a job. Yep, a real one wit' twelve a week in it, if yer make good, and there aint no doubt of that at all wit' a feller that can warble like you can."

The man in the bed arose, pulled a frayed bath-robe over his rumpled pajamas and stared at Bannon in unbelief. Sitting on the edge of the bed in that cluttered room his frame loomed truly colossal.

"A job? Where?" he questioned in a voice ridiculously high-pitched. Anyone less used to that voice than was Bannon would have experienced a shock. It sounded like a mouse-squeak coming from an elephant.

"At the Eureka Café that Emil Schwartz runs down by the docks," Bannon explained. "Know the place, don't yer?"

"Sure!" Shea squeaked. "Yer say there's twelve dollars in it? How much time have I got to put in?"

"From six till twelve every night. Aint that about all right—wot? Yer can sing there nights and keep up yer lessons and yer practisin' daytimes."

"Mr. Shea rolled his eyes dramatically heavenward. "Twelve a week! Lead me to it, Pokey," said he fervently. "I'm pretty near all in. If somethin' hadn't turned up this week I was goin' to chuck it all and go back to that ten per in the foundry."

"Yer'd be a fool to do that," said Pokey, soulfully, "wit' a voice like you've got. Well, this oughter keep yer goin'—wot?"

"Yep, this'll keep me goin', and maybe I can squeeze out a bit to pay back some of the coin you've staked me to," Shea declared. "It aint no skinch tryin' to be a artist, Pokey—take it from me. It's mighty tough goin'."

"Aw, keep your nerve and yer'll be makin' yer hundreds a week, yet," Pokey encouraged. "Now sing me that one about lettin' me rest, will yer?"

Mr. Shea slid over to the piano stool, which snapped and creaked beneath his weight and seemed in imminent danger of letting him down. He struck a few tinkling chords on the piano and began to warble. Perhaps, to truly express the effect, it might be better to change the *r* to a *b* in the final word of that last sentence; for Mr. Shea's ridiculous voice quavered forth nasally with many false notes.

"The long day's task is done; the shadows fall.
Now let me rest, and let my sleep be sweet"—

sang Shea, with a certain tremolo quality in his tones, which Pokey Bannon, sighing ecstatically in the one chair of the room, considered the *ne plus ultra* of vocal effort.

"Oh, gee, aint that great?" he gurgled as the whining, dragging song came to an end. "Say, Ignatius, Schwartz is takin' yer on down there to stop the rough-houses the ginks has been startin' there of late. He's had four or five bouncers, but they've all got done up. Now's he's goin' to try music on 'em—see? Well, if yer see anything startin' yer just spring that song on 'em. That 'ud tame down the worst rough-neck that ever was the way you sing it. I gotter run along now. Be down there prompt at six, wont yer? I'd like to be there and hear yer singin' to 'em. I'll bet it'll be quiet as a church when yer do."

Evidences of the recent period of turmoil through which it had passed had been for the most part removed from the Eureka Café—thanks to a day of strenuous labor by all hands—when Ignatius Shea reached it that evening just as the clocks were striking six.

Asking for Mr. Schwartz, one of the waiters obligingly pointed out that gentleman to him, and Ignatius made his way thither.

"You der shentleman dot vill sings—iss it not?" he asked, taking Ignatius by the hand and running an admiring eye up and down his tremendous frame.

Ignatius admitted that such was the case.

"Come mit me," Schwartz said, moving across the room and beckoning Shea to follow.

"Here," he paused before a newly-built little platform in one corner upon which reposed an upright piano—"I haff made for you der place. It gives der sadtisfaction—yess?"

"'S all right," squeaked Ignatius, taking off his coat and seating himself at the instrument.

"I vouldt der voice safe until der ladter in der efening," advised Mr. Schwartz. "Der vuns dot here iss now don't count. In der later efening it vill be to sing all der times berhaps."

"That's all right," Ignatius agreed, running his fingers over the keyboard of the piano, which proved to be of excellent tone.

At seven the little tables began to fill up, and the place became thick with tobacco smoke. A half-hour later and the laughter had grown louder and now and then a voice was raised jarringly from one of the tables.

A waiter stopped at Ignatius' platform with the curt order: "Boss says yer'd better let her go now!"

At this Mr. Shea cleared his throat, tinkled out his prelude and began his first song of the evening.

It was a heart-breaking ballad—something about a maiden and a sailor and a grave and weeping willow trees, all of which ingredients seemed to become worse and worse entangled as the song progressed its five long verses.

Mr. Schwartz, who was practically stone deaf, looked about the room to note the song's effect. The waiters were grinning behind their hands. One of the bartenders was looking over to Shea's platform and sadly shaking his head. The groups at the table seemed not to mind Mr. Shea's first effort very much either one way or the other, although one lone man was applauding wildly—but since this was the gentleman whose laughter had been the loudest for the past few minutes, Mr. Schwartz took the approval from whence it came and for what it was worth.

With scarcely a pause for breath, Ignatius was off again. There was an uneasy stirring at the tables; necks were craned in his direction. One man suggested unoriginally that the calf be given more rope; and then the chatter and buzz of voices and the laughter and the arguments proceeded, quite as if Mr. Shea were not present.

The second song finished, he turned about to survey his audience. At one of the tables, four big longshoremen were arguing heatedly—so heatedly that Mr. Schwartz was watching them with worried eyes. Several men arose from the other tables about the room

and crowded about the arguing group, taking verbal sides in the encounter as they came. The air seemed charged with the omen of something unpleasant about to happen.

Shea, beholding them, realized that a crucial moment was at hand. Like a flash there came to his mind Pokey Bannon's advice: "If yer see anything startin', just spring that 'Lemme rest' song on 'em; that 'ud tame down the worst rough-neck that ever was."

Wherefore, Mr. Shea spun about on the piano stool, and, because the noise of the altercation was waxing, he jammed down the loud pedal with his foot and began at the top of his lungs:

"The long day's task is done; the shadows fall.
Now let me rest, and let my sleep be sweet."

The voices momentarily hushed, but not for the reason Mr. Shea fondly anticipated.

"How'n 'ell yer goin' to talk wit' a noise like that goin' on?" demanded one of the men disgustedly.

"Hey, cull!" another called to Shea, raising his voice above the din, "no one's stoppin' yer from restin'. Take it now, if yer want it that bad."

Followed a howl of laughter, and more advice to the performer, amongst which the counsel to "Have yer voice scraped," and "Aw, go crawl off somewhere else if yer're goin' to die that hard!" were the mildest.

Like *Casabianca* to the burning deck, Shea clung desperately to his song. He stuck it out until a well-aimed pretzel caught him stingingly on the left ear, and, turning about, he ducked too late to avoid a sandwich, which caught him full on the forehead and dripped a trail of mustard across his cheek. Simultaneously a bottle caromed off his shoulder and set the piano wires to whining; and then came a miscellaneous fusillade.

Shea jumped wrathfully to his feet and dodged a heavy salt-shaker, but in doing so his head came in violent contact with a flying match-stand.

His face went white; his lips drew tight together; great swirls of red swam before his filming eyes. With a roar he leaped down from his platform and charged blindly into the fray.

Over went tables and down went men. Two big deck-hands from a tramp steamer jumped on his back; but these he shook off, and, catching one of them, hurled him over the bar and into pyramids of piled glasses which went tinkling to their ruin. Right and left he smashed, and at every blow a man went down.

Schwartz, wringing his hands at this fresh disaster visited upon him, climbed to the top of the piano, and howled for a cessation of hostilities in a voice truly pathetic—could it ever have been heard above the din.

It was only when the few survivors of the carnage, recognizing the better part of valor, broke madly for the door, which they closed after them and locked on the outside, that Ignatius Shea paused for breath.

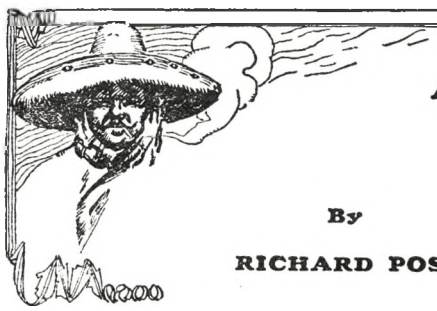
Two waiters were assisting the much agitated Mr. Schwartz from the piano-top; the bartenders were hauling prone figures from under the tables and sluicing buckets of water over them.

"I—I—guess it's up to me to resign," said Shea, in his queer squeak as Schwartz came up to him.

"Resign?" howled the latter. *"Nein! Nein!* Nefer shall you dot do! As der singist it may be you der frost iss, but as der bouncer! Say, Mr. Shea, I pays you der fifteen dollars by der week to stay on here and der peace keep in dis blace. No disturbance will der be if you are aboudt!"

Ignatius Shea scratched his head and thoughtfully surveyed the wreck about him.

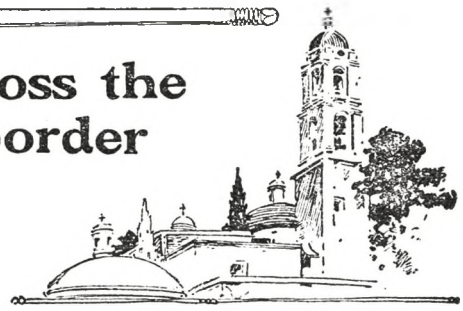
"Now, maybe that *is* my partickerler forte after all," he mused. "Anyway, ye're on, bo!"



Across the Border

By

RICHARD POST



THE MINUTES crept along as Parcher sat in the arm chair, his presence only revealed by cigar-glow. When an hour previous Juan, the *mozo,* had stolen noiselessly in to light the gas, his employer had waved him aside impatiently.

"Not for a while to-night," he decreed.

Cigar after cigar passed to the mortuary of the tray. Still the past flitted before him, the dark pictures which he would fain forget. Suddenly he started from his reverie as the ring of a happy laugh echoed from the *patio.* Quick steps crossed the flagging. It was his son.

As Frederick entered and the *mozo* lit the gas, the older man arose, blinking in the sudden light.

"Just arrived, Dad; came right through from San Antonio," the boy cried in an ebullition of excited joy. "We're to be married, Jessie and me, on the 20th. It's all settled."

Parcher smiled as his fingers were compressed by the boyish grip. "I'm glad you're happy, Fred," he responded simply. "That's the main thing—and to make her so, too.—Tell me about Miss Underwood," he continued. "You know I have never met her."

Frederick threw himself into a chair, then leaning forward, he began his description, his words the adoring praise of a lover. The girl to his eye seemed the apogee of all perfection.

"Of course, we'll have to have you at the wedding, Father," he concluded.

The evening was warm with the heat of May in the Mexican highlands, but the man shivered slightly. It was the invitation he had feared, and he knew it could not be.

"I realize that you don't like to travel," Frederick continued, crossing to the table and selecting a cigar from the humidor. "But it's not far from Mexico City of San Antonio. Anyway, you must go on account of Jessie and me."

The boy laughed happily and, lighting his cigar, returned to his seat. Still his father sat in brooding silence, not knowing how to shape the refusal. The fragrance of many roses was wafted in through the open *patio* door. The soft tinkle, like a myriad of far-away bells, echoed from the spraying splashes of a great fountain. He had all these and yet he was not free to do as he desired.

"I'm sorry, Fred," he said finally, "but I fear it will be impossible. Really you don't need me at all."

The youth cut him short. "I knew you'd say that, Father, but it wont go this time. We've got to have you with us. On this day of all days I couldn't have my own dad absent!"

But Parcher continued unheedingly. "There is a bank-meeting scheduled for the morning of the 20th, and in the afternoon the directors of our new Tehuantepec road to go over the details of a bond-issue with Spenser, the representative of the British syndicate. You see it is quite impossible, Fred."

"Business, always business!" the boy cried angrily. "Nothing else! Oh, I know," he continued, a note of bitterness creeping into his voice, "that it has paid for my education in the States and afforded me all that money can buy. Perhaps I shouldn't ask more."

Frederick arose and going to his father, rested his arm gently across the older man's shoulder. "But I do," he continued. "I want your love and companionship. I want you with me, this time, Dad."

As his son pleaded, the iron resolution of the father wavered and then suddenly gave way. Parcher decided he would take the risk. Perhaps after all there would be no danger.

"I can't refuse if you wish so much to have me go," he said almost wistfully.

"I knew we'd get you," his son cried with a gay little laugh of happiness. Then they fell to discussing details, the boy's words ever wandering in unconscious rhapsody to his Jessie. Listening, the feeling of fear fell from the older man in the reflected glow of youth. Yet when the cathedral bells had chimed midnight and his son had left him, the man still sat in his chair, once more staring into the purple dusk of the *patio*.

"How am I to go back into the States?" Parcher questioned himself. For out of the night came the shadows of the past, the men, who, in the far-away Iowa years had trusted him and whom he had betrayed.

Parcher's smile was rather grim as he drew a bundle of receipts from the drawer and removing the band, turned them over one by one. When honest prosperity had come to him in the Land of the Cactus Eagle, he had repaid principal and interest, forwarding the money to Dr. Crane, an old friend, who had sent the expatriate acknowledgments as one by one the debts had been cleared away.

But, though Parcher had tried many times, he had not been able to obtain permission to cross the Rio Grande. From a pigeonhole he drew forth a letter from the prosecuting attorney.

"You are safe in Mexico, because you arrived there before the extradition treaty was negotiated," it stated in frank bitterness, "but we will arrest you promptly the moment you venture into the United States."

He was an exile. So they would have him remain.

Suddenly the expatriate rose to his feet, stretching forth his arms in the conscious strength of six-footed vigor, unimpaired by his fifty years. "I'm going to defy them," he announced grimly, unconscious that he spoke aloud.

His father's early history had been carefully concealed from Frederick. The son did not know, and, as Parcher retired that night, his anxiety was principally that through some chance Fred might learn the bitter truth.

A week later, the two traveled northward toward the border. The older man peered nervously through the glass as the wheels creaked on the long Laredo bridge and then came to a jarring stop at the custom-house on the American side.

But nothing happened. Baggage was inspected and the train proceeded. The father breathed freer. There was probably no danger after all.

On the night of the wedding, Parcher was seated in the library watching from the seclusion of an alcove the arrival of the guests. Miss Underwood joined him, and as the father gazed at his son's betrothed, his smile was that of a man at ease.

He thought well of Frederick's choice. As his eyes traveled over the delicate lines of her face, framed by the wavy, burnished gold hair, he agreed that she was lovely, and Parcher was proudly happy.

After a moment Jessie flitted away; and Parcher, rising, was about to mix with the crowd, when in the hallway he discerned a figure strangely familiar after all the years.

The next instant their eyes met. The two men stared at each other. James Rodney stood before the expatriate.

Without hesitation the newcomer entered the library, closing the door after him, so that the two were alone.

"William Parcher, and here!" Rodney exclaimed, breaking the strained silence.

The exile dropped limply into the recesses of his chair. He tried to laugh naturally, but it was a dismal failure.

From a far-away room came the ripple of a song and the melody of light voices and laughter. Still Parcher stared before him. His voice would not be controlled, he could but wait for the sentence he feared.

Rodney calmly seated himself. "Kind of breaks you all up, Billy, to see me, doesn't it," he remarked. "I suppose you hardly expected to find me among the guests. But you see I happen to be Jessie Underwood's uncle, so I came clear from Iowa to see the little girl get spliced."

Her uncle! Perhaps after all there might be hope. The expatriate tried to compose himself, but his voice, when he spoke, was unnatural. "What are you going to do with me, James?"

"I? Oh, nothing, I guess," Rodney replied with a rasping laugh. "I'm not the man to spoil a night like this for a little girl, as I reckon you're Frederick Parcher's father. He's a right smart boy, too, better than I would expect from you."

If the words stung, by no wincing did the man betray his feelings. Color slowly drifted back into his face; his fingers no longer beat a tattoo on the chair-arm. With reassurance of safety, Parcher felt the desire surge within him to present his side of the story.

But before he could frame the words, an interruption came. The wedding ceremony was to be performed, and the two in understood truce took their place in the solemn service.

Afterward in unspoken agreement, Rodney and Parcher drifted back into the library, now deserted by the guests for the allurements of the ball-room.

The Iowan returned at once to the attack. "You surely do look prosperous, Will," he remarked pointedly. "Diamonds, a fine watch and good clothes! Your son does, too. I reckon you're rich.

"How is it," his voice rose sharply, "how is it, William Parcher, that as you prospered, if you're square, and I'd like to think it—why have you never repaid any of that money that you—shall we call it—owed?"

"Not repaid?" the man stammered, his voice choking, this time with excitement. "Not repaid? Why, man, I returned every cent, and the interest too. I sent twenty-two thousand dollars to my old friend, Dr. Crane. Maybe it didn't make things right, but I sure did what I could."

Again the men blankly stared at each other, the same almost unbelievable thought slowly creeping into each mind. For Dr. Crane was a pillar of righteousness in the small Iowa town, a man universally trusted and respected.

Was it possible that he too could have fallen? The expatriate, suspicious of all men, had excepted this one.

"Two thousand of it was for you," Parcher added in a whisper as the conviction of Dr. Crane's unfaithfulness pressed full upon him.

"What are you going to do about it, Will?" Rodney asked after a moment. "All the authorities wanted was the repayment of the money."

Still before Parcher's eyes was the long vista of his troubled years. Slowly, as a man in a dream, he arose and walked over to the table.

"Just this," he said, as he took a fountain pen and check-book from his pocket. "I have an account in San Antonio, a large one fortunately, and I will give you a check for the amount in full. Can I rely on you to see that the long-ago obligations are squared?"

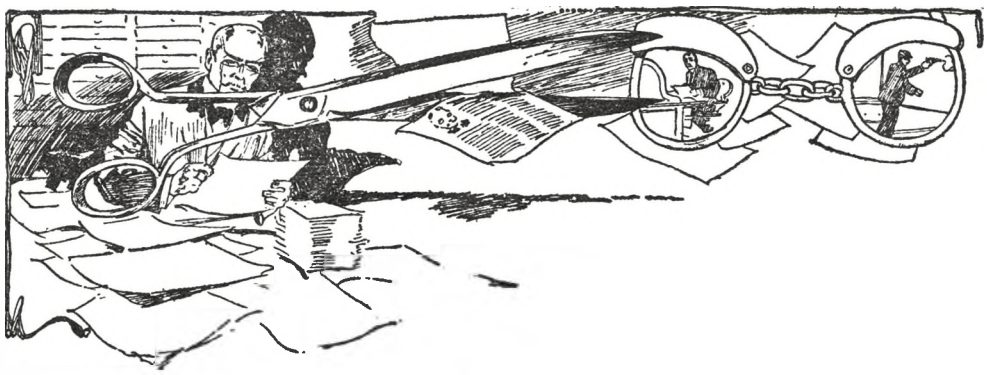
Without a glance Rodney thrust the check into his pocket. "I trust you now," he said with a smile. "I think I entirely understand. But what action are you going to take about Dr. Crane?"

