MARCH 20, 1927
VOL. LXXXIII No. 5

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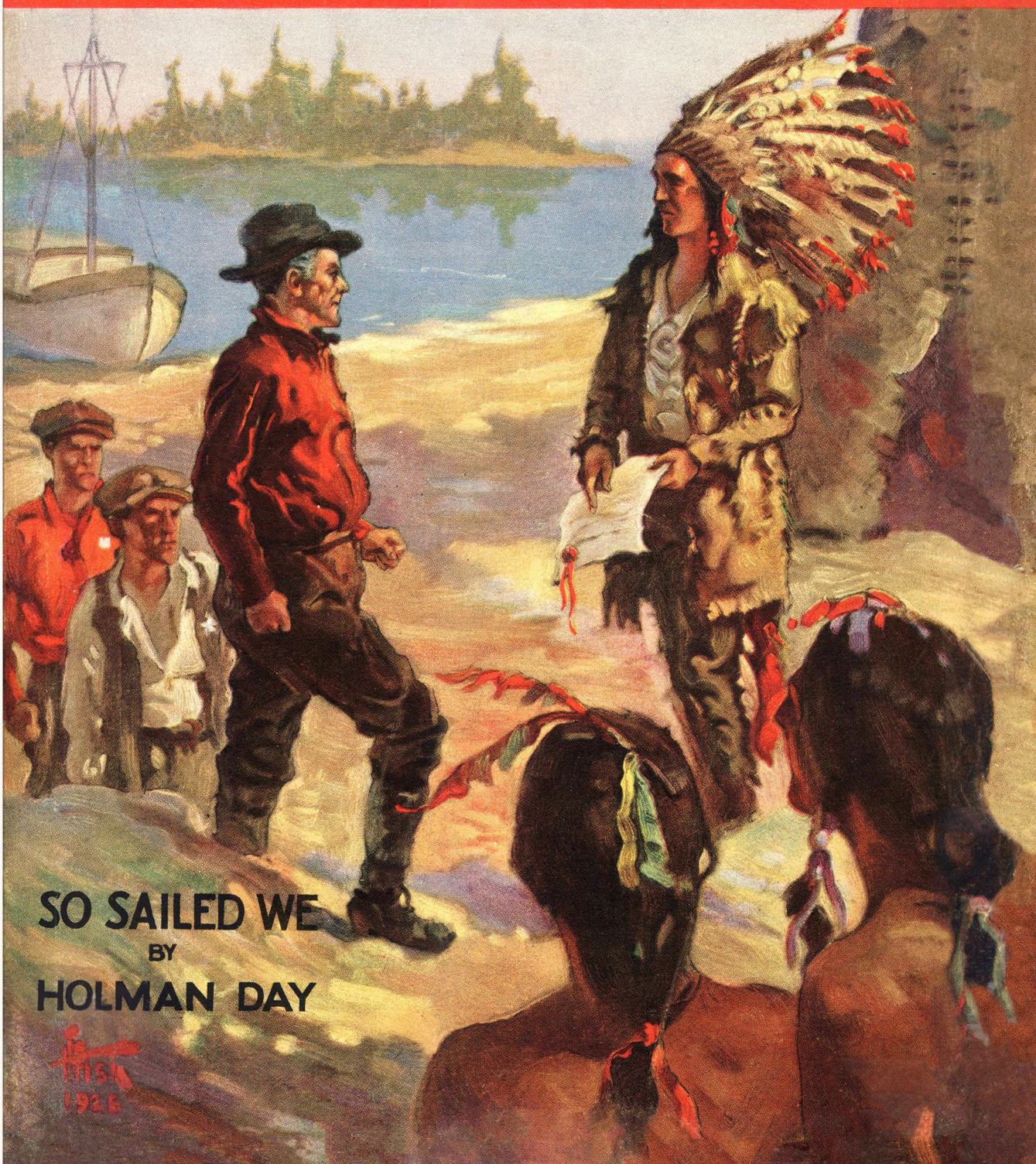

SO SAILED WE

BY

HOLMAN DAY

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Volume LXXXIII Number 5

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Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1926, by Street & Smith Corporation, New York. Copyright, 1926, by Street & Smith Corporation, Great Britain. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 20, 1909, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $4.72. Foreign, $5.44.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $4.00 — SINGLE COPY, 25 CENTS

THE POPULAR

VOL. LXXXIII MARCH 20, 1927 No. 5

So Sailed We

By Holman Day

Author of "Squared," "Avast Heaving!" Etc.