"He can take care of himself," Parcher replied, turning from the table. "He's suffered—he must have suffered. Surely it is not for me to judge him."

The first cadence of a waltz strain floated through the open door. "Say," Parcher suggested, his face alight, young once more. "Let's see if we can't find partners.

"For years I've possessed everything—everything but the confidence and respect of my fellow-men," he said softly, as if as yet he could scarcely believe. "Now I have that again."

Parcher stood erect. "Come," he exclaimed. "I'm free, and I've just got to celebrate!"



The Trackless Jungle

By GUY C. BAKER

BY A CLEVER conspiracy a young man was made guilty of theft. His sister invoked the aid of Josiah Snook; the wily Josiah once more made a little journey into the "trackless jungle of the law" and found wherewith to save the situation. A vividly attractive story.

No. V—THE TRAP

A FROWN of annoyance gathered on the wrinkled, freckled forehead of Josiah Snook as his eyes slowly raised from the note which he held in his hand, and traveled lingeringly over the diminutive, bower-like garden.

"Huh!—*summons* me to his exalted presence as some royal potentate commanding a vassal!"

Petulantly he bit the end from a cigar and lighted it. "These millionaires—why the dickens doesn't he make use of his fifty-thousand dollar corporation lawyer! Eh—why?"

His eyes wandered jealously over to where the honeysuckles and roses vied with each other in the glory of their sweetness and fragrance. Then, with belligerent reluctance, he once more glanced at the note.

"Demmit!"

Slowly he rose to his feet, thrust the paper into his pocket, and, addressing himself to the near-by bed of sweet-williams, growled aloud:

"I'll go!—but I shall go to tell Mr. Halbert McDonald that Snook's brains are not a bargain-counter chattel awaiting the fancy of a millionaire's dollars. I'll let him know that Snook hauled down his shingle because it is the dratted influence of just such pirates as he that has stultified the high ideals of the legal profession. I'll go, because—"

The rest of the tirade was lost to the nodding posies in the little garden as he strode indignantly into the house.

A half hour later Snook was ceremoniously admitted into one of the most imposing residences in that exclusive quarter whose bounds are First Street and Monument Avenue. Neither the elegant appointments of the room into which he was shown, nor the dominant personality of the man in whose presence he found himself served to abash the composed caller. Quietly he accepted the invitation to a chair, and turned toward the gray-haired, iron-faced financier with cold, silent inquiry.

"Mr. Snook, I'm informed that you are the most resourceful lawyer in this part of the state, and I am going to put your reputation to the test."

A flood of resentment swept upon Snook. He rose, and his voice trembled with suppressed feeling as he replied:

"I fear that you have the wrong cue, Mr. McDonald. I have an abhorrence of being tested. I am even unwilling to be experimented upon. My 'resourcefulness' is not a commodity to be bid for in the market-place. I am not practising law. I—"

He cut short his irate crescendo, and turned confusedly toward a young lady, who, for the first time, he discovered quietly regarding him from the doorway. The fire of indignation faded from his eyes, and his face softened into a smile, as he marked the charming good-fellowship, the out-of-door look, and the superb self-possession of the tall, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl.

The financier's glance followed that of his caller. "Ah—come in Sheila. This is the gentleman of whom we were speaking at luncheon. My daughter, Mr. Snook."

Snook's first impression of the girl was at once strengthened. With a pleased—"Indeed!"—she came forward, grasped the caller's hand warmly, and looked straight into his eye with an old-time friendliness.

"I've heard of you so often. And how is that wonderful flower garden?"

Cleverness, quick wit, woman—synonymous terms! The battle was won. Josiah Snook capitulated in a gulp.

"Bless me! What do you know about my flower garden?"

Sheila laughed softly. "A great deal more than you suspect. I shall tell you all about it one of these times. But just now we must talk about something else—something that—that"—her voice faltered, and she became very grave—"that concerns Father's name and my happiness."

"Yes—Mr. McDonald was just—"

"But father is so—so injudicious." She glanced toward her father apologetically, then turned again toward Snook.

"We have high-salaried attorneys at our disposal, but our trouble has not to do with corporations nor finance—it is a peculiarly personal matter. We are convinced that there is but one person capable of coping with the situation—yourself." Her voice lowered in unaffected earnestness. "Your consent to help us out of our trouble will be an inestimable kindness."

Snook tugged nervously at his little goatee as he gallantly replied:

"You make it impossible to refuse. My fee shall be a visit from you to my flower garden. And now—what is it all about?"

Sheila glanced meaningly toward her father.

McDonald brought himself together with a jerk. With new-found consideration, he begged Snook to resume his chair.

"Er—you see, Jared—Jared is my son, as you are no doubt aware—is again in bad. If you have followed the newspaper accounts of his career, you will know that he is *usually* in bad. This last, however, is the worst escapade of his wild progress."

The financier arose and began to pace back and forth in agitation. Again he burst forth bitterly—as much to himself as to the two silent listeners.

"I have given him everything. Education, travel, pleasure, have been his. He had more money than he could spend, and yet—yet he is now under arrest for *stealing!*"

Snook gave a start of surprise. "Stealing? What is he accused of stealing?"

"Baubles!—just a tawdry lot of cheap jewelry."

"But—but—must there not be some mistake?"

"No, there is no mistake—he has confessed the whole miserable affair to the reporters—to all the world!"

There ensued a moment's embarrassed silence. Suddenly McDonald stopped short, and, his face white, and his manner vehement, he burst out:

"And that is not all—his confederate was a common thug, and the person from whom he stole was a notorious *demi-mondaine!*"

For a moment he ceased speaking; then, his voice dropping to a low, calculating pitch, he continued:

" I would have let him go to the very depths this time, only for—for Sheila. For Sheila's sake, I will make one last move on his behalf. I have bonded him

out of jail, and I ask you, Mr. Snook, to make use of every expedient of the law to save him from the penitentiary. I'll give ten thousand dollars to have this accomplished. I want you to take full charge—I don't want to have anything to do with it. Will you do it?"

Anxiously the capitalist searched the face of his caller.

Snook tugged at his goatee meditatively for a moment; then, casting a glance toward the daughter, he slowly arose.

"I'll do it."

McDonald reached out his hand impulsively.

"Thank you—very much. Now, I shall turn you over to my daughter—she will see that you get started on the case."

Snook bowed, and quietly followed Miss McDonald from the room. Together they crossed a hallway and entered a cozy sitting-room. Sheila closed the door, and smilingly motioned the whimsical repudiator of Blackstone to a chair.

"I can't tell you how happy you have made me, Mr. Snook. I feel sure that you will be able to extricate Jared from his dilemma. And I want to tell you a secret: Jared is not half so bad as Father thinks. Father has magnified my brother's failings. Jared is indiscreet—nothing more. I do not understand this affair, but I am convinced that there is something back of it all."

"Where is your brother?"

"In the library; I am going to take you to him now. I only wanted to tell you these things beforehand, so that you would—would better understand."

As Snook followed his fair guide into the stately McDonald library, he beheld a light-haired, good-natured-looking young fellow pull himself out of a comfortable leather chair, and face them. Snook recognized the prodigal son in the young man even before the sister formally introduced them.

"Well, my boy, you seem to be responsible for no little anxiety in the McDonald household."

The boy laughed softly, at the same time glancing repentantly toward his sister.

"And I regret it—regret it ever so much, sir. I am always bringing a bunch of worry home to Sis and Father. And this last is simply fierce—I knocked the props clear out from under."

Sheila crossed over and sat down upon the arm of her brother's chair. Tenderly she smoothed her hand over his hair.

"Now, Jared, I want you to tell Mr. Snook all about it—everything."

"It's a short chapter. You see it was my last day at home before going back to college, and I was celebrating. I got two-thirds pickled. Somehow, I fell in with Squint Wallington—he used to teach me boxing, you know. Well, Squint has a bon-bon by the name of Belle Berdeen—I kid him a great deal about his soul-mate. So when Squint and I came together last night, Squint takes me aside and confides that Belle has gone to the theatre with some one else, and suggests that we put one over by going to her apartments and relieving her of the irksome custody of a certain bunch of jewelry. I was just enough whittled to make the thing appeal to me as a joke. And—well, that's the whole bloomin' story. We did it, got caught by the cops, and I—well, there was nothing whatever to deny."

Snook studied the boy's face in silence. He watched the sister quietly stroke the boy's light, wavy hair, and noted the unusual tranquility and trustfulness in her voice as she gently scolded:

"But, Jared, dear—you carry your sport too far. However innocent your intentions may have been, you have made yourself amenable to the law. What you did was, in the law's eyes, stealing."

There was a defiant ring in the boy's voice as he replied:

"I suppose it was, but it wasn't in mine. That stuff didn't belong to that Berdeen woman anyway. It—" He paused in embarrassment.

"Go on, go on, young man—let us hear everything."

The boy glanced about furtively.

"I—I don't think that that will cut any ice in the matter. But the jewelry which I took was stolen property that

this woman was keeping for one of her admirers."

"How do you know that?"

"Squint told me."

"What became of Squint?"

"He ducked."

"Had you actually secured any of the booty?"

"Yes, I had it all. The cops took it from me."

"And you made a full confession to the police?"

"Yep—everything."

A first shadow of fear sprang to the boy's face as he alternately searched the faces of his sister and the lawyer. Snook tugged at his little goatee for a moment reflectively. Then, briskly, he arose to his feet.

"You are in a pretty serious dilemma, my boy, but we will do the best we can for you. I want you to remain close in the house, and for heaven's sake, give no more interviews to anyone! I shall probably see you both again tomorrow."

The following morning, Snook secured an interview from the police prosecutor. He found that individual not only highly elated over the arrest, but unswervingly resolved to use every effort to consummate a conviction.

"Why, hang it, Snook—that crowd of young swells have driven the police to distraction for more than a year by their diabolical escapades. They have steadfastly eluded us. They have mocked us with derision, and held us up to public contumely. Now we've got the king-bee, and by thunder!—we're going to soak him—and soak him hard!"

"Have you succeeded in capturing the other fellow—Squint?"

Into the prosecutor's face swept a look of mingled craft and exultation.

"Squint? Oh, we were not after that precious knave. You see, Snook, it was Squint who tipped the thing off to the police. Young McDonald walked right into an ambush."

Snook stared back at the smiling prosecutor incredulously.

"Why—why you must be mistaken, Mr. McKertchner—it was Squint who worked the job up."

McKertchner laughed scornfully.

"According to young McDonald—yes. But we have the other side of the story. It was McDonald who did the planning. Squint agreed to go along—but he put us wise first."

Snook gulped down his surprise. For a moment he became overwhelmed with a conviction that his client was wholly unworthy of his efforts. The undefined feeling of the day before that the boy with the light, wavy hair was not just what his frank, good-natured countenance indexed, rushed impellingly back upon him. Then suddenly there sprang before his eyes a vision of a serene, trustful girl with the calm dark eyes and the glorious black hair. He drew himself up with a jerk, relighted his cigar, followed the lazy flight of the smoke through the air for a moment, then turned quietly toward the prosecutor.

"Uh-huh, I see, I see." Then: "And this Belle Berdeen—what about her?"

"Belle? Oh, Belle is not so bad."

"Where was she that night?"

"Theatre, I believe. At the Victoria, I think they said."

There was nothing more to be learned from the prosecutor. Shortly after, Snook found the manager of the Victoria in the box-office.

"Say, Mack—I suppose that it is foolish to ask—but have you a way of knowing whether Belle Berdeen was here in the theatre night before last?"

The answer came unhesitatingly.

"I know positively that she was. The fact was brought to my attention by a little incident. You see, her apartments were broken into that evening, and a message was left here at the office for her about the affair. One of the ushers took it down to her."

"How do you know that the note contained information about the robbery?"

"She dropped the note on the floor, and the same usher who delivered it to her found it after the show. We have it here as a relic."

"A relic? Why, was there anything unusual about it?"

The manager laughed as he turned and began to search in a pigeonhole.

"Well, rather. It sounds like pig-latin to me. We couldn't make head or tail out of it. Ah—here it is."

Snook took the bit of paper eagerly. Slowly, he read the scribbled words:

Pearly Brush, find em who worked at the Park. Tell her it is all over. One bagged. One got away. Come home. SQUINT.

Thoughtfully Snook studied the seemingly meaningless jangle of words. Then, suddenly, a light of understanding flashed into his face. He turned eagerly toward the manager.

"Would you mind letting me take this with me? It is an important link in the unraveling of the robbery."

"Sure—take it along."

As Snook again reached the sidewalk, he was visibly excited. Fifteen minutes later, he was making his third taxicab call. This time his destination was a high-priced apartment house across the river.

A *chic* French maid admitted him. He was shown into a small, extravagantly furnished sitting-room. A doll-faced, yellow-haired woman languidly arose from the depths of a heavy leather chair.

"Miss Berdeen? Ah—yes. Well, my name is Snook. I am an attorney, and represent the young man arrested for breaking into your apartments."

"Indeed?"

"I thought you might be able to throw some light upon the matter advantageous to my client."

"Gee! I like your nerve! I don't owe that McDonald kid nothing. Besides, I don't know a thing about it."

"Is your memory bad?"

"See here, I aint going to waste any more time with you about it—see?"

Snook smiled grimly.

"Ah, I guess you will—a little. I came to talk business—understand?—business. I think that we understand each other pretty thoroughly—at least, we will very soon. For instance, I have here a tender, endearing little note which you thoughtlessly dropped at the theatre—no, don't take it; I'll read it."

Slowly, and with exaggerated emphasis, Snook read the famous message. Having finished, he glanced up at the woman.

"You don't mean to say that *I* dropped that—that outlandish thing, do you?" she drawled.

"Splendid, Miss Berdeen—you should have studied for the stage. You are a natural *tragedienne.* But listen to me—do you recall the famous prosecutor of the Skragg's gang?—yes, of course. You remember the funny-sounding letters that were introduced in that case? Yes? Well, it was I who defended that bunch of pirates. It was—"

The woman's nonchalance dropped from her. With clenched fists and burning eyes, she took a step forward. Hoarsely she whispered:

"Then—then you know the cipher?"

"Perfectly. This note told me everything."

The woman sank limply into a chair. There was both fear and defiance in her voice as she glanced about, sullenly commenting: "That's what I git for taking up with a kid—he ought to've stayed home of nights with his nurse. What you going to do with me?"

"Nothing—providing! You see, I don't want to punish anyone—I merely wish to save the boy. But I can't understand one thing: Why did Squint put the police wise?"

The Berdeen woman straightened up as if treated to a galvanic shock, exclaiming, "He didn't!"

"He did—I got it straight from headquarters."

Slowly, as if dazed, the woman gasped: "Squint—it was Squint who peached? Why—why—" Then, like a flash, understanding swept into her face, to be followed instantly by uncontrollable anger. Springing to her feet, she hissed: "The dog! The coward! I'll—I'll get *him!* I'll—"

Snook broke in calmly: "Answer me—*why* did Squint squeal?"

"Aw, jealousy—that's what got him. You see, he thought the kid was cutting him out with me."

"So! That clears it all up. Just lie low until this all blows over. You will not be molested. I don't think there will be a trial—now."

Again Snook hurried into the taxi, and soon afterward was ushered into the presence of the prosecutor.

"Say, McKertchner, do you remember the famous Gunckel case?"

"Yes—why?"

"Remember there was a burglary committed, and the evidence showed that the burglary was instigated by the occupant of the building burglarized?"

"Yes, yes—but—"

"And that the court held that the law would not tolerate an *entrapment*—that such a burglary lacked the real elements of a crime? That the necessary terror and surprise to the occupant was lacking?"

"Sure—but what are you driving at, anyway?"

"If exactly the same case came before you, would you insist on prosecuting it?"

"No—that would be foolish. But what—"

"Then I ask you to *nolle* the McDonald case."

"You're crazy!—er—pardon me! But whatever—"

"Wait. Let me tell you a remarkably queer little tale. You know this Berdeen woman—I need not dwell upon her varied accomplishments. Suffice to say, that she had in her possession certain jewelry of which she was not the owner. Why she had it, and to whom it belonged, matters not.

"Well, the owner was demanding it. The vain Belle had compunctions about giving it up. Her resourceful brain conceived a burglary of her own household. She planned the details. Squint was her most trusted follower. She passed the key over to this gentleman of the slanting optic, and left a clear field by going to the theatre.

"All would have gone smoothly, had not Squint, her *particeps criminis*, decided to take advantage of the opportunity to get even with McDonald, against whom he had a grievance.

"He prevailed upon McDonald—who did not know that the Berdeen woman was in on it—to be one of the *dramatis personae*. Then, putting the police wise, he led his young rival into the trap."

The prosecutor had followed the narrative closely. A look of skepticism crept into his face.

"The facts, if true, would let the boy out, all right—but how do I know they are true?"

Snook drew forth the little written message.

"After Squint was assured of the success of his Judas stunt, he sent a laconic dispatch to the theatre. The manager found it. It is in cipher. Translated, it reads: 'The police caught us in the act. I had a confederate. I slipped through without being recognized. Pal was caught. You are unknown in the matter. Squint.'"

The prosecutor whistled softly. Snook continued: "I just came from Belle Berdeen—she didn't know that it was Squint who had tipped it off, but she admitted all the rest."

The prosecutor stroked his chin thoughtfully. Presently, his voice reluctantly slow and measured, he said:

"Of course, young McDonald was not playing the game of burglary for the benefit of the galleries; yet, under the decision of the courts, the Berdeen woman's knowledge and participation exonerates the boy. You're a smooth one, Snook."

Within fifteen minutes, Josiah Snook was back at the McDonald home. Quickly he was shown into the gorgeous library and stood for a moment smiling into the anxiously inquiring faces of the brother and sister.

Sheila was first to speak.

"Your face portends something good, Mr. Snook. Have you discovered anything?"

"I should say that I have!—never so many things." And, without ceremony, Snook unfolded the whole complication of conflicting intrigues, concluding, "and that lets you out, my boy—the prosecutor will at once recommend the dismissal of the case. I—"

With a laughing, "You dear old man!" Sheila rushed impulsively forward and planted a kiss on the cheek of the surprised owner of the flowers.

Flushing with confusion, Snook tugged at his goatee as he stammered:

"Tut, tut! It was nothing—awfully glad to do it. And now, how about the fee?"

The girl's face sobered. "Ah—yes—to be sure. We will have to see Father."

Snook raised his hand impatiently.

"No, no! You don't understand. I don't want money—not a cent. That was not our contract. My fee was to be a visit by you to my little garden."

Sheila laughed in happy remembrance.

"And I am ready to pay the fee—now! Just wait until I get my hat."

The Come-Back

By BRUCE FARSON

AN INCIDENT OF THE INSEPARABLE TRIO IN BASEBALL

NICK CARTER sat alone in the garish lobby of the hotel. Over at the cigar counter a platoon of his teammates were noisily trying to beat the "twenty-six" game.

Ordinarily, Nick would have been among them; but to-night he had no heart for amusement. The blow that he had been expecting had fallen at last. Fillmore had "benched" him.

It had all happened so suddenly that Nick could hardly realize it. The manager had pulled him out in the seventh inning and sent a recruit slugger in to deliver a hit. Then young Ainslee had gone behind the bat and had won the game with a screaming three-base drive in the twelfth.

Never before in his thirty-six years of life had Nick felt so old. He had known on the spring training trip that he was getting into form slowly, and the fact had worried him. Later, he had developed a kink in his throwing arm; and now, for the last two weeks, his batting eye had deserted him.

He had tried to convince himself that his weakness was of his own imagining; but the night before two recruits had stopped near where he was sitting. They did not see him in the dim light.

"Carter's slowing up," said one. "Back to the 'Bush' before long."

The other nodded. "Hard luck!" he answered. "Nick's a good old wagon; but he's done broke down. 'Taint right for Fillmore to keep a whirlwind like Bing Ainslee out o' the game on account of sentiment."

Nick had felt a wave of anger, that clenched his gnarled fists and set his teeth, sweep over him. So Fillmore was playing him out of sentiment, was he? He longed to rage between the two youngsters and wither them with scorn; but instead, he sat tight until they had gone and then sneaked to his room.

Before he went to bed, he had sat for a long time staring fixedly out over the furnace-like glare of the city. His hot anger had given place to a dull, gnawing pain. He felt very tired and very much alone. In spite of himself, his thoughts went back to the days when he had been acknowledged the best catcher in the Big League—days when his face adorned the covers of magazines and stared haughtily forth from cutlery and haberdashery advertisements — and it struck him like a blow that those days were now nothing more than a memory.

"I wouldn't care if I'd been knocked out or fired," he muttered. "But I'm just a 'has been.'"

The next day he had struck out in a pinch and Ainslee had stepped permanently into his shoes—and was filling them better than their former occupant.

That was why Nick Carter had lost interest in amusements. While the dice rattled on the cigar counter, he sat contemplating a tawdry vision of life in the tank towns of the minor league. He did not even look up when Fillmore himself slipped into the chair beside him. The Leopard manager proffered a cigar.

"Smoke up, Nick!" he urged. "And let me tell you a good one I just heard."

Both men laughed at the point of the story; but their amusement was strained. Carter knew that Fillmore was leading up to something and Fillmore knew that he was not deceiving. Doggedly the manager made up his mind to have it over at once.

"Say, what d'yuh think of young Ainslee to-day? Got the makin's aint he?" he floundered.

Carter nodded grimly. "He's Big League class," he replied.

"Yuh know, I believe I'll let him work every day for a while. It'll give him experience and you can sort o' take it easy."

Fillmore's eyes were glued on something across the lobby. Nick swallowed twice, licked his lips; then he answered.

"Good idea! Guess I'll go to bed."

The manager watched his veteran catcher's tall figure as it slouched toward the elevator.

"Too bad!" he growled. "The old boy's goin' to take it hard!"

Carter began his rest in mid-season and it kept up till August had given place to September and the Leopards were in the home stretch. Ainslee had blossomed out into a sensation. His throw to second base was beginning to be characterized as chain lightning, and he was batting well above .300. Occasionally Carter caught "second string" when Ainslee was not feeling quite up to form; but of late Bowen had been doing most of the relief work. Idleness was stiffening up the old-timer's worn muscles, and his eye did not improve with only batting practice to sharpen it.

The Leopards were scheduled to finish the season away from home and the pennant race was narrowing down to a duel between them and the Gray Sox. On "get-away day" Fillmore spent a long hour in conference with the owner.

"What do you think about taking Carter?" he asked.

"You wont use him, will you?" asked the owner.

"No, but—" Fillmore hesitated. "Well, I kind o' hate to leave him."

The owner nodded. He was an old-time warrior himself and he knew the sentiment that lurked under his grizzled manager's words. Carter's playing days were over. This would be his last trip.

"You're the doctor," he replied. "I want the pennant, that's all."

"Then he'll go," decided Fillmore.

That night the Leopards rode east in a special train, and hardly had the lights of Leopardville winked out below the horizon before Fillmore called a caucus. The manager looked over his audience before he began talking. Bronzed, clean-cut, some a little drawn as to face, they sprawled upon the upholstered seats or lounged easily in the swaying car-aisle.

"They're the cleanest, gamest bunch in the Big League," Fillmore told himself proudly. "They'll stand the gaff."

"Now boys, it's up to us," he began. "There's seven more games before we fight it out with the Gray Sox, and the way I figure it, we've got to win six of 'em to have a chance. We open against the Bandits while the Sox are playing the Pigeons. They'll take all three. We've got to do the same thing. Then we get the Cormorants for four while they play the Maroons. They'll bag the odd and if we can get three we'll be only one point behind them. We've got to do it! There's no use in me telling you that the man that doesn't keep in shape is double-crossing his pals. All I can say is that if every man plays the best he knows how, we'll be up there at the finish. The Sox've got all the best of it. The Pigeons are the weakest team in the league and the Maroons are slumping. More than that, they're playing at home. It's going to be easy for them and tough for us. The newspapers are giving them the pennant now."

A growl of dissent went round the crowded circle.

"They haven't counted us out yet!" said Curly Wolf.

The manager gave a sign of dismissal and the group melted. The usual poker and pitch games started. Half a dozen gossipers foregathered in the smoking compartment. Only Nick Carter sat alone. He held a book across his knees, but he wasn't reading. Instead, he stared out of the black square of window at his shoulder and thought.

His team was in desperate case. Every craft and wile of big league baseball would be required to win those six games that Fillmore had demanded. Nick groaned as he realized that for the

first time since he had donned the "spangles" in fast company, his teammates were not looking to him to be out there doing his share and steadying the youngsters with his cool head. Never in the long afternoons that he had spent upon the bench had his nerves been as raw as now. Gloomily, he rung for the porter and ordered his berth made up.

The Leopards, hitting like fiends and fielding marvelously, tore through the Bandits for three straight victories. Between innings, they watched the scoreboard and gnashed their teeth as they watched the flying Gray Sox trample the lowly Pigeons underfoot.

Then they sweltered through a night ride to the home of the Cormorants. Stall pitched the first game and lost in thirteen furious innings. The Gray Sox won 5-3. And the next day it rained!

Feverishly, the Leopards hung over the ticker and read the story of another Gray Sox victory. That night, the team was as silent over dinner as a burial party.

Fillmore sent big Pat Rockwell to the slab for the first game of the third day's double-header. Pat won handily and the score-board told a cheering story of rain in Gray Sox town. Kit Kidder dazzled the opposing batsmen with his slants for five innings of the second tussle. Then he weakened and Fillmore signaled to Benham, a youngster, to step into the breach. Before Benham could get out of his sweater, however, Rockwell surged forward.

"Fill!" he pleaded. "I'm fresh as a daisy! Put me in. Don't take a chance. We've got the game."

For a moment, Fillmore hesitated; then he nodded non-committally.

"But don't let out any more than you have to!" he ordered.

Rockwell held the enemy runless and his team-mates batted out the victory. That night the pennant flapped louder.

"The Sox've got to win both ends of a double-header to-morrow and we've already turned the trick. We've got an ace in the hole," said Shorty Long.

The last game in Cormorantville was a heart-breaker. For eight innings the rivals fought unavailingly to push a runner across the plate. Both in-fields smothered base hit after base hit. Once, with two men tearing home, Curly Wolf was thrown out at first by an eyelash. Again, Bailey caught a screeching liner that would have put the game on ice for the Cormorants. Meanwhile, the Sox had won the first game of their double-header and had accumulated three runs in as many innings toward a second victory. In the eighth inning, the first Cormorant batter went out via the strike-out route; the second beat out a scratch hit to first; the third advanced him to second at his own expense.

Stall was pitching easily and the fact that a man was on the keystone sack only tightened the Leopard defense a bit. Confidently, Stall eyed the man at the plate. He was a notoriously weak batter with a mania for swinging at high pitches. Consequently, Stall served him one. He bit at it and poked a puny fly just out of the diamond. Shorty Long sprinted easily back under it. Doll began to slip off his glove. The outer gardeners were trotting in. Shorty raised his hands for the catch. Then the bleachers came to their feet with a hoarse roar, for Shorty had stumbled. He struggled wildly for a moment to keep his balance; then he flopped helplessly over on his shoulder. The ball thumped to the turf unimpeded, and the Cormorant runner scored. Shorty scrambled to his feet and untangled the discarded glove of a Cormorant infielder from his spikes. Sheer luck had put the Leopards in the last ditch. Then, as they trotted disconsolately to the bench after the third out had been made, the scoreboard displayed a huge "8" in the Maroon's bracket. That the Gray Sox were losing was adding insult to injury.

However, the Leopards were not through fighting. Bowen, catching relief for Ainslee, got a base on balls. In a moment the Leopards were bursting out of their lair. Bailey tore up and down the third-base coaching line. Curly Wolf was pounding his glove and bellowing behind first. Fillmore crooked a finger to Blake, a heavy-hitting youngster from the Katy League.

"Here's your chance!" he snapped. "Kill it!"

Blake turned a little pale under his

tan. Quickly, he sprang to his feet and picked up a bat. He whistled it around his head as he strode to the plate. Bailey and Wolf roared a welcome.

"Come on you Kid Blake! Muss 'em up! Show 'em why they call yuh 'Fence Buster!'" they bellowed.

The Cormorant pitcher eyed this newcomer uneasily. There was no known weakness to play upon here. The youngster's very rawness made him dangerous. Accordingly he tried a "wide one." Blake sneered at it.

The slabman tried again, and again the batter refused to bite. The third cut the corner of the plate—almost.

"B-a-a-ll three!" decided the umpire.

"He's afraid of yuh! He's gonna walk yuh, kid!" baited the coachers.

The Leopard coop was a seething, roaring whirlpool. From it issued a polyglot chant of encouragement that even the umpire's baleful glare could not stop.

Blake gripped his bat and thought fast. Most fellows would let the next ball go by even if it was over the plate, in the hope that the pitcher would fail to keep it under control. That was baseball custom; but Blake had never been strong for custom in the "Katy." That was one of the reasons why he had left it. He was the sort of young man that has opinions of his own. Therefore he noticed the flush on the pitcher's face and told himself:

"He's sore at the kidding and don't want to walk me. He'll put the next one over and I'll pickle it."

Elaborately, he assumed an attitude of indifference. He let his bat half fall to his side. Idly, he watched the Cormorant slabman unwind his arms and drive the ball straight and true at the heart of the plate. The catcher reached forward. The umpire framed his lips for the word "Strike." But they were both premature. For like a flash the recruit stiffened, whipped back his war club, and met the flying pellet of horsehide with every ounce of strength in his broad back and shoulders. A moment later, the Cormorant outfielders stood and watched the ball soar over the outfield fence. For good measure, the victors batted in a brace more of runs before the inning closed.

That night the Leopards howled with glee. They were going to fight it out with the Gray Sox. They had won their six games. Only one thing dampened their ardor. Bowen, second string catcher, had split his hand on the last ball pitched and was out of the game.

"But Bing Ainslee'll be all we need," said Curly; and the others agreed.

The first two games of the closing series between the Gray Sox and the Leopards will live long in base ball history. Both were won by the narrow margin of a single run, and the fenzied, sport-mad thousands that rimmed the Sox's huge concrete amphitheatre, were glutted with sensations. The Leopards won the first engagement, the Sox the second. So it was that when the two teams faced each other for the closing game, a pennant and the fat prize money of the world's series hung in the balance.

Shorty Long squinted at the assembled populace and began to whistle "All Alone." The youngsters were dry mouthed and nervous. The veterans were grim. For once, horse play was lacking.

At last the Gray Sox trotted out for fielding practice. They tossed the ball around the diamond—slowly at first, until their well-trained muscles were limbered up, then faster, till the sphere became a white streak that vibrated from first to third, to home and to second. The spectators, keyed to the boiling point, growled, roared, stamped and shifted. No one sat down till the Leopards took the field. Then a silence brewed that was ominous in its intensity. Gray Sox town wanted a pennant.

At last the gong trilled "play ball" and the umpire announced the batteries. They were Pat Rockwell and Bing Ainslee against Big Ed Wells and Summers.

Fillmore strode back from a final consultation over ground rules. His face was as expressionless as if he were sitting behind a straight flush in a poker game.

"Hit into the crowd goes for two bases," he told Bailey, first man up. "And remember, make him pitch to yuh."

Big Ed Wells, steady as a church in the face of thirty thousand critics, swept his stinging curves over the plate. Three Leopards faced him and three Leopards went out.

"Wait him out and make him pitch to yuh!" growled Fillmore as the team took the field.

Rockwell gave the first of the Gray Sox a base on balls; then he steadied and struck out the next two; the fourth batter rolled an easy grounder to Bailey at the third corner. The first inning was over and the honors were even.

The second and third innings were runless for both sides.

"Air-tight ball!" snapped Curly Wolf as he passed Babe Doll.

"Too tight!" Babe threw over his shoulder. "Pretty soon somethin's goin' tuh bust!"

He was right, for after two men were out in the fifth, Rockwell faltered and a brace of runs crossed the plate.

The grandstand went mad at the success of their almost-champions. Men pounded each other on the back and the air was thick with hats, cushions, paper and yells.

In the Leopard coop, a row of grim-faced players sweated and crouched in tense positions. Fillmore's face grew a bit more masklike.

"Their turn to break next," he said.

But the Gray Sox turned the sixth and seventh innings safely and their two-run lead assumed ominous proportions. Big Ed Wells struck out Seymour to open the eighth. Leisurely, he wiped his forehead; then he dropped his arms. Fillmore, watching intently, leaned forward and then turned to his players on the bench beside him.

"He dropped his arms as if he was tired. He's weakening. Swing hard at everything," he ordered.

Shorty Long slashed a sizzling grounder at Russell and the Bearcat fumbled.

In a moment, the Leopard coop began to boil. Gardner Wells sprinted to the plate and began to pound it with his bat. He drove the first ball pitched into left field for a single, and Shorty slid safely into third. Summers and Wells held a conference—as a result of which they fanned out Becker. The Leopards, however, were not to be denied. Ed Wells seemed suddenly to have lost his cunning; he was buried under a fusillade of base hits. Four runs came over the plate before the break was over.

Frantically the Gray Sox came back in their half of the inning and tried to retrieve themselves. They pushed a runner as far as third, but could not score him. Buck Andrews superseded Wells and kept the Leopards from increasing their lead.

Then, with a scant half inning between them and defeat, the fighting Sox rallied. Andrews himself pounded out a safety and wise old MacArthur, playing manager, sacrificed him to second. Rockwell, pitching his arm off to hold the enemy in check, got two strikes on Russell, only to have him lift a single just over the in-field. Shorty Long was on it like a cat after a mouse. As he drove the sphere to Bing Ainslee, crouched over the plate, he glimpsed Andrews already half-way in from third. Breathless, the Leopards watched the Gray Sox's whirling slide. They saw Bing grip the ball and go down in a tangle of legs and arms. Then they groaned as the umpire signaled "Safe" and the ball rolled out into view.

"Dropped it!" yelled Babe and threw his glove to the ground.

Then he fell silent, for Ainslee lay still. Mike, the Leopard trainer, ran out with a bucket and sponge. A hush fell upon the crowd. After a little, two players half carried the catcher to the bench. His head drooped and his legs wabbled weakly.

Nick Carter had run from the bench with the others. Dimly, he heard some one say:

"Clean knocked out!'

The blackness of the misfortune held him speechless, brain-bound. He only realized that Ainslee was out and Bowen useless with a split hand. The personal equation was sponged out of his mind completely.

Suddenly, he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned to face Fillmore.

"You'll have to go in, Nick," said the manager.

For a moment, the "has been" gaped stupidly; then he turned without a word and picked up chest protector and glove.

As he buckled himself into his armor, he felt his heart pounding heavily against his ribs. For the first time since he had been a raw recruit, his mouth was dry and his legs were weak. His throwing arm felt dead and leaden. Slowly, he walked toward the plate. Rockwell, in the pitcher's box, looked at him nervously.

Suddenly a hot wave of anger surged over the catcher. So Rockwell was afraid of him! He smiled bitterly. Well, what of it? He was afraid of himself. He signaled for a throw and then snapped the ball to first. Babe Doll returned it approvingly.

"Lots of pepper, old kid!" he called.

"Play ball!" called the umpire.

Nick crouched behind the plate and signed for an in-drop. He well knew that Swede Anderson, who was in the batter's box, liked a low ball. Consequently he would be expecting something else. The in-drop would cross him. For a moment, Rockwell hesitated; then he obeyed the instruction.

"Stri-i-ke!"

Warily, Nick watched the Bearcat pirouetting around second base. Becker slipped in behind him and motioned for a throw; but the veteran only shook his head. He knew that one hard throw would crumple up his stiffened old arm. He must hold that peg till it would count most.

The count was "three and two" on Anderson now. Rockwell drove in a sharp-breaking in-shoot. Desperately the batter slashed at it and—connected. Nick, crouching with out-stretched arms, saw the ball carroming straight at Shorty Long. He saw the second baseman scoop it and drive it back toward the plate. He set himself in the base line to receive it. Straight and true, the ball came at his waiting glove. He heard the drumming of the Bearcat's approaching feet and, high and shrill, a continuous roar that he knew must be the fans. He glimpsed Anderson lumbering over first. Then, he felt the thud of the ball in his mit and turned. The Bearcat was just leaving the ground in an irresistible slide. Nick saw the baleful glitter of his spikes. There was no time to dodge. He lunged forward, ball in hand. He felt the flannel of the Bearcat's trousers against his gripping fingers. Then there came a shattering crash that threw him to his knees. He sensed the ripping tear of spikes along his shins, then the hot deluge of blood.

Came a thought:

"I'm through! My legs'll stiffen up now!" Then he laughed grimly. "As if I wasn't done before!" he told himself.