Two salt-water sailors, bold and keen for adventure, found not only plenty of excitement among hijackers and scramblers for an unusual buried treasure, but a real chance to show that they deserved the good fortune they sought. In Scott and old Tuzzer, we have two doughty heroes instead of one.

CHAPTER I.

A HERO AND A COCKNEY.

LANDING at Halifax from an Allan liner westbound from Glasgow, Argyll Scott attended to certain required formalities at the bureau of shipping. Then he went directly along the water front to the berth of the Cape Breton steamer; here he dribbled coins on the ledge of the purser's window, making up the price of the fare to Sydney, dredging his pockets clean.

But the purser, after an identification squint through the wicket at the bronzed face of the young man, left the coins where they lay, hustled out of the purser's pen, and banged and walloped Scott's back and breast in hilarious greeting. Among a lot of complimentary profanity, he dropped the affirmation that Scott was a hero.

"You're a liar, Jock Anderson, like most of the money changers get to be!"

The grins of the two men took the edge off profanity and accusation.

"But the bit of news in the paper said you were a hero."

"I paid a reporter lad to print the piece. That's why I had only small

change left for the fare, this last jump toward the tip o' old Bluenose beakie." He had named Breton's eastern point with a sobriquet of his own invention.

With his attention thus called to the coins, the purser scooped them off the ledge and engaged in a whirling scuffle with Scott, trying to drop the money back into the side pocket of Scott's reefer.

However, Scott was stronger, taller, more nimble. He parried Anderson's hand dabs and finally picked him up and lugged him through the open doorway of the pen, dropping him down upon a chair.

"If you put that money into my pocket, I'll feed it into the slot o' your mouth, my lad, and then I'll stand on you to see how much I weigh."

The argument was suspended at that point; another passenger had presented himself at the wicket, after watching the tussle. He remarked ironically: "If you want to ram my money into my pocket, Mister Purser, I'll give you plenty of time to get your breath and muscle back."

"That style goes only for heroes, sir! Are you one?"

"Yes! Absolutely reckless, too. I'm a book agent."

"Double fare, then. All my friends live in Sydney."

When the passenger had retired, after those pleasantries, Scott warned Anderson to keep his mouth shut on the hero business. "A devil of a hero am I! It's a case of back home and broke!"

"Did you ever come home any other way?" queried the purser with a chuckle.

"No!" admitted Scott amiably. "And I wouldn't have anything to joke about if my pockets were full. When a fellow has a lot of money, Jock," he philosophized, watching the purser assort coins in the drawer, "he's quite likely to settle down in his ways, and nothing funny happens any more in his case."

"Huh! A lot of money, for most chaps, starts 'em to make things happen."

"Not if he's one o' my breed," returned Scott dryly. "I was born in Aberdeen, as you know."

"Well do I know, also, Scotty, you're steady in all your notions, but you sure do keep landing in queer snarls."

"It's because I take 'em as they come along and fall into the current of 'em and drift to see what will happen around the other bend o' the stream, Jock."

"What next do you reckon on?"

"I don't reckon. That's the beauty o' the business to me!"

Other passengers were lining up at the window. Scott took his ticket from the purser's hand, who said to him in low tones:

"Come, now, old pal, let me slip you a few bones to come and go on."

The other emphasized his refusal with a broad smile.

"Worry begins for a Scotsman when he hears the jingle in his pocket. Right now, Jock, there can be no spending, so I'm happy. Howe'er, I'll eat with you later, if you feel that generous."

"All right! That's a promise. Come back when the rush is over."

SCOTT closed the pen door behind him and strolled across the deck where arrivals were entering by way of the gangplank. The lobby, in which was located the purser's office, was lined with settees for the accommodation of smokers.

On the end of one of these benches an elderly man had been sitting, when Scott strode down the plank. The old fellow had eyed the vigorous chap keenly, had taken great interest in the scuffle, and had blinked bright eyes rapidly when Scott was hailed as a hero.