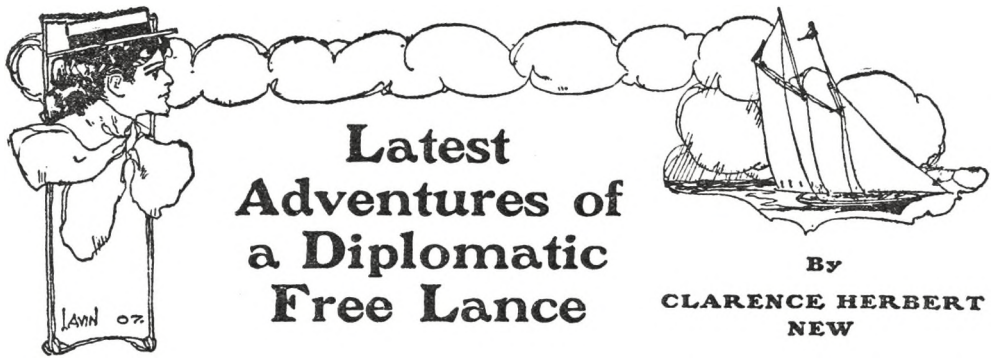
A twinge of pain dulled his brain for a second; then it flashed clear and he remembered Anderson. Blindly, he staggered to his feet. At what seemed a great distance he saw the bulky figure of the Gray Sox runner charging down upon second and blocking it off—the eager outstretched body of Shorty Long. He drew back his stiff old arm. The crucial moment had come. Fiercely he set his teeth and threw with a devastating whip that drove the ball on a line to Shorty's waiting glove. Then, he crumpled up and gripped his torn legs.

A moment later and a deluge of frenzied Leopards fell upon the doughty old warrior. They picked him up off the ground and swung him to their shoulders. In a daze, he heard the babel of their cheering voices. Fillmore fought his way through his joy-maddened team and gripped his hand.

"You won us the pennant, old pal!" he cried, and his voice was husky.

Suddenly, Nick burned with a fierce joyousness. The pain in his legs was forgotten. The minors no longer loomed as a thing to be dreaded. He could go to them now with a clean record.

"And the boys 'll remember my last game!" he whispered to himself — "'Cause when the good old wagon broke down, it was plumb in front o' the Gray Sox tallyho!" he finished.



Latest Adventures of a Diplomatic Free Lance

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

THE FATE OF THE LITTLE KINGDOM of Delgaria hangs in the balance, while certain powers try to encourage the King into a marriage which might provoke a revolution. Lord Trevor, recuperating from an attempt to assassinate him, takes a hand, and points the way to an alliance which places Delgaria on a sound basis.

No. VII—THE PRINCESS DELICIA

OVER a rippling sea of rose and amethyst, at sunrise—gliding silently toward a hilly coast of emerald and topaz—the *Ranee Sylvia* came into a little bay just north of Monte Conero, about six miles below Ancona, on the Adriatic. As the plunge of her anchor echoed back from the hills, a fine-looking man in cool white linen stepped out of the starboard companionway, leaning upon the arm of a tall, black-bearded Afghan, in white muslin and turban, and seated himself in a bamboo chair upon the after-deck.

"The Huzoor hath more strength in his limbs to-day than yesterday—there is color in his face. And my father's son is filled with thankfulness to Vishnu the Preserver that such thing hath come to pass."

"Fawncy I shall make a clean job of it, this time, Abdool—a couple of weeks on those hills up there should put me right. Persistent sort of beggar, Pfaff—wasn't he? Any other man would have been satisfied to shoot a person he wanted out of the way, an' let it go at that. But when his tools failed three times to get me, the Colonel made up his mind to be more thorough in his work. What the devil do you fawncy he could have smeared over those steel-jacketed bullets to poison me awfterward—eh? Rum sort of proceeding—what? Doctors told me if the ball had struck a bone an' stayed inside, instead of goin' clean through, I'd have been a stiff one by now. Odd, don't you know, the poison didn't have much effect until I'd partly recovered from the wound, an' come down to dinner the first time. Then, back I went—flat again for two weeks.

"Well, Pfaff was a genius in his way; but I fawncy they'll all let me alone now. My takin' any interest in diplomatic affairs seems more absurd than ever; an' there's not a Chancellery in Europe that dares risk attackin' me an' havin' it found out. Now, tell me, Abdool, what sort of a place is it you've leased for us up yonder? I quite fawncy the situation—couldn't be better—an' six miles is sufficient to keep the Ancona tourists from botherin' one."

"It is a villa belonging to the estate of the Prince de la Marche, oh Thakur Bahadur. Thou canst see it nestling among the olive trees at a hundred and fifty meters, well up the slope. There are baths and other desirable things, and

around the park, some ninety acres of your English measurement, there is a high stone wall to prevent intrusion."

"That's excell'nt! An' the view up there must be superb! That hill appears to be a shoulder runnin' north from Monte Conero. I say, Abdool, are there *two* villas on the place? There's a pink one stickin' out of the olive trees just to the left of the one you pointed out."

"Nay, Huzoor, the other be a place in which lives a young memsahib with a teaching ayah, or some kind of a woman companion. It is said the young memsahib be a writing woman—one who tells her stories in books and magazines that she may have more listeners than merely those who might hear her voice."

"But the wall you mentioned is between the two places?"

"Even so, Huzoor, the height of a man with a boy upon his shoulders. On thine own side, there be a large tree in which a chota bungalow hath been set; from it, thou mayest look over the wall at the young memsahib if it amuses thee."

"Hmph! I wonder what Nan would say to that?"

"If such thing was—that thou looked with favor upon another woman—our Chota Ranee would make that woman her friend—and eat her own heart in silence. *Aie*—and I think thou knowest this to be a true thing, oh Thakur Bahadur. Never will our Chota Ranee love another man while thou livest."

"Rawther a pity the Colonel's bullet didn't settle the business—what? I'm twenty years too old for her, Abdool!"

"That be reason for other men, Huzoor—not thee. For other women—not her. For, seest thou, age hath not crept upon thee, nor will for many years. With her, also—she be not as other women who scarce have left their *ayahs*—her thoughts be those of wiser ones with twice her years. She hath not borne child, true, and in so much lacks she the knowledge of life, and birth, and death. But in all other matters, her wisdom is as that of Nag. So, mates she not with boys, chasing butterflies in the sunlight; but with men who know all things, even more than *she* knows. All this is read by him who is not blind."

"Faith, Abdool, if thy father's son were the devil, he couldn't tempt me more. But some things should not be done."

"Then will our Chota Ranee be a widow who hath never known her man."

"If I thought that—? Oh, well, in time, all things are clear."

"*Aie,* sometimes it is death which makes them so. And for the woman who loves, that be too late."

"But, if the love came first, and death a year or so awfterward, eh? That might be a solution of the diffic'lty."

"If *two* deaths be a solution, Huzoor—even so. Thy mind is as clear to me as a running brook, yet to this precious thing in thy life art thou willfully blind. If a woman loves a man before marriage, thinkest thou she can see him wither and die as a worthless thing after he hath taken her to him? If her heart be in his keeping, will not the shot or knife-thrust which stills his own stop hers from beating?"

"Deuce take it, man, I cawn't stand this sort of thing until I'm a bit stronger, y'know. It's a problem I've feared I might have to face, but I've kept puttin' it off as best I could, don't you know, as somethin' a gentleman couldn't do—takin' unfair advawntage of a situation, d'ye see. I say—that yacht out there seems to be comin' in to Ancona! Her lines are a bit familiar—not? Wonder if Hillyer has been talkin' with her? Ah! Here he comes, now, from the wireless room. Mornin', Hillyer! Been talkin' with that chap out there? Looks to me like a deep-sea cruisin' boat."

"Your Lordship is looking much better this morning! I scarcely expected to see you on deck so early. That yacht? It's the Arch-Duke's—I see you partly recognize her. They're coming up from Corfu with King Alexis, of Delgaria, and quite a party. The King and the Arch-Duke both came to the wireless-room when their operator told them what yacht this was, and asked me to give you their best wishes. They will be over to call at first opportunity."

"By Jove! Pawssibly I'll not be as immune from visitors here as I supposed. However, as long as it's that sort, I don't mind. The Arch-Duke an'

I are old pals, even if we occasionally disagree on some things—but King Alexis? Where the deuce have I run across *him,* I wonder? As I recall the *Times'* account, he inherited as Prince of Delgaria after the assassination of a distant cousin—an' was raised to kingly rank by consent of the Powers upon the understandin' that he was to marry again very shortly—his first wife havin' been childless, an' one of the ugliest lookin' women in Europe. But who was he before he took over Delgaria?"

"Why, let me think a minute, Sir. Wasn't he formerly 'Prince Alec of Thalzberg'—one of the Danube Provinces?"

"Oh-h-h—to be sure! With no more idea of inheritin' the throne of Delgaria than I have at this moment! Who'd have supposed that Prince Peter, Princess Olga and both their sons would be assassinated in one short hour of butchery! An' who'd ever have thought the Delgarians level-headed enough to call an extra Sobranje, pass over three nearer claimants, an' elect 'Alec of Thalzberg' as their ruler, partly because they liked him, but more because they wanted to get clean rid of Prince Peter an' all his family, root an' branch? I was told the particulars by Lammerford Khan, at the time; but somehow I didn't connect them with the jolly decent chap I'd met in Vienna several times. So *that's* who King Alexis is, eh? I'll be pleased to see him again. An', by the way, Hillyer, speakin' of Lammerford—Sir Francis—you expected to pick up a message from him somewhere along this coast, didn't you?"

"Got it this morning, Sir, just before sunrise, from the Marconi station. He's coming down on the Brindisi Express and will drop off at Ancona before eight o'clock. If Sabub-Ali has reached here with your touring-car, he can fetch Sir Francis out to the Villa; otherwise, he'll get something in Ancona."

Just then a beautiful young woman—slender, yet perfectly formed—came out of the companion and approached them.

"Upon my word, George, you stole a march upon me this time; I didn't think you'd fancy getting up before eight, and so took my time with my bath. M-m-m-m—just *look* at that sparkling water, will you! I've almost a mind to put on a bathing-suit and dive into it for an extra dip! No, I wont. I'll wait until you feel like going in with me. I say! Seems to me you're looking quite fit, this morning—more color in your cheeks. That's jolly! A few weeks on the hills up yonder will put you right, no fear. Where are we breakfasting? On deck, here? Might as well—you can't beat this air, anywhere. Will you tell the steward, Mr. Hillyer? Thanks. Then come back and join us—one of the quartermasters will relieve you in the wireless-room."

"Nan, when did the notion come into your head to call me 'George,' instead of 'Guardy?'" asked Lord Trevor, when Hillyer and Abdool had left.

"Why, I think it must have been when I realized that I was a grown woman at last. The name 'Guardy' will always be sweet to me from its associations, but it implies an age which no one would accuse you of—puts you in the grandfather and benevolent uncle class. If your memory is as good as you imagine, you may remember my calling you 'George' when I was a wee tot in short frocks and pigtails—in Madras, when Daddy was alive and you were his chum. I called you that because he did. And now—I like the feeling of intimacy and equality which it gives. I'm still your 'ward,' George—and shall always consider myself that; but I'm no longer a schoolroom miss. You must reckon with me as a mature woman, just as you would any other woman."

"Even when you sit on my knee and snuggle your nose into my neck?"

"Yes, even then. I do that because I *feel* like doing it. If anyone disapproves, that doesn't concern me in the least. As long as that sort of thing doesn't occur in public, I can't see that it's anyone's business. Now, what will you do, to-day? Stay aboard, or go up to the Villa? Everything is in perfect order to make you comfortable if you care to go up there."

"Why, I fawncy we may as well get settled ashore when we've finished breakfast. Whenever the glawss drops a bit, the yacht can go around inside

the breakwaters at Ancona—bad lee shore here in a blow, d'ye see. But in good weather I'll keep her where she is now; may feel like driftin' up an' down the coast, if we're in the mood, or across to Fiume. Reminds me of the time you were studyin' under Bracciacomo in Venice."

By ten o'clock, the household staff were installed in the Villa, at an elevation six hundred feet above the beach. Sir Francis Lammerford, who had been formerly Dean of the King's Messengers and still "advised" the Foreign Office upon occasion, arrived in time for tiffin, after which he retired to his apartment for a nap after his long and dusty ride from Calais. Wandering through the grounds, Lord Trevor came upon the big tree with the pavilion or little bungalow nestling among its upper branches and, climbing to it, stretched himself in a hammock he found there.

From where he lay, an opening in the branches permitted a magnificent view over the sparkling Adriatic to the dim blue shadows of the Velebit Mountains in Dalmatia, ninety miles away. On the other side—over an eight-foot wall enclosing the estate—he looked down into the neighboring garden, where a semicircular Roman bench of time-yellowed marble partly enclosed the basin of a fountain. Olive trees surrounded it, and an *allée* of tall cedars led across the breast of the slope to a villa with mellow walls of pink stucco. The fountain by the old wall appeared to be a favorite lounging place. A beautiful girl with thoughtful eyes, hair like spun gold, and soft, clinging drapery, half reclined among cushions on the marble "exedra," while a leonine St. Bernard lay with his nose upon the fountain-coping, at her feet. Upon the flat top of the "exedra" lay a dish of figs and mandarines, by a sheaf of manuscript paper, and, upon the marble flags by the dog, were several *revues* printed in French and Russian. The girl was writing upon a lap-tablet, occasionally pausing to look out across the Adriatic.

Presently an elderly woman, whose tasteful gown indicated cultivation and who might have been either friend or salaried companion, came through the *allée* of cedars with the cards of two callers at the Villa. The girl frowned slightly.

"The 'Signor Nietze' and 'Herr Gratzki?' The men who consider themselves leaders of the socialist movement in Delgaria—but they have never seen me. The object of their visit is not difficult to guess. Well—it would serve no particular end to refuse them. They seem to have traced me out, and will be persistent until they secure an interview—I might as well see them and have it over with."

"Suppose, instead of 'having it over with,' the interview leads to complications and serious risk for you?"

"Well—it can't be helped. If I publish what I see fit, regardless of whom it hits, I must expect consequences—and I can't do it *inconnue* much longer. One would have supposed this a fairly safe retreat—but—you see! Oh, send them up here; I feel in the mood to have it out with some one."

Frau Weblich returned to the Villa, and two men presently appeared, coming up to the *allée*. Lord Trevor had settled himself in the hammock with the intention of napping away the afternoon, but the girl, her surroundings and the brief conversation interested him. As he understood the situation, she appeared to have been publishing things which certain people didn't like—and she was in for a rather unpleasant interview—possibly a dangerous one. Dangerous? She'd mentioned the active socialist party in Delgaria—possibly it *might* be a bit dangerous, you know! Difficult to say what a couple of bounders might do if they found themselves alone with the girl at some distance from the Villa. Hmph! Oh, well—His Lordship couldn't stand for aything of *that* sort, you know—rawther *not*. He quietly pulled a heavy-calibered automatic pistol from under his white coat and laid it across his lap. Dev'lish bad form to be list'nin', you know—but what else could a chap do under the circumstances! The interview was none of the girl's seekin'—nothin' confidential as far as *she* was concerned.

The two men were well dressed and had the outward aspect of gentlemen. Their greeting was most courteous, and for several minutes they confined them-

selves to generalities, to appreciative remarks upon the Villa and its surroundings. Finally the Signor Nietze—who was Magyar, in spite of his Italian prefix—got around, hesitatingly, to his object.

"The Signorina is an author—yes? I 'ave be'old the manuscript. She writes under her own name, perhaps? Yes?"

"Oh, no—I use a nom-de-plume. One finds it advisable in reformatory and philosophical writing, you know."

"Such a one, possibly, as 'Marie Stavouroff?'"

"Something of the sort—yes."

"May I compliment the Signorina upon two most powerful books upon her subject?—Books with some rather startling innovations to us of the older cult. They are being widely read."

"So my publishers inform me. More than two hundred thousand of each have been sold."

"Might one ask the Signorina to explain some of her theories a little more clearly—the question of monarchy, for example? We hold it to be a pernicious institution which must be done away with before the human race can progress. Yet in one of your books I think you plainly state that monarchy is not in itself objectionable. It is your claim, is it not, that certain rulers—like King Alexis, for example—might further advance the cause of socialism than any popular leader of the people, if they had the disposition and the belief in it?"

"A little reflection should prove to you the soundness of that theory, Herr Nietze—"

"*Signor*—if Madame pleases!"

"No—*Herr* Nietze, as I said! Do you suppose I could write what I do in the *revues* without knowing something of the 'Nietze' who is a self-appointed socialist leader in Delgaria—or—of what happened in Budapest a few months ago?"

"*Peste!*" The man started from his seat, every particle of color receding from his face.

"Oh—be seated, *Mein Herr*—and learn to control yourself better. I've nothing to do with that past of yours now—possibly I shall never have. But let us remove the buttons from the foils and understand each other. Socialism, as a principle, is not anarchy. Socialists are not assassins. Some of their beliefs are impractical at present—but they are altruistic at least. During the reign of Prince Peter, the misgovernment of Delgaria was so notorious that the socialist propaganda spread like wildfire until, to-day, a majority of the adult males are thoroughly innoculated with it. But the Delgarians are capable neither of self-government nor the carrying out of reforms among themselves—the assassination of Peter and his family proved that. Left to themselves, they would quarrel like cats—their leaders would kill each other for mere difference of opinion.

"There must be a recognized tangible head upon the throne to keep order in the country. Alexis is a strong man with advanced theories, and if the socialists of Delgaria recognize in *him* their leader, support him heartily and thoroughly, there may be a kingdom in Europe that will make a better showing than the Swiss Republic."

Nietze had been listening superciliously, and he now replied:

"I cannot agree with you, Madame—you are making the mistake of youth versus experience. Your *theories* do not concern me or our party in Delgaria, one way or another. We need not quarrel over them. There is one point, however, upon which I have a grievance to discuss—a very real one, I assure you. In neither of your books—in none of your magazine articles—have you made the slightest reference to either myself or Herr Gratzki as recognized leaders of the Delgarian movement. You have referred to lesser men—mere theorists who accomplish nothing—but your obvious slighting of our names discredits us by implication. Moreover, monarchy will not be allowed in Delgaria. It is already doomed. If you will assist us along the lines of what we consider pure socialism, we are willing to recognize and protect you as one of us. If you persist in writing as you have been doing, we must take unpleasant measures to suppress what you attempt to publish."

A rippling, contemptuous laugh stung the man beyond his self-control again.

"That is beyond your power, Herr Nietze. What I choose to write, I shall publish when and where I please. Stop me if you can—stop me if you *dare!* You may find that 'Marie Stavouroff'—though, so far, but a name to her readers—has more of a following than you think. *She* is doing something for the uplift of mankind—*you* are *not.*

"Perhaps a little more frankness between us, Herr Nietze, will do no harm. You and Herr Gratzki have been exploiting Delgaria for what you can personally get out of her. What you advocate is nihilism, not socialism. You already dream of more assassinations—revolution—a republic, with yourself as Dictator. You have received certain hints in diplomatic circles that no attempt at interference would be made to save King Alexis in case of a popular uprising against him—and you place dependence upon these hints without seeing what lies beyond. Perhaps I can tell you a few surprising things in that connection.

"This marriage of King Alexis, for example—the Princess Dagmar of Troatia is one of his companions upon the Arch-Duke's yacht. And this match is being urged upon him by the Austro-Hungarian Government as a desirable one from every point of view. But if he marries her, his people will repudiate them both—she is Austrian and has neither Slavic blood nor sympathies. This marriage will strike the spark for your socialist revolution, acting as the national party—*which is exactly what the Powers expect and have planned.* But, instead of getting your republic, Delgaria will be declared in a condition of anarchy, incapable of self-government, and armed intervention by Austria will follow. Delgaria's fate will be that of Bosnia and Herzegovina—and—that will be about all.

"Now, where do you and Herr Gratzki come in on that proposition? What can you possibly get out of it? Office? Power of any sort? Military commands? Not in a thousand years! It will be safer for all concerned to have you both promptly executed as dangerous revolutionists. You see—you—know—too—much."

Nietze's face was livid—twice he tried to speak but was choked with rage and the beginnings of a horrible fear. What if the woman should be right!

"Madame—that is a very pretty little fairy story of yours, but—it is mere foolishness. Why should the Powers do anything of the sort, after raising Alexis to kingly rank? And why should I be considered a dangerous man—by anyone?"

"Because the Powers confidently plan to use Alexis as their cat's-paw, if he plays into their hands by marrying the Princess Dagmar. As for yourself, because there are members of the Diplomatic Corps who feel almost positive that you were the leader of three men who assassinated Count Schonzyl in the garden of his own Schloss in Budapest, a few months ago—and had something to do with the purchase of a cavalry revolver that was used in Rome on March 14th!"

"Curse you, Madame, for a she-devil! It is *you* who know too much for your own good!" The man's hand suddenly darted inside his coat—there was a flash of light on polished steel. Then—came a stunning report from the foliage of a tree beyond the stone wall—and Nietze stood foolishly looking at the haft of a stiletto which he grasped in his right hand. Two pieces of the blade were glistening at the bottom of the fountain.

"Curse—"

"Oh, save your breath, *Mein Herr*—you lack originality. One of my neighbors appears to be a very pretty shot with a pistol. Really, you know, I think this interview has lasted as long as you could reasonably ask; our respective positions have been sufficiently defined, and I'm very busy to-day. You will be able to find your way out with no difficulty, I think."

Like men in a daze, they picked up their hats and bowed themselves away. Who could say how many hired assassins the woman had concealed behind that wall, or what other effective means of protection were at her disposal?

When they disappeared beyond the *allée* of cedars the Signorina was just climbing upon the marble seat to express her appreciation of the mysterious stranger's opportune shot, when she

heard running footsteps on the other side—and anxious exclamations, *sotto voce:*

"Where did that shot come from? Somewhere in this direction wasn't it, Abdool?"

"Even so, Lammerford Khan—from the great tree, I think. Now, by Shiva—by the beard of my father's son—if they have harmed our Thakur Bahadur, I will cut them in quarters and feed them to the vultures!" Came a voice down through the foliage of the tree:

"I say, you chaps! What's all the row, down there? Who is it you're choppin' to little bits, Abdool?" (Audible exclamations of relief from below.)

"Oh, nothin', old chap—nothin' at all, you know. Just fancied some one was pot-shottin' at a mark out here, you know. I say! How does one get up to your perch? Oh, I see. Here we come!"

Deferring her thanks to a more auspicious time, the Signorina patted the leonine head of the St. Bernard, and calmly resumed her writing—with the sheet upside-down.

When Sir Francis and Abdool emerged through the trap-door of the little bungalow, there were exclamations of surprised appreciation at the magnificent view through the opening in the foliage and the restful comforts of the tiny retreat. Speaking in a low tone which couldn't be heard beyond the wall. His Lordship briefly sketched the interview in the neighboring garden which led up to his timely shot—and when Sir Francis peered down through the leaves at the Signorina, his lips puckered in a noiseless whistle—ending in a whispered exclamation:

"By Jove!—I say, you know—this is most extr'ord'n'ry! Hm-m!—Hm-m!" (Coughing, until the Signorina involuntarily looked up at him.) "This is a pleasant surprise, Your Highness! I was not even aware you were in Italy." She studied his features, which were none too clear in the shadows of the foliage and the bungalow roof—then shook her head, smilingly.

"I am indebted to one of you gentlemen for his rather dramatic interference a few moments ago, but you certainly have the advantage of me—and—appear to see a fancied resemblance to some one you know. Perhaps it will disappear in a closer view. May I invite you, in a neighborly way, to join me?"

"Charmed—but—er—"

"There is a ladder, here, upon my side of the wall—doubtless you will be able to find another one, somewhere."

"*Aie,* Huzoors! The one below the bungalow is long enough—it is but a moment's work to cast it loose!"

In five minutes, they had climbed down and seated themselves along the "exedra" by her. The Afghan—in his striking uniform as "Rissaldar" in the Indian Army, which he wore when in charge of His Lordship's household—lent a note of more vivid color to the picture, and so obviously interested her that he was introduced by Sir Francis with his full string of titles. Then Lord Trevor was presented as her temporary neighbor across the wall—and she turned to Lammerford with a challenging smile.

"And now—will some one kindly introduce *you,* Sir?"

"You've forgotten me, of course, Princess—you were not more than six or eight, I fancy, when I was Attaché at our Legation in Hanover. But we used to be rather chummy in those days—remember the Irish setter I brought you, once, when I came back from England? I've kept track of you in the *Court News* and society gazettes ever since."

"For whom do you take me, if one might ask?"

"For the Princess Delicia, of Zattenberg—an' I'm not mistaken, you know—that scar on your finger was made by a cut from my pocket-knife, an' a precious time we had to make it stop bleeding, too."

"Suppose I were to say that I am 'Marie Stavouroff,' the writer of socialist books and articles?"

"I'm properly amazed at the fact, I assure you. An' yet—considerin' your post-graduate courses at two German Universities—it's a logical enough result. Also, it explains this beautiful villa an' gardens—which, as a residence of the Princess Delicia, would have been the greatest surprise of all."

"Considering the well-known fact

that she is one of the very poorest Princesses in all Europe—eh, *mon ami?* I recognize you now — apparently, you're the same old 'Lammy'—more of *l'air distingué*—oh, a lot more—and the touch of gray at the temples is vastly becoming! You've been knighted also, I notice—so you must have made a name in the Diplomatic service. Well—this rather eventful day is ending delightfully, after all. An old friend—a most acceptable neighbor—and a distinguished Oriental, whose people were altruists ten thousand years before we were born! Lord Trevor scarcely needs an introduction—a stranger might address him with perfect confidence in his reception. In fact, I dare say Your Lordship has many friends whose names and faces are unknown to you—which reminds me: May I compliment you upon your superb marksmanship—and —er—thank you for exercising it in my behalf? I don't think I was really in danger. Bruno would have killed the man had he come a foot nearer—still, one never knows how those little affairs will come out."

Trevor was making light of the service in considerable embarrassment when Sir Francis laughingly cut in:

"I fawncy if anyone in Europe knew Trevor was aimin' a pistol at him, he'd call for a priest, don't you know. When a chap—fallin' from his horse with a bullet through his body—can draw a gun with his last seconds of consciousness, an' put three shots inside a four-inch circle over another man's heart at sixty paces, when that man is partly hidden in a clump of bushes, he's what I consider a jolly dangerous chap to fool with."

"Oh—I remember! That's what happened when Your Lordship was shot in Hyde Park, six weeks ago. I think all Europe was glad when you killed that miserable creature!"

"Er—self-defense, you know—most unpleasant subject. I must apologize, Princess, for overhearin' your interview. Started to climb down, don't you know—but that bounder commenced to get ugly an' I feared he might do somethin' annoyin'. Rotten bad form, my stayin', of course."

"Hmph! I've reason to be glad you did stay! There was nothing private about the conversation, and the interview was certainly not of my seeking. My only regret is the annoyance it must have been to *you*—it could scarcely have been interesting to an outsider."

"Oh, I'll not go as far as *that*, y'know. Alexis is one of my friends. And—by the way, I hear the match between him an' the Princess Dagmar of Troatia is likely to be announced within a week or so. If I understood Your Highness clearly, you're of the opinion that Princess Dagmar is not popular in Delgaria?"

"No one could be less so. She is of the Austrian Court—the most exclusive and intolerant circle of its kind in the world—a circle whose members believe in their superiority as something almost divine. The masses, to them, are *canaille* to whose existence, desires or needs they are supremely indifferent. Well—the masses in Delgaria, to-day, are people of no mean intelligence—and —socialists. King Alexis is of their own blood to some extent—he understands and sympathizes with them. They wish his heirs to inherit the same blood and traits—not, a mixture tainted with the ideas which are intolerable to them. If he marries the Princess Dagmar—and heavy pressure is being exerted in that direction—she will be received with coldness and distrust. And her first open act of inborn insolence will have the effect of a spark in a powder magazine—Alexis and his kingdom will go down in the ruins."

"Your sympathies appear strongly on his side, Princess, and your books present a powerful appeal to the Delgarian people. Might one awsk how your interest has been aroused to this extent?"

Her eyes flashed; her face took on a coloring of added beauty.

"Because I see—have seen for a year —the single opportunity in a hundred to fool the Triple Alliance and give to a little state a solidity and dignity that will amaze all Europe."

"You believe it really possible?"

"Just that—and no more."

After dinner that evening—when the Viscount and Sir Francis were smoking their cigars upon the terrace of

the Villa, in the moonlight—Trevor brought the discussion around to Delgaria again.

"Lammy, you came through Delgaria on your way home from Constantinople a short time ago, did you not? Thought so. Well—had you any chawnce to notice whether 'Marie Stavouroff's' books are bein' read to any extent?"

"There were stacks of them in every book-shop, on every kiosk. And the reviews with her articles in them were displayed with placards to that effect. Her name an' her socialist ideas were bein' quoted in the clubs, on the railway trains, in the hotels—pretty much everywhere that people gather—an' cheap paper editions are circulatin' among the farms. She's probably the most popular woman in Delgaria, to-day."

"They're familiar with her appearance from the magazine pictures, I suppose?"

"There *are* no pictures! An' the mystery about her adds quite a bit to her popularity, don't you know."

"You mean that none of her readers know how she looks—whether she's light or dark? Beautiful, or ugly as sin?"

"Precisely. Some believe that she's deformed an' very plain lookin', others, that she's one of the famous European beauties, while there are a few who imagine her to be a Siberian exile at Kara or Saghalien."

"Then what she told Nietze had some foundation; anyone who maltreated or belittled her in Delgaria would have a host of warm pers'nal enemies?"

"I fawncy it would be an exceedin'ly unsafe proceedin'."

"Lammy, how does this Delgarian proposition strike you? How do you fawncy it'll work out?"

"Like Bosnia an' Herzegovina. Alexis'll go down in the wreck. Demnition outrage! He's a fine chap who deserves better things—but it's his 'kismet'—that's all."

"How would you say the proposition affects England—if it affects her at all?"

"It does, most assuredly. Strengthen the *Triple Alliance* by an absorbed kingdom, and you increase the balance of power against the *Triple Entente.* An independent State might become allied to us through various considerations—but a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is—a part of the Triple Alliance—with its foreign relations handled in Vienna."

"Then, if anything could be done to establish this rawther sizable state on a solid foundation, under fairly strong obligations to the British Government, or persons connected with it—why—might be worth lookin' into a bit—eh?"

"*It would be a Diplomatic coup that would give at least three great Chancelleries food for solemn thought!* But what's the use? It would be almost an impossible task for a well man with an army at his back, an' you're supposed to be down here recuperatin' from what might easily have been a death wound."

"Quite right, old chap; but many a convalescent plays chess to pass the time, don't you know. I'll not run myself into a fever over the possibility—no fear. But I'm figurin' a bit over an idea which int'rests me. Well, fawncy it's bedtime for *me;* you can sit up all night if you like."

As Lord Trevor went up to his room, his brilliant methodical mind was going over and over the interwoven occurrences of the day—since the *Ranee Sylvia* had dropped anchor off-shore that morning—and noting how almost every incident seemed to have been a loose thread from the tangle of Delgarian politics. The Princess Delicia! Beautiful girl, that! Woman with a rarely cultivated mind and much executive ability, calmly throwing dice with Delgaria's fate on a thousand-to-one chance of creating a counter-current which might delay her annihilation temporarily at least. But why? Was it merely pure altruism, grasping at the single opportunity to accomplish something? Or, did the motive lie deeper? Trevor was inclined to think it did. He more than half suspected "Marie Stavouroff's" secret—and his face softened regretfully at the possibility. The girl was playing a brave game—but a hopeless one, as she herself knew. Had she not frankly admitted to them how extremely improbable it was that King Alexis might escape from the net of circumstances the fates had woven? There was one un-

known quantity in the game—the King himself. And until there was opportunity for studying him at close range, the situation appeared to him by no means impossible.

Next afternoon, a gay motoring party from Ancona—including the Arch-Duke and Duchess, King Alexis and the Princess Dagmar—stopped at the Villa de la Marche to inquire after His Lordship's health, and were received with such delightful hospitality that the visit was prolonged until late in the evening. At odd moments, Trevor made himself agreeable to the Princess Dagmar—studying her mental and physical attractiveness. She was of the chestnut-haired, Junoesque Austrian type so familiar in the Ringstrasse—inclined to be more unapproachable than the delightful Viennese of the middle class. After dinner, while the ladies joined the men with their cigarettes on the terrace and watched the rippling Adriatic below them, His Lordship took the King for a stroll among the olives and cedars above the villa.

"Where does Your Majesty go from Ancona? The yacht lays up at Trieste, I presume?"

"Probably. But I may go up from here by rail or cross in to-morrow's boat to Fiume. And, I say, my friend—drop the 'Majesty' stuff when we're alone, will you—I'm sick of it! A puppet! A cat's-paw! A marionette! Bah! I'm an average human atom—with possibly a little more education—pitchforked upon a pedestal for a purpose, if what I suspect is true."

"Then—you're not altogether blind to the Princess Dagmar proposition?"

"Trevor—if you can give me the key to that puzzle, I'm your friend for life! I know there's something underneath, but the match implies pretty solid backing from her family connections, including the Austrian Government."

"I fawncy the Delgarians'll not receive her with respect or confidence, you know. At least, so Lammy tells me. Then—very likely, she'll be a bit insolent to some of your aristocracy—an' there'll be ructions. You've a couple of bally nihilists posin' in your capital as leaders of the socialist party, an' they want just about that sort of openin' to start a revolution in which you'll go over the same road that Peter did. I've heard that Nietze has been promised non-interference in any ruction he stirs up against you. An' there you are!"

"*Gott!* And I might have put my foot in the trap, though the Princess does not attract me in the least. But—to strengthen my position—you see? Still, 'twill be the same with any woman I marry. There's no one in Delgaria. *Gott!* The 'eligibles' are *too* ugly. Look you, Trevor, my first marriage was an affair of state, forced upon me for political considerations. Well, I acquiesced, but I couldn't live with her! I would have no child by her to perpetuate either disposition or appearance. In my second marriage, I shall not do quite so badly as that. I shall marry a healthy woman of decent appearance at least—oh, I've had my dreams, like other men—but in my position, one does not see them realized."

"I say, old chap—if you insist upon familiarity—have your luggage fetched over here from the yacht an' be my guest for a week. I'm here to recuperate, in a quiet way—an' a congenial friend or so will help me along. Of course, you know—I'm no 'political.' But come along over, an', if you like, we'll not be 'at home' to any callers whatever. I came down here to avoid the crowd, you know."

"But that's just the point—I'm an outsider—I've no right to intrude upon your much-needed privacy."

"If you act as a tonic, you have. Don't worry, old chap—I'd not awsk you for mere courtesy. I'll enjoy havin' you here by yourself with us, an' I fawncy this comin' week is one you need badly for serious reflection. What?"

"The Arch-Duke wont like it very much."

"Well, you'll not lose sleep over that, will you? I like 'F. F.' and his pretty Duchess quite a lot, but I don't always agree with his theories by a demmed sight. Take the mornin' train North, if you like, an' I'll have my car meet you at Pesaro. You can motor in the back way, and no one'll know you're here."

The idea caught the King's fancy—as did also the invitation to stay *on*

famille at the Villa. His Lordship's pretty ward, Miss Nan Tremaine, was a charming hostess and, from previous acquaintance in Vienna, he knew that behind Trevor's mannerisms and sporting tastes lay one of the most brilliant minds in all Europe—the sort of mind to see, in any game, a sporting chance which might occur to no one else because of its sheer audacity. Diplomat or politician, it was generally known that His Lordship was not—emphatically *not*—but no one ever suggested he was a fool. That there might be an ulterior motive in this invitation would have seemed to the King too absurd for consideration. It was merely an evidence of rare and timely courtesy, the sort of thing by which Trevor was always endearing people to him. So the programme was carried out: His Majesty, disguised in motoring goggles and cap, arriving at the Villa in time for tiffin. The customs of His Lordship's household had always an Oriental coloring.

In the afternoon, Trevor and his royal guest strolled out under the trees of the estate, coming presently to the big oak in which the bungalow was perched. When they had climbed into it, His Lordship casually pushed a bamboo chair against the railing for the King in such a position that he could look directly down through the foliage upon the fountain at the other side of the wall. Trevor had taken some pains to acquaint himself with his neighbor's habits and knew that if nothing unusual prevented, she would bring the dog and her writing materials out to her favorite nook between two and three o'clock. So he'd taken the precaution to be in the tree about two, keeping the conversation with his guest down to an undertone because it touched now and then upon matters of State.

"Try some of these cigars, old chap. Yours are really excell'nt, don't you know, but these are made by a pers'nal friend of mine in Havana. He says they cost *him* eight hundred dollars the thousand, an' I'll guarantee there's not a headache or a nerve-irritant in the lot. By the way—I was goin' to awsk, yesterday—have you ever come across any of 'Marie Stavouroff's' books on socialistic problems? I've been quite daffy over them because they get right down to nuts, don't you know, an' offer practical suggestions, instead of theorizin' in a general sort of way that conditions should be changed."

"Hmp! I think I've read everything that clever woman has written. I've even asked foreign representatives to ascertain for me who she really is. More than that, I'm actually making preparations at this moment to put some of her suggestions into actual practice."

"My word! That's jolly int'restin', don't you know! Might one awsk just what it is you're up to? Of course—if you'd rawther not—eh?"

"*Au contraire,* I shall be glad to have your opinion, though secrecy is necessary to make the stroke effective. You are aware that we have extensive coal mines in Delgaria, and that our climate makes the annual consumption a heavy one. The mines are owned by Russian Jews, who have advanced their prices year by year because there is little or no competition. We have but one railroad to the outside world—with very heavy grades—and freights are high. So my people are obliged to pay forty leva the English ton—equivalent to one pound, twelve shillings, of your money—for coal which costs about ten leva to mine. The price is an outrage. A bill is being prepared in our 'Sobranje' to appoint a Commission who shall determine the actual gross cost of coal, flour, dressed meat, ice, gas, and electricity. When the cost is ascertained, a maximum profit is fixed at twenty-five per cent and a minimum profit of ten per cent, the minimum applying to each dealer who handles the commodity after the producer. In the case of perishable necessities, which deteriorate if not promptly sold, a maximum profit of fifty per cent is allowed over the original cost of production and marketing. When I sign that bill, it becomes law in Delgaria—and if the various owners are not satisfied, they have this redress, and this only: The Government will step in and handle their property in the most economical manner possible—allowing them the above profits, less ten per cent for the Government's expenses in operating. So it will pay them better

to operate themselves. They will—er—"

The King's voice trailed away into silence—as he bent a little further over the rail and looked down in wondering admiration at the beautiful girlish figure which had perched itself upon the old marble "exedra" by the fountain. Holding out a warning hand behind him, he presently whispered:

"S-s-s-t! Who *is* she, Trevor! Gott! She is delightful—charming!"

Trevor got softly upon his feet and peered over the King's shoulder.

"Er—which? Oh—*that!* My neighbor on t'other side, don't you know. The Princess Delicia. Faith—I must compliment her on that gown—most becomin' one I've seen on her. Though, for that matter, her taste is remarkably good, you know."

"De-li-cia!" (He lingered over the name.) "Gott! It fits her, does it not? But—Delicia—of what, *mon ami?*"

"Oh—er—Zattenberg, I believe."

"Really! Our beauties among the Princesses don't seem to be restricted to the richer lot, do they? The Zattenbergs have barely enough income to keep a governess—deuced pity—they're among the oldest blood in Europe. Visiting here, with friends, I presume?"

"*Au contraire,* old chap—she owns the place."

"Then—I don't understand—"

"Why—I fawncy she went in for paintin', or composin' operas, or writin' books. Somethin' of the sort, don't you know—seems to net her quite a tidy income. But—er—you were tellin' me about those bills of yours in the Sobranje, y'know. What was that other one you were mentionin'?"

"Why—I—don't know. I—I've forgotten. Gott! Did one ever see such hair—like spun gold and copper! And the skin—the curves of the neck! Look, Trevor—look! There's the embodiment of what I dreamed, as a boy—what I've dreamed all the long weary years since then. You know what I *got!*"

"Well—it's a bit late now, I fawncy, old chap. She cawn't be over twenty-five—an'—er—you must be nearly double that—what?"

"Well? Put yourself in my place. Suppose you thought such a woman might care for you—a man forty-five—with more than half your life behind you? Suppose your first mating had been wreckage—that the hunger for love and beauty had grown with the years? Would you test your luck, like a red-blooded man—or would you preach renunciation, and talk of fitness?"

"Oh, I dare say that's all very well from *your* side of the question—but it would be 'cradle-snatchin'' all the same, d'ye see. Put yourself in *her* place, an' see how the proposition looks! Youth mates with youth—she has her right to fire an' strength and passion—the right inherited from nature itself."

"That's theory, Trevor—and it's good theory, too. But there are exceptions to all theories. Why, man—you yourself are one of them. You told me yesterday we were born the same year—but who'd believe our ages unless we told it? At what age does a well-preserved man lose his strength and fire? Some men are tottering 'pantaloons' at forty—others, in physical endurance and mental clarity, are in their prime at seventy. As for the fancies of a young girl—have they never been known to fix themselves upon a much older man? Aye—even a *failing* man? You see instances every day—and the cases are usually young women of exceptional mentality, such as I judge the Princess Delicia to be from your description of what she has accomplished."

"Hmph! For a mere academic discussion, I fawncy we're gettin' a bit worked up. I'll introduce you presently, if you like—an' you can propose before dinner. But about those bills of yours, now, in the Sobranje? I'm jolly well int'rested in that sort of thing, don't you know—if it can be carried out."

"Patience, my good friend—at some other time. Those bills will keep for a day or so—and I've something more interesting on my mind. I came here to stay a week with you for a little needed rest and reflection at a rather critical time in my affairs—at your own suggestion. The match with the Princess Dagmar has never attracted me for one instant—nor have I definitely commit-

ted myself, though another day on that yacht might have settled the matter—it was being already taken for granted. If I could win this girl by the fountain, I might have some happy hours before I die—there's a better chance of the Delgarians accepting her than an Austrian."

"Suppose they don't? You may be doomin' her to assassination—like Olga an' her children."

"She doesn't strike me as the sort of girl who would make enemies by her manner—but I should place that contingency before her in asking for her love."

"You seem to be harpin' on the idea of *love*. Wouldn't you take her anyhow—if you could get her consent?"

"No. I'm *done* with marriages of State—from this on. Either I win some woman's affections, or I'll not marry at all!"

"How can you be sure the glamour of a throne wont carry a good deal of weight with *any* woman?"

"I'll trust my instinct to find that out. Were you joking when you said you'd introduce me, presently? Do you know her? Because, if not, I'm capable of introducing myself. You see, I *knew* Delicia when she was a little girl of eight or ten—just before my first marriage. I was a care-free young captain in one of the Prague regiments at the time—on leave in Hanover. She was a pretty child even then, but gave no promise of being the woman she is now. Used to romp with me and ride my horse in the woods on her cousin's estate. But I'd forgotten even her name until you told me who she was—so much has happened, since."

"Oh, I'll introduce you, old chap—with pleasure. But you'll not allow a momentary impression to be an excuse for an unconventional break, you know—on *my* account. You chaps with Balkan blood in you are an impressionable lot, but you'll very likely forget all about this in the mornin', awfter a night's sober reflection. Of course, I understand you're in a deuced unpleasant position—with your back to the wall—an' a thing of that sort, down by the fountain, has the fascination of an unexpected ray of sunshine. But you cawn't afford to make a move in the game just now without pretty weighty consideration—it might be your lawst, don't you know."

Had Lammerford, or any of the few who knew him intimately, been in position to overhear the conversation in the tree, they would have keenly appreciated the finesse—the deep understanding of human nature with which Lord Trevor was playing such cards as had been dealt to him. And his *tête-à-tête* with the Princess Delicia, a week later, was a still further exhibition of the same thing—possibly, because there was in the affair a close analogy to his relations with Nan Tremaine. He had purposely chosen a time when every member of his own house-party was off motoring for the day—when there was scarcely a possibility of interruption—and after climbing upon the wall, had pulled his own ladder over on the other side. She had grown to like her celebrated neighbor and his charming ward immensely, even to the extent of talking more confidentially with them than anyone she'd known for a long time. And the conversation had drifted around to Delgaria—to the strong personality of King Alexis. Presently—Trevor lighted one of his long cigars with his usual deliberation and asked—between puffs:

"Princess—how would you relish bein' Queen of Delgaria?" She glanced at him in a startled way, and smiled, doubtfully.

"I doubt if even Lloyd's would insure my life, in such a case—and the mere sensation of living gives me intense happiness, I assure you."

"There are prob'ly not more than two men in all Delgaria who would have a desire to kill 'Marie Stavouroff'—I doubt if they could even bribe Hungarian nihilists to do the job. It would be merely a case of unrelaxing surveillance over Nietze, Gratzki, an' their intimates, with an eye to the doin's of the moneyed int'rests antagonized by the socialist bills in the Sobranje."

"That may not be far from the truth, *mon ami*. Personal considerations of safety would carry little weight with me in such a proposition. Your question goes deeper than that. I wouldn't mar-

ry the greatest man in the world unless I loved him."

"An' a girl of twenty-five doesn't love a man of forty-five."

"Not as a rule, perhaps—but she might—very easily. Where did you get any such idea as that? A man's age has really very little to do with it—if a woman *loves* him!"

"Delicia—would you marry King Alexis—for example?"

"That's a question which but one man has any right to ask—and he's not in position to do so even if he wished—which I doubt very much." (The King had been "conventional"—out of consideration for his host—which but strengthened his purpose.)

"Er—do you mind if I tell you a bit of a story? No? Well—once upon a time there was a little tot in short frocks up in Hanover, don't you know—a cute little tyke, an' a bit of a romp. An' a handsome young captain in an Austrian regiment was spendin' his 'leave' with her cousin, where she was stayin'. He had a most beautiful horse, don't you know—she used to ride, in his cavalry saddle, through the woods of the estate with him. Used to love the bristly, tickly feelin' of his mustache when he kissed her—used to cuddle up in his arms an' listen to the fairy stories he told her—an' dream of his comin' back some day to carry her off from some enchanted castle she was in. I fawncy 'poverty' must have been the beastly castle, you know—poor little tyke. Then—he went away—an' married a horrid ugly woman with the disposition of a shrew. An' the little tyke grew into a beautiful woman, an' went to the University, an' went bravely out into the world an' made a name an' fortune for herself. An' her Captain turned out to be a Prince, d'ye see—an' the Powers made him King of a wild an' troublesome country—meanin' all the while to have him killed an' grab the country awfterward—the ugly wife havin' died childless.

"An' one day he happened to be in a big tree on a neighborin' estate to where the little tyke lived when she grew up an' wrote her books—the only weapons she could use in fightin' for him a bit off her own bat, d'ye see. Well, he'd read her books, an' was even then carryin' some of her ideas into practice; but he'd no idea who wrote them. An' lookin' over the big wall around her place, that day, he saw her by the fountain—an' went crazy over her. When he heard her name, he remembered all about Hanover—an' the little tyke—an' the horse. But, most of all, he remembered the fairy stories—an' the kisses, don't you know. An' he was hungry for 'em again. But, d'ye see, he was nearly twice her age—an' so he was afraid she couldn't love him just for himself. But he wasn't the sort to let his happiness go without havin' a shy at it. An' so—er—well, Delicia—you're by way of bein' a writer—pawssibly you can finish the story for me?"

Her eyes were bright with unshed tears—she looked at him with dawning comprehension.

"And so—you—you *guessed,* did you? You saw the possibilities for Delgaria, when no one else dreamed of such a thing. You spirited him away from that yacht where he was just on the brink of committing himself, irrevocably—and brought him here as your guest, *'inconnu.'* And then you placed him in a position where surroundings, memory and the very desperateness of his position could scarcely fail to exert a powerful influence. And *then*—I suppose you spent a full minute lighting one of your long cigars and said: 'Most extr'ord'n'ry!'—or something of the sort. My friend—my very dear friend—were you ever kissed by a Princess of the blood? Because—you're about to have that experience!"

When the betrothal of King Alexis to the Princess Delicia of Zattenberg was announced, two days later, Sir Francis Lammerford begged Miss Tremaine's pardon for saying "damn!" After which, he smashed his favorite pipe upon the floor and sprang up to pace about the room.

"Do you *get* it, Nan? D'ye see the matchless precision of Trevor's reasonin'—an' the possibilities he saw at a glance? Blind fool that I was, I never dreamed of 'em! An' the Arch-Duke—an' the Triple Alliance! Oh, let me go off in the woods somewhere an' *laugh!*"

The Whispering Ruin

By BERTON BRALEY

NO, Mr Edgren, we cannot accommodate you."

"But this is a matter of vital import to me, Howland. My business is in a sound state—it has simply grown beyond my power to finance it, and I must have more money. If I don't get the money, I'll go under. I can't handle the increased business with my present funds—yet the loan is absolutely safe and you know it."

"That may be true," President Howland, of the First National, admitted, "but we are retrenching. Money is tight."

"Cautious! Conservative!" snorted Edgren. "How about the money you've been loaning the promoters of 'United Brick?' How about the limitless supply of cash you've been furnishing that Meers crowd?"

Howland grew rather red in the face. "Edgren," he said, angrily, "I don't like that tone. You're talking wildly about the most powerful bank in the city. As to your loan, I've already told you that careful business sense will not allow us to aid you."

"Rot!" blurted Edgren. "Cut that high and mighty tone with me. I've been a depositor and borrower here for twenty years. You've always regarded such loans as I'm asking for as legitimate and wise—they *are* legitimate and wise. Yet now that I'm pinched and in need of the help for which my business is ample security, you turn me down. Why?"

"I *have* told you," suavely insisted the banker.

"You've lied to me, that's all," Edgren declared hotly, as he rose to his feet. "I know now why you're trying to smash me. I've been butting into some of the deals that Meers crowd has been engineering, and the order has gone out to break me."

"Abuse wont get you anything, Edgren," the banker said. "We cannot help you, but I am truly sorry."

Edgren went down the bank steps with bent head. Surely he was a broken man. For some time he had suspected that the Meers crowd was after him because he had underbid them on a contract and taken it away; and now he was sure of it.

"I was a fool to threaten them," he thought. "There's nothing I can do to break that gang—and I guess they know it. I simply made an exhibition of myself before Howland. The bank has done some rather risky things, but it's always made money on them and it's as strong as Gibraltar. There has never been a whisper—"

The word actually stopped him for an instant in his walk. His brow wrinkled; then his face suddenly lighted, his bent head sprang erect, his step grew brisker. By the time he reached his comfortable home he was smiling; and at dinner that night he was in a jolly mood.

"Pop," said his eldest son, when the meal was half over, "Agnes Howland and I have just gone and got engaged. What do you know about that?"

"I know that it's good news and I'm glad," said his father. "Agnes is a fine girl."

He smiled rather sadly, though, as he thought of his interview with Agnes' father that afternoon.

"Son," he said, quietly, "I want you and Agnes to be very happy. And I want you to remember that your love

is more than anything else in your lives and that nothing which may come between your father and hers should affect it. If I know Agnes well, it wont."

"Why so serious-like, Pop?" asked his son. "Row on?"

"I'm afraid so," Edgren acknowledged.

Edgren was quite right. The First National had fallen under the power of the Meers clique and Howland, the president, had been told to "get" Edgren, if he could.

It was true that Edgren and he had been friends, and that his wife and Edgren's had been very intimate, while Edgar Edgren and Agnes Howland were, he hoped, eventually to be married. Certainly they were very fond of each other. But if he cared for his own financial existence he must do as he was told, and Howland was no Spartan.

When Howland got home that night, his daughter came to him and whispered her happiness—whereat Mr. Howland kissed her and told her never to let anything in her life spoil that love.

"Whatever breach there may come outside of yourselves," he said, "don't let it affect the fact that you and Edgar care for each other."

"What's the matter, Papa," asked his daughter, "are you and Mr. Edgren at outs?"

"I don't quite know," said Howland.

II

When the First National opened its doors Monday morning there was an unusually long line of depositors waiting. The teller noticed that most of them made withdrawals, and several took out their entire accounts. They were, of course, very promptly paid.

During the day several more of the newer depositors called and withdrew their accounts, yet there was nothing that could be called a run. The teller was puzzled slightly by the withdrawals, but not worried.

Tuesday the withdrawals continued in increasing number. One of the reporters for a newspaper wandered in and asked the cashier about the "rumored robbery." A tip had come in over the wire. President Howland denied the rumor and then called up the editors of the papers and told them to print nothing. When he was told of the withdrawals he frowned.

"Pay them—pay them promptly, express no surprise, ask no questions," he said. "We have plenty of money for such demands and we can get more."

It was a peculiar week. Steadily the number of withdrawals increased, but the drain was not very serious and no investigation was made into the cause. All the big depositors kept their accounts and a few increased them. Only the little fellows withdrew. Toward the end of the week the reporters again called, this time to know if it was a fact that the bank had been caught on a fifty-thousand-dollar forgery. The story was denied, and Meers, who practically controlled the local papers, was appealed to to prevent any hint of the story from being published. It did not appear.

By this time one or two of the vague rumors which had been flying about town had reached the ears of President Howland, who set a detective to trace them down. Feeling also that the whisper of distrust had done damage enough to make it worth while to consider, the bank decided to make a demonstration.

Gold was ordered from a New York bank, and when it came, it was piled in sacks on wagons and ostentatiously unloaded at the bank doors under guard. The newspapers all ran stories about it, together with pictures and news articles concerning the Harveyized steel vault in which the bank's funds were kept. The bank's statement was published in the same issues, showing the most prosperous business in years.

The beginning of the following week found the line of depositors much smaller; a good many of those in line were making deposits, and a few were returning the money they had taken out several days before. Again the papers helped by warnings of the danger of keeping money in the house. They didn't mention safe-deposit boxes.

President Howland was pleased and relieved.

He had been sorry about the quarrel with Edgren, and when that gentleman

stopped him on the street Monday morning and apologized, adding that he realized the fault was not at all that of the banker, and that doubtless money *was* rather tight, it eased Mr. Howland's mind a good deal, though he felt guilty—recalling how Edgren's first words had been more true to the facts.

However, that was an unfortunate circumstance of the business game. The Meers crowd were preparing to swing the deposits of the city his way, and that would make the bank absolutely unassailable. Confidence was returning and confidence is more than deposits.

But on Tuesday the withdrawals again increased; on Wednesday they took another jump, and simultaneously people began to ring up the cashier and demand to know if the rumor of a defalcation, of a big robbery, of a failure of a manufacturing company which was known to have used a good deal of First National money, were true. They were not true, and the inquirers were so informed; but by Friday the withdrawals had become steady enough to amount to a run.

The Meers crowd, who controlled the papers—or all but one little weekly sheet which nobody thought worth bothering about—did their best to give the impression that they were supporting the bank. But this was not particularly effective, because everybody knew that the Meers crowd did not really have much money, that it was not strong except that it combined political power and sagacity with the ethics of piracy.

The neglected little weekly published a story or two about a few deals in which the First National had been guilty of some daring finance several years before, and the article fell into the hands of a wonderfully large number of people. Confidence was rudely shaken. A savage run resulted. Several big depositors withdrew. Another appeal to the other banks was useless.

Howland looked to the city deposits to turn the tide, but the city treasurer, though a pliant tool of the Meers crowd, dared not, in the state of public opinion, swing the money to the First National.

The First National had always been liberal about extensions on first-class paper. Now, when it tried suddenly to realize on such notes, it was confronted by a very real shortage of money. The paper was perfectly good—in time—but it could not at once be collected.

Then there were a good many loans to Meers and his crowd, loans which, if this whisper—now become a roar—had not started, would have been excellent investments, but which were now almost impossible to collect.

More articles in the little weekly, more denials, statements in the newspapers, front page stories, runs, conferences, sleepless nights for Howland and his men, wrath and fear and distrust and doubt among the Meers crowd; then came the state bank examiner, closed doors, and something very close to panic in all the enterprises which were in any way affiliated with Meers.

The First National had been wrecked by a persistent whisper of suspicion and distrust. And on the day it closed, Frederick Edgren succeeded in getting from a bank in Chicago the accommodation he had been refused at home.

It was a very haggard face which James Howland turned to Frederick Edgren when the two men met in the lobby of the Green hotel a few days after the bank had closed. Edgren extended his hand.

"Howland," he said, "I'm sorry. How bad is it?"

"I'm a broken man, Edgren," replied the banker, "a broken man. But—I thought you had failed, too."

"Came pretty close to it, Howland," happily answered Edgren. "When the bank turned me down I was very blue around the gills, but by great good luck I got the accommodation elsewhere. I'm on my feet again. What are you going to do now?"

"God knows," said Howland. "We'll pay all our depositors in full, but it took most of my money. As you know, I'm liable not only to the full extent of my stock, but an equal amount besides. Maybe I've got $10,000 left, but I owe most of it."

"If you were a partner in a good business, do you think you could stave off those creditors for a while and keep your ten thousand?"

"Perhaps. But why talk about it. I'm a discredited man."

"Discredited nothing," said Edgren heartily. "You did your best. It was that Meers gang that is discredited. I'll tell you what I'll do. I need ten thousand more in my business. You invest yours; I'll take you in and we'll come pretty near owning the town in five years. I can give you facts and figures that will convince you."

"Do you mean it?" gasped Howland. "Well, you bet I'll come in. But I don't understand this generosity. I was told to get you—"

'And you didn't. I said I'd get you—and I did. I owe you this chance."

Howland looked at Edgren in blank amazement.

"*You* get me!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"Come in here," Edgren directed, taking Howland's arm and leading him into a corner of the writing-room, "and I'll tell you all about it. Do you know what killed your bank?"

"Loss of confidence, apparently," said Howland.

"Exactly. And confidence was upset because of rumor and report. Well, I'm the fountain of rumor. You're going to be my partner and I'm telling you this. I wont go into detail, but the game was very simple. I guess you thought I was too honest or you might have suspected me when you remembered how I had threatened you."

"Oh, a lot of men did that," said Howland easily.

"Well, after the bank turned me down, I thought I was a goner, but I was mighty angry inside and I kept beating my brain for an idea how to get back. If I was to go down I wanted to drag something with me—especially the Meers crowd. Then I began to think how that crowd was tied up with the bank and I also thought about how a whisper, if cunning and persistent enough, can injure the reputation of any institution or person in the world. And there was my hunch.

"I talked, or began to, a good deal about the queer work of the Meers crowd, their bad ethics, their shaky deals and their evil influence. I managed to bring in the bank always when I spoke, but only incidentally—nothing anybody could get hold of, but it started things. Then Ed went out to his clubs and 'frats' and asked various friends of his—only semi-occasionally—if there were any truth in the rumor that the First National wasn't quite as strong as it had been.

"In fact, all I had to do was to keep adding a fillip to the talk now and then, and all your demonstrations and statements were useless. I thought your gold parade was going to queer my game, but I managed to get a few people to wondering if there really was gold in all those sacks. You couldn't directly trace anything to us, for every remark and question we made was planned ahead — written out and learned, in fact.

"I contrived to place the information as to some of those old deals in which the First National played a part where Harney, of the *Weekly*, could get it, and he ate it up. Harney never loved your bank.

"You think all this was covert and cowardly? Maybe, but it was a lot more honest and square and justifiable than the efforts you made at the behest of the Meers gang to get me.

"I knew that your bank would manage to pay dollar for dollar, because I knew you and therefore I knew I was not going to harm any innocent party. I knew if I could smash your bank, the Meers gang would be out of business because their fortunes were so tied up in yours. I didn't expect to save myself; that was only luck; and I didn't care if I got you in the bargain, for you were in the game, even if only as a tool.

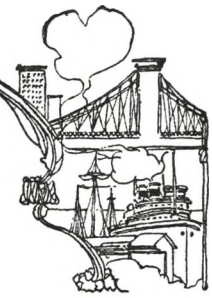
"I was determined that I would break the hold of that brutal and rapacious gang on the city, for the satisfaction of my own revenge and for the good of the town, so that nobody else should suffer as I had, for daring to earn an honest living. And I've done it. Meers is busted; some of his men will go to the pen; the city is free."

Howland looked at Edgren with a friendly smile of admiration.

"I guess we had it coming, Edgren," he said. "All the same, I'm glad you're with me now, not against me."

"Of course I'm with you, Howland. We couldn't have dissension in the family."

Concerning Solitaire Rings and Reginald



By R. BIGELOW LOCKWOOD

REGINALD PARSON'S actions were, to say the least, suspicious. For almost two hours he had been pacing back and forth in front of Patterson's Jewelry Shop, his collar turned up, his soft hat pulled down over his eyes in a vain attempt to keep the drizzling rain from blurring his spectacles. At certain periods during the walk, he would pause before the window, glance guiltily around to see whether anybody were looking, and peer over the tops of his misty glasses at a certain glistening tray on which were arranged solitaire rings of all sizes. After feasting his eyes upon them for as long as he dared, he would square his narrow shoulders, thrust out a very small and unobtrusive chin, and march quickly toward the door. And then, just as quickly, the narrow shoulders would slip down and forward into their natural position, the small, unobtrusive chin withdraw like a frightened periwinkle to the protecting shelter of his moist collar, and its wilted owner would resume his nervous walk.

Patrick Flannigan, standing in a hallway opposite, had watched these proceedings for the past half-hour with a critical eye and keen professional interest. "I hate to spoil me uniform in the rain," he said to himself, "but if that crook doesn't get busy and start something pretty soon I'll nab him anyhow, on suspicion."

Blissfully unconscious that he was being observed, Reginald suddenly gave a hasty glance at the ring tray, boldly opened the door and entered.

Reginald leaned weakly against the nearest show-case and gazed with blinking eyes at the faultlessly dressed individual who, with both hands spread outward on the glass, was studying him with an obvious air of amusement.

Taking out his handkerchief, Reginald carefully and slowly dried his glasses; then summoning together his tattered shreds of courage, he said, with all the dignity he could muster, "I—er—"

"Yes, sir," exclaimed the clerk. "We have some very fine ones."

"Some very fine what?" said Reginald, surprised into a quick reply.

"Why rings, sir. Solitaire rings. Isn't that what you want to look at?" And he said it with such a cocksure manner, and with such a confident smile, that Reginald had half a mind to throw a French clock at him.

Sliding back a little door, the faultlessly dressed dispenser of jewelry reached out into the window and lifted the glistening tray on which were arranged diamond rings of all sizes. With deliberate care he placed the tray down on the counter, and with an accustomed gesture swept up the green plush show cloth. With the same ease and grace of manner he extracted the largest and most brilliant diamond from the assortment. "Now here's a beauty!" he exclaimed, laying the ring on the green cloth so that the diamond faced Reginald. "She'll be proud of that."

Ignoring the last sentence, Reginald picked up the ring with trembling fingers and examined it. Most certainly the stone was very large, and very brilliant, and cut very deep and altogether very beautiful. Down in its heart there burned a fire that flamed in a thousand

twinkling little flashes. It was a marvel of a diamond. Reginald gazed at it in much the same manner as a bird gazes entrapped into the eyes of a serpent. "How much is it?" he whispered.

The faultlessly dressed individual waved his hand. "It's very reasonable," he answered. "It's only three hundred dollars."

Had one been in a position to observe, he might have seen a very much agitated Adam's-apple jerk madly up and down, in a most alarming manner. He might also have seen the face above the Adam's-apple turn quickly in the direction of the door, on the other side of which lay blessed security from the lures of three hundred dollar diamond rings.

Possibly the dapper clerk saw all this, for he hastily replaced the ring and just as hastily extracted another. "This is also a fine one," he said, "and it is only one hundred dollars."

While the agitated Adam's-apple still shuttled up and down in a most surprising manner, its motion was not quite so evident. "And here's one for seventy-five dollars." The agitated Adam's-apple slowed down a trifle. "And here's one for fifty dollars." The convulsive jerking diminished perceptibly. "And here's one for thirty dollars, a nice white diamond, rather small, but a perfect stone."

The agitated Adam's-apple ceased being agitated and came to a sudden halt. "Let me see it," said Reginald.

It seemed small and insignificant beside the three-hundred-dollar ring, and Reginald sighed. Still it *was* a nice white stone, and it *did* sparkle if you held it in the right light; and if taken away from the rest it might—

"I'll take it," he said suddenly; then he added in an agony of embarrassment: "If the ring shouldn't be the right size I suppose I can change it?"

"Bring the young lady in any time and we'll change the setting, or measure her finger with a paper band. Haven't you done that yet?"

Reginald counted out the money, four fives and ten ones, then looked at his empty wallet before replying. "I haven't even asked her yet," he said, in a sudden burst of confidence.

From all this, it might be inferred that Reginald Parsons was seriously contemplating matrimony. And prying into Reginald's past history a little, we may learn that the cause of his resigning his position in the bank at Oliet for the job of bookkeeper in a New York wholesale butter-and-egg concern was Mabel Brooks.

Ever since he had first seen Mabel, at the modest little boarding-house where he had taken a room upon his arrival from Oliet, he had been badly smitten. His visit to New York, during the previous September, had been the culmination of a haunting desire of long standing to break away from the little dried-up inland town, if only for two weeks, and spend his vacation in the Metropolis. And it had happened, when the time came for him to return to dreary Oliet, that Mabel's eyes, Mabel's smile and Mabel's entire charming and dainty little self had bound him with such strong chains that instead of going back he had remained.

From that first memorable evening when they had talked together in the stuffy little parlor, Mabel had assumed a certain strict air of proprietorship over him. She it was who had talked the butter-and-egg concern into giving him a trial; and she it was, too, who with watchful eye made sure that he wore his rubbers rainy mornings.

He flushed guiltily as he looked at his dripping coat and wet feet. There had been no Mabel to tell him, two hours earlier, when he had asked permission to leave the office at three o'clock, to put on his rubbers and take his umbrella. And to-night he was going to ask her!

He pictured just how he would go about it, as he slipped the little box containing the ring into his pocket. Mabel would arrive home at quarter to six, from her work as stenographer in a down-town office. They would sit across the table from each other, during dinner, just as they had done for the past six months—only to-night somehow it would be different. He would glance at her every now and then, when she wasn't looking, and perhaps if she *did* look he would smile in a very knowing and mysterious way.

And after dinner! Ah, then would come the time when they would both withdraw to the parlor. She would sit at one end of the sofa, and he would sit over in the bay window, by the rubber plant. They would talk for a while and finally he would leave his seat and in a most natural manner cross over and sit on the sofa beside her. Perhaps she would be surprised, for he always sat over by the rubber plant, but before she could speak he would slip his hand into his coat pocket and pull out the ring box. Then, opening it with a sudden quick movement, he would hold it in such a manner that the light from the chandelier would shine directly upon the diamond. And, while she gazed speechless at the wonder of it, he would take her hand and say—and say—

Across the street and in the hallway, Patrick Flannigan had allowed his watchful attention to be distracted by a certain buxom cook who was calling to him from an area window, next door. Thus it was, his broad back to Patterson's Jewelry Shop, he failed to see the excited crowd which suddenly swept around the opposite corner, in front of which ran a man of about Reginald's size, hat pulled down over his eyes, head low and breathing hard.

It was only at the shrill cry of "Stop thief!" that Flannigan turned, just in time to see the valiant Reginald, all thoughts of Mabel for the moment banished, join in the pursuit. And as Reginald swung into the crowd just as they drew opposite the doorway, and as he ran slightly in advance of the rest, it was only natural, in the sudden excitement, for Flannigan to jump to the conclusion that the madly flying Reginald, he of suspicious actions, was the thief.

Flannigan joined in the chase, and because he was very fat, and very tightly buckled and very wheezy, he pattered and splashed along far in the rear.

In the meantime, Reginald, and the man who ran with his hat pulled low over his eyes, drew slowly but surely away from the rest. Thus it was that they turned a corner half a block in advance of the howling mob behind them. And it was then that the cause of all the commotion, feeling Reginald's fingers close on the tail of his coat, turned and swung his fist savagely.

By the merest chance Reginald dodged, and then like a faithful bulldog, secured a stronger grip on the coat-tail, spinning around the while like a dizzy top, but never letting go.

The shouts of the crowd became clearer, and with a desperation born of despair, the owner of the coat closed in and grappled with Reginald. And fearing capture, with a lightning movement, he slipped his hand into Reginald's pocket, withdrew it, broke away with a mighty effort and faded down an alley, just as the mob turned the corner.

Reginald, breathless and dazed, watched them come, and then to his indignation found himself suddenly grasped and rudely held by dozens of willing hands—while in the distance, but rolling along with surprising rapidity for one so fat, loomed Flannigan, crying, between puffs: "Hold him—hold him."

In vain Reginald tried to explain. The crowd, carried away by excitement, refused to listen. Some were for lynching, others for beating; and in the midst of a babel of frenzied voices came Flannigan—Flannigan, in all the majesty of his mud-spattered uniform and brass buttons, who gripped Reginald's collar in a tight grasp.

"So ye tried it, young feller, hey? Come on now, loosen up the swag." And he shook the frightened Reginald while the crowd gasped.

"I—didn't—do—anything," protested Reginald, between shakes.

"He hit the store-keeper a whack on the head and ran off with a tray of diamonds," a voice cried from the outskirts of the crowd.

"He killed him behind his own counter."

Silencing the throng with a fierce gesture, Flannigan twisted his fingers into Reginald's neck and with his free hand dived into Reginald's coat pocket, bringing to light a handful of loose diamond rings.

"You're a desprite character," he said, as again he administered a session of shaking.

"Come on now—back to the store and

we'll see what damage is done. If it's murder, you'll go to the chair."

And thus in the driving rain, protesting his innocence at every step, buffeted by the strong arm of his captor and hooted at by his tormentors, went Reginald—misjudged and persecuted.

The desire to stop at the photographers, on her way home from the office, and get some proofs, took Mabel's steps in the neighborhood of Patterson's Jewelry Shop that evening about five-thirty. Turning the corner from the elevated, she ran into a wildly excited crowd, in the midst of which, waving his arms with impassioned gestures, was a strangely familiar figure who, with a hunted expression, peered from right to left, through his rain-smeared spectacles.

Forcing her way through to the center, Mabel planted herself directly in front of the shrinking Reginald and the majestic Patrick Flannigan.

"What does this mean?" she demanded in a voice so calm that afterward, when it was all over, she became quite astonished at herself.

"This desprit character, Miss," said Flannigan, "—this desprit character has killed a defenseless shop-keeper and stolen a king's ransom in diamond rings. Caught with the goods on him, too."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mabel, a tone of authority in her voice. "I know this man; I don't know what he's done, but whatever he has done, I know he didn't do it, and that he's innocent." After which rather ambiguous speech she looked at Reginald and added, "Aren't you, Reginald?"

Flannigan drew himself up until his button-holes creaked. "I know me duty, Miss, and if you're a friend of this desprit character, then all I'll say is that I'm sorry as how such a nice appearing young lady, begging your pardon, can go around wid such company. Back and forth, in front of Patterson's Jewelry Shop this young crook paces, eying the rings in the window wid longing glances —under me very eyes, mind you. Finally, in he goes wid intent to kill and plunder. Then out he comes flying, his pockets filled wid rings and a crowd of people after him. It's lucky I caught him."

By this time they had reached the store and Flannigan turned to enter. "Everybody stay outside now," he ordered, "except this young lady." And despite a murmur of protest from the crowd that the shop which had been robbed was further down the street and around the corner, he shoved the speechless Reginald in ahead of him, Mabel following.

At their entrance the faultlessly dressed individual came forward, his smile of polite greeting changing to one of amazement as he beheld the trio.

Flannigan wasted no time: "I've got him," he panted. "How badly are ye hurt?"

The bland dispenser of diamond rings, jeweled trinkets and the like, came around the counter. "I'm not hurt at all, thank you," he said. "What's the trouble?"

Flannigan gasped. "Wasn't this store robbed?" he spluttered. "Didn't this young feller hit ye wid a black jack and run off wid a tray of diamond rings?"

The clerk smiled. "This gentleman looked at a tray of diamond rings," he said slowly, his eye resting on the trim figure of Mabel. "He bought one, too, a very nice ring with a clear white stone."

"But what on earth did he buy a ring for?" questioned Mabel, speaking for the first time.

"I really didn't ask him," replied the faultlessly dressed individual, with a smile. "He asked, however, whether he might change it if it wasn't the right size."

"Oh, did he, indeed?" said Mabel.

"Yes, and he also told me that he hadn't asked the girl yet."

"Oh, did he indeed?" replied Mabel for the second time. "He must be pretty sure she'll accept him!" And she shot an indignant glance at Reginald, who clung weakly to the counter, his agitated Adam's-apple working desperately.

At this instant a sudden commotion outside caused them to turn and look toward the door. A man was entering, supported by two friends, his head wrapped in a fresh bandage.

"I hear you've caught the thief," he said to Flannigan. "Where is he?"

Without a word, and with none too much confidence, Flannigan pushed Reginald forward. The newcomer eyed him sharply. "That's not the man," he said.

Digging into Reginald's pocket Flannigan jerked out a handful of loose rings. "How did ye come by these?" he asked.

And then Reginald found his voice. Standing with his back to the counter, he bitterly denounced the laws of the land that permitted such a thick-skulled monster in human form as Flannigan to trample upon the innocent. From over the tops of his spectacles his eyes snapped wickedly; his small, unobtrusive chin puckered and thrust itself savagely forward, while a trembling fist shook within an inch of Flannigan's nose and defied Flannigan to do his worst. And, launching into a flood of passionate words, he explained how he had come by the rings—explained how he, Reginald, had caught the thief alone and unaided, explained how they had fought, how the thief had broken away, and how, before so doing, he must have transferred the rings from his own pocket to Reginald's when capture seemed imminent.

All this he poured forth with rare eloquence; then suddenly reaching into his pocket he drew forth a ring box bearing the name, "Patterson's Jewelry Shop," and hurled it savagely to the floor.

It was Mabel who finally came to the rescue. During the tirade she had watched him with astonished eyes, the color coming and going in her cheeks. Crossing over to him, she laid her hand gently upon his arm, and at the soft touch his anger subsided, the roving eyes lost their wildness and the puckered chin withdrew like a frightened periwinkle to the protecting shelter of a moist and sadly rumpled collar. Picking up the ring box, Reginald replaced it in his pocket, clutched the counter, and anyone with eyes might have seen a very much agitated Adam's-apple work convulsively.

Flannigan thrust forth a great hand. "Put it there, me boy," he said. "Ye ought to be on the foorce."

During the way home it was Mabel who asked the single question that furnished the total conversation: "Where are your rubbers?" she said severely, "and your umbrella?"

Reginald hung his head. "I—er—left them at the office," he stammered, glancing at his water-soaked shoes.

During dinner Mabel did not look at him, although several times he looked at her, a strange ache in his heart. After dinner was over they drifted into the little parlor and Mabel sat very primly and erect at one end of the sofa. Reginald sat in the bay-window, on a gilt bench by the rubber plant, and said nothing.

After a seemingly endless silence Mabel coughed, a delicate, dainty little cough with a world of meaning in it. "You were very brave this afternoon," she said.

Reginald stared at a spot on the carpet and did not answer. She tried again.

"You were very brave to fight that thief the way you did, and to talk up so to that policeman."

Reginald raised his eyes, but still did not speak.

"I think you might show me what you bought this afternoon," she said with a little pout.

And then, wonder of wonders, he left his seat, and in a most natural manner crossed over and sat down on the sofa beside her. And just as he had planned, before she could speak, he slipped his hand into his pocket and pulled out the ring box. Then, opening it with a sudden quick movement, he held it in such a manner that the light from the chandelier shone directly on the diamond.

"I think you may try it on," she said softly. And then, while she gazed speechless at the wonder of it, he took her hand and said—and said—

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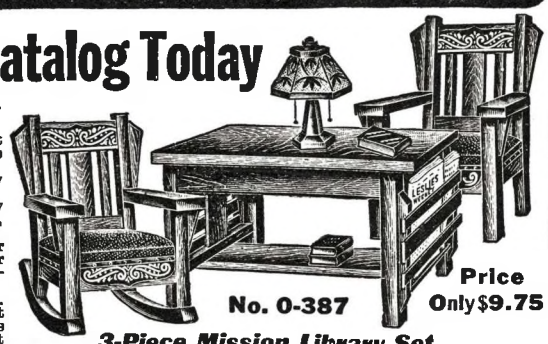
You may order any item in this special announcement, and the same way from the catalogue by simply sending first small payment. Our new, liberal confidential credit plan is just the same kind of credit your grocer or meat man might allow you, only we give you a year or over to pay—a little at a time as you find it convenient.

Our multi-million dollar resources (all our own capital—we do not do business on borrowed money,) give us such tremendous buying and trusting power that we can offer you terms no ordinary concern would even dare think of. In fact, we have listed practically every item in this wonderful catalogue *at prices far below what your local dealer could even buy them for.*



3-Piece Mission Library Set

This is a set of the highest grade in every particular—and of exquisitely beautiful design. Strongly made of solid oak, finished Early English or Fumed. A real mission design with rich carving on front of seat and top back panel. Has heavy posts and wide arms; broad comfortable seats contain "Monarch" indestructible steel spring construction and are covered with "Imperial" Spanish leather. Library table has top, size 34x24 inches, broad bookshelf, stout legs and end magazine racks.

Price of Set Complete, only $9.75
Terms: $1.00 down and 50c a month

30 Days' Free Examination—One Year to Pay

Great Stove Bargains.

We say with positive knowledge that you cannot find anywhere else in the world, stove values equal to those we offer in our new catalogue. And we also offer the most extensive line ever listed. For, in the production of no other line of goods can we enjoy greater advantages than in the manufacture of stoves. We guarantee to you a positive saving of from 15 to 50 per cent on any stove you select. We anticipate the biggest stove season in the history of our business, and you should not think of buying a stove before studying the wonderful line we show in our new free catalogue.

No. O-8042

This famous "Regent" Heater is listed at a remarkable bargain. It is an intense heat radiator, economical in the consumption of fuel. Built of cold rolled steel, heavy ornamental cast iron, and full nickel trimmed.

Made in two sizes.

Price, 13-in. firepot only $5.75. *Terms* 50c *down and* 50c *per mo.*

Price, 15-in. firepot only $7.85. *Terms* 75c *down and* 50c *per mo.*

No. O-8B125

"Prize" Blue Steel "Regent" Range—with a reputation of over 50,000 now in use—absolutely guaranteed. Has 18 x 13 in. oven. Beautifully nickel trimmed. High closet. Large Firepot.

Price, without hot water reservoir, only $19.75. *Terms:* $3 *down,* $1.25 *per mo.*

Price, with reservoir as shown, only $23.75. *Terms:* $3.50 *down,* $1.75 *per mo.*

No. O-8C203

Our famous "Regent" Hot Blast Stove is a powerful, quick heater, made of handsomely designed heavy cast iron and cold rolled steel. Has mica light door, is beautifully nickeled. Has hot blast tube and draft features—a wonderful fuel saver. Fully guaranteed in every particular. 13 in. Firepot.

Price only $9.85. *Terms,* $1.00 *down, and* 75c *per mo.*

Through 57 years of dealing with the public, we have proved what we believed at the beginning—that no matter where a family may live, or how small their income might be, they are just as honest and we can just as safely trust them for home furnishings as we can trust the people of greater means who have charge accounts with us in our 22 great retail stores in the big cities. Just write for our new catalogue and we will open an account for you, so that you can order anything you want—and all you want to furnish your home—and you will be given a whole year or over to pay. Remember, there are over a million families—rich and poor—who buy all of their home furnishings from us on this great, easy-payment plan.

We have prepared this Great New Catalogue, representing 7,000 modern designs in articles of furniture and home furnishings, and we will send this new book showing illustrations in natural colors, with complete descriptions, by mail, postpaid in a plain package, if you will simply send us your name and address on a postal card right now so that you can secure a copy before the edition is exhausted.

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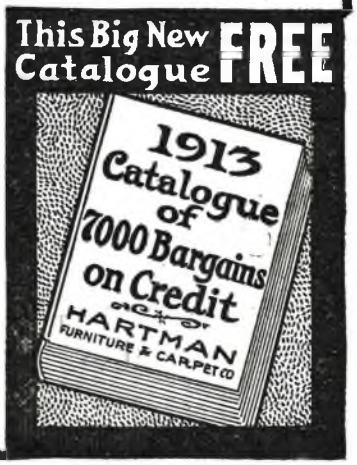
Take advantage of this great saving in money and the convenience of our liberal, easy-payment credit plan. For 1c you can investigate and fully satisfy yourself. Send just your name and address on a postal card and we will mail you this big book of 7,000 bargains. The book will be sent in a plain package, and all charges prepaid.

It Is Free. Send Today.



HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
3980 Wentworth Ave., Chicago, Ill.

A Study of Miss Marlowe
by Frank C. Bangs

SOTHERN and MARLOWE are quitting the stage

Mr. Sothern's latest photograph

They plan to travel leisurely, to write, to raise chickens—to "keep house" and have a home "like other folks." Miss Marlowe wants to bake her own bread and put up some canned fruits.

They tell all about their plans—they have only a year to wait now—with all the delight of a pair of children, in their interview with Archie Bell.

Does Your Daughter Want To Be An Actress?

If she does, what are you going to do about it? The mother of one of the most successful actresses on the stage tells her inmost feelings when the problem confronted her, in *"Why I Let My Daughter Go on the Stage."* When the girl put the problem up to her father, he said, "It's up to your mother." What plan would you have followed? This mother took the only course that she saw, and now, after years have passed, she tells how she feels about it.

These are the eyes of the most beautiful woman on the stage, according to two of the leading dramatic critics.

They agreed, without a moment's hesitation, on the identity of the most beautiful actress, and now each tells his reason for his decision.

One Man Has Made $2,000,000.00 by Writing Lyrics

He is Harry B. Smith, who wrote "Robin Hood," "The Fortune Teller," "The Soul Kiss," and more than three dozen other light operas—"Old Dr. Smith," they call him, because whenever a musical show fails to "go across," they send for him to put life into it. His creed of work is: "I care not who writes the songs of the nation, if I but get the royalties." He never goes to see one of his pieces rehearsed. These are only a few of the angles of a mighty interesting man. The story about him is by Rennold Wolf, who is quite some librettist himself.

Some Excerpts From the Diary of Theodore A. Liebler Tell That—

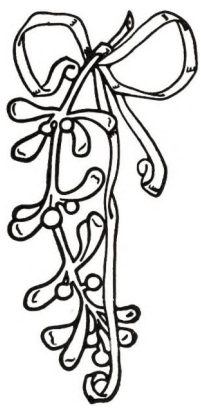
Viola Allen had to go to the Isle of Man to get Hall Caine to write a dramatization of "The Christian" which would enable her to have a part in it. After the piece was put on, she averaged $1000.00 a week as her share of the proceeds. At one time she wrote to the producers that this was too much, and offered to take less. When Liebler & Co. discovered Charles Coghlan, he borrowed $10.00 to buy a dinner. When they discovered Eleanor Robson, she was getting $35.00 a week.

This is the inside story of the men who produced *"The Garden of Allah"* after starting on "a shoe-string."

SEPTEMBER ISSUE
ON SALE AT ALL STANDS

May 15, 1899, Mr. Liebler wrote: "Tyler saw a young girl playing the heroine in a play called 'Arizona' in Chicago. . . . . She was getting $35 a week. Her name is Eleanor Robson."

Spend Your Vacation in the East



ERIE

The summer of 1912 promises to be an unusually attractive season.

The American people are attaching constantly increasing importance to summer out-door life, as the city becomes hotter and more crowded, and the nervous strain and pressure of life more intense. A summer vacation is no longer a luxury of the few; it is the necessity of the many.

Foreseeing that an unusual number of people will want to visit the Eastern States, New England and many parts of Canada during the summer of 1912, the Erie Railroad Company has consummated plans by which one may travel at a comparatively low cost consistent with comfort and convenience. Arrangements have been made with the various railroad and steamship lines whereby all may receive the best accommodations and attention.

The Erie Railroad and its connections reach nearly all of the important cities and resorts that are situated between Chicago and the Atlantic Coast, and their modern and well appointed equipment insure perfect comfort en-route.

Many charming summer places are situated in this section of the United States; abounding in resorts where the opportunities for summer recreation, rest and pleasure are ideal.

Seashore, mountains and lakes serve to make up a vacation territory that for climate, scenic charm, out-door recreation and historic interest, has few equals.

A wide range in choice is offered; to the seashore, rocky coast or sandy beach, with the delights of surf bathing, yachting and deep-sea fishing; the mountains where one may breathe in the fresh, bracing atmosphere of the higher altitudes, and which afford unlimited opportunities for hunting (in season) and long rambles over wooded slopes; the peaceful valleys, among the hospitable farmer-folk, at a boarding house or a hotel, where all the joys of summer life may be fully indulged in; or on the shore of some pretty lake, which affords unlimited opportunities for bathing, fishing and boating.

Whichever one of these places you may choose, you will find either good bathing, fishing, sailing, rowing, canoeing, or facilities for bowling, golf or tennis; with the added attraction of splendid roads for driving.

Think it over.

Direct Routes. The following fares apply to the points named below. Tickets are on sale daily, **June 1st** to September 30th. Going and returning same route. Return limit thirty days from date of sale.

$27.00 CHICAGO to NEW YORK and return

Via Erie R. R. direct in each direction, or going via Erie R. R. to Binghamton, D. & H. to Albany, thence Hudson River Day Line, or Hudson Navigation Co. (Peoples Line) to New York, returning via Erie R. R. or direct vice versa.

$26.00 CHICAGO to BOSTON and return

Via Erie R. R. to Binghampton, D. & H. to Troy, B. & M. to Boston. Returning same route.

Proportionately low fares from various other points on the Erie Railroad.

R. H. WALLACE, General Passenger Agent, NEW YORK

J. D. BROWN, Ass't General Passenger Agent
CLEVELAND, OHIO

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

ORIGINAL SIEGEL COOPER & CO. CHICAGO

TEN GOOD REASONS WHY

WE MADE AND SATISFIED DURING THE YEAR 1912

Over One Million New Customers

1. FREE DELIVERY from Chicago to your home. 2. 24-Hour Service. 3. We sell at lowest prices. 4. We show latest styles. 5. We do not exaggerate. 6. We never substitute. 7. We guarantee to please you. 8. We pay for alterations. 9. We cheerfully refund money. 10. We are absolutely reliable.

No. 19E27.

This $25 strikingly handsome coat for . . $13.95

is made of a beautiful quality silk seal plush, a lustrous and luxurious fabric of unusual heavy close pile; so heavy that it could be easily mistaken for the genuine sealskin. The coat is made becomingly semi-fitting and single-breasted, closing with a large silk braid double frog ornament and plush covered buttons. The shawl collar extends almost to the waist line in graceful tapering reveres. The sleeves are stylishly devoid of fullness and finished with deep turned back cuffs. At the bottom the coat is slashed at each side seam to provide necessary roominess and convenience when walking. Richly lined with an excellent quality heavy durable Guaranteed Satin. We recommend this model as a faultless winter coat, stylish, serviceable and unusually low-priced. Black only. Women's sizes, 32 to 41 inches bust measure, about 54 inches long. For Misses' and small women, 32-34-36 bust measure, about 48 inches long. State size. Price delivered free from Chicago to your home . . $13.95

$6.00 Chinchilla Cloth Coats $3.95

For Girls 6 to 14 Years

73E21—Stylish and effective coat made of fine quality Chinchilla Cloth recommended for its warmth, durability and extreme lightness. The coat is a single-breasted box model fastening with large, fancy metal buttons. The long shawl collar and deep turned-back cuffs are of contrasting shade Chinchilla, very effective and becoming. Comes in navy blue with silver gray collar and cuffs, or silver gray with navy blue collar and cuffs. State color and size.
Price, DELIVERED FREE from CHICAGO to your home $3.95

This Model in Caracul Cloth, $2.95

Sizes 6 to 14 Years

73E22—Same model as above style, made of fine, lustrous, Chase's Caracul cloth with self collar and cuffs $2.95

This Coat in Plush, $4.95

73E23—We furnish this model made of good quality close pile plush with collar and cuffs of self material $4.95

$6 Gray Manchurian Wolf Fur Set $3.95

No. 74E29. Fashionable Gray Manchurian Wolf Fur Set, warm, handsome and durable. Large shawl collar, cut very deep in the back and over the shoulders, is an ample protection during the coldest weather. Collar tapers gracefully in front, ending in two long full tails on each side. The large pillow shaped muff is made over a warm soft bed finished with a silk wrist cord. Set is handsomely lined throughout with rich durable satin of self color. Price delivered free from Chicago to your home $3.95

OUR GUARANTEE

If you are not pleased (more than satisfied) with any article, return it at our expense and we will refund your money as cheerfully as we accept it.

$3.00 Value in All-Wool Sweater $1.95

All-wool double-breasted Sweater Coat. Made from a fine quality of heavy, soft wool, woven in an artistic zig-zag pattern. Has rolling collar which is very desirable for outdoor wear as it can be turned up. Cuffs on well-shaped sleeves. Two side pockets. This coat is well finished and shows the most careful workmanship, also splendid fitting qualities. Colors are white, cardinal or Oxford. Sizes 32 to 44 bust measure. State color and size.

Order by No. 6E15

Price, DELIVERED FREE from CHICAGO to your home . . . $1.95

Norfolk Style SWEATER . $1.95

6E16—This same sweater can be furnished in Norfolk style with high military collar, belt and turn-back cuffs, as illustrated $1.95

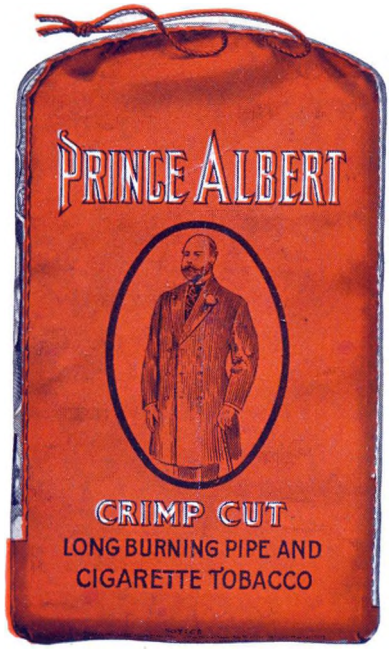
FREE DELIVERY FROM CHICAGO TO YOUR HOME

CATALOG FREE

Write today for FREE big Fall Catalog and be the first in your town to get posted on all the new styles. Your name on a postal will do, addressed to Dept. E.

24 HOUR SERVICE

ORIGINAL SIEGEL COOPER & CO. CHICAGO



5 cents to you!

Meeting home folks in the family album and coming face-to-face with the tidy red Prince Albert portraits is pretty much the same thing—kind of makes you feel like you were in the hands of your friends!

Easiest thing ever for you and P. A. to call each other by your first names, because P. A. ***simply won't broil your tongue or parch or singe your throat!*** Sting's removed by a patented process! No other tobacco can be in the same class!

PRINCE ALBERT

the national joy smoke

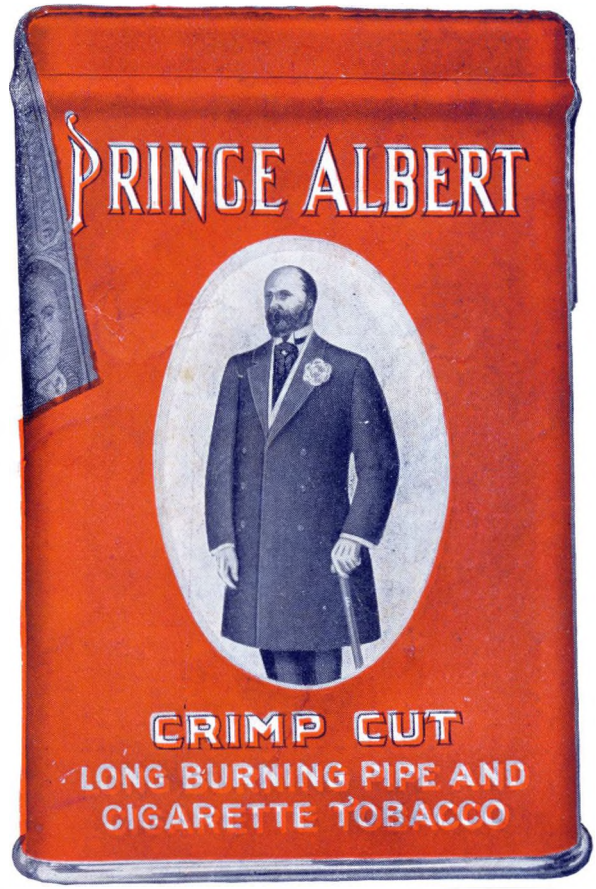
is just regular human, man-smoke tobacco with the good ***all left in*** and the bite ***left out!*** Just as bully good rolled up in a cigarette as jammed in a jimmy pipe!

Sure as the little apples grow on trees you're going to get P. A. jimmy-pipe-joy'us. Get started, ***now***—for the goin's simply great!

Buy P. A. in 5c toppy red cloth bags; 10c tidy red tins handsome half-pound and pound humidors—anywhere.

10 cents to you!

R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO.
Winston-Salem, N. C.



The Morning Beverage *Instantly*

A cup of hot water
A level teaspoonful of Powder
and there you are

INSTANT POSTUM

Under the new method we boil Postum at the factories and reduce it to a Powder, which dissolves instantly in hot water and produces *a perfect* cup of Postum.

This makes it easy for anyone unpleasantly affected by coffee to stop it and be rid of the disorders.

"There's a Reason"

Sample sent for 2-cent stamp to cover postage. Grocers sell 100-cup tin 50c.

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