When the young man sauntered past, the elderly man lifted himself out of his seat by a stout pull on the iron arm rests.

"Hist, Jack!" he called anxiously, but covertly.

Scott looked around and saw a veteran sailor. Unmistakably the hailer was a mariner, even to the old-type roll of fuzz under his chin. And that call of greeting was certainly the prelude of a "touch," for Scott had heard it in many a port.

He grinned and pulled a trouser pocket wrong side out.

"It's no blooming brace I'm making," protested the sailor.

"Oh, you'll be telling me a yarn leading to one, Johnny Ranzo! I have naught to lend you, not even an ear."

"Me harsking a blimed Scotchy for even the air to fill the hole in a round seizing!"

"You're up to snuff!" returned Scott genially, as he went on his way. A moment later he turned on the old man and sharply commanded him to mind his manners and give up his chase.

"But I'm minding me hunch! I feel it about you! I want to put money into that empty pocket."

Scott rolled up his eyes in mock anguish.

"What a wicked world! A chap is floating in happiness, and along comes somebody to plummet-weight him wi' coin and ram him under."

Again, at the foot of the main staircase, he was obliged to turn on his pursuer. Scott narrowed his lids, and his gray eyes glimmered ominously.

"Look you, Johnny! If you don't give over the stern chase, I'll be minded to step on your foot, pull the oakum from beneath your jaw, and calk your mouth. See, now? You've spoiled my smile and made me speak bitter to one with gray in his topknot. But take warning."

He passed up the staircase and disappeared on his way to the saloon deck.

The sailor went muttering back to his seat and stuffed the bowl of his black pipe with fierce finger jabs. He lighted the tobacco and puffed smoke, with angry exhausts of breath. He was saying a lot to himself about the infernal wariness of Scotchmen when the matter of money was mentioned.

However, he had something else to keep an eye on, now that the special object of attention was out of sight. The bright little eyes fixed themselves on the purser's window and on the filing line of passengers. When the last arrival came stampeding, as the last man down the plank always arrives, had bought his ticket, and had gone puffing away with his baggage, the vigilant picket presented himself at the window.

He tapped the bowl of his pipe on the ledge to draw the attention of the purser from cash counting.

"Me nyme is Ben Tuzzer," he stated loftily.

Anderson flipped a glance, took in the cockney, and was tart in rejoinder to one of the mass, as is so often the case when a man at a public wicket rebukes presumption.

"Anyways proud of a name like that?"

"If I wasn't of a mind to do a good turn for a man that's better than you can ever grow to be, I'd hand back your kind o' talk. But I'll not wyste the time."

The purser took a comeback at the cockney.

"Was the crack still as bad in Bow Bells the last time you heard 'em?"

AT this moment two men shouldered to the window. One of them spoke to Anderson.

"Isn't that chap up in the main saloon—that husky boy—Argyll Scott?"

"Scotty is aboard. You have probably spotted him." Anderson was ready enough with speech now. "We ought to have the band out to meet the boat in Sydney."

"Can you give it to me straight—what it was he put over? I know it was something handsome, but I don't half read the papers."

The admiring friend spoke volubly.

Mr. Tuzzer, not excluded as an auditor, canted his head and made his ear serve as a funnel for the overflow from Anderson.

It was stated that Scott had been of the crew of the Gloucesterman, *Peter Bowman,* cut down in fog off the Grand Banks by a liner. Only one of the familiar cases in the hazards between Sable and Bay St. Lawrence. But there was a new twist in this instance. The liner, bound eastward, took on board the *Bowman's* rescued crew, to be transshipped home. Fire broke out on the liner a few days later. There was panic among the passengers, and frenzy among the regular crew.

"You see," declared the purser, "ships don't carry real sailors any more. Deck swabbers, waiters and cooks—stewards

and he-chambermaids. And that mob o' hired help was all roaring to get away with the boats and rafts. Officers was shooting 'em in the legs, but the cowards hopped all the livelier. And that's when the *Bowman's* laddies proved their bigness. Thirty men—sixty fists, sixty big boots. After they had tossed the cheap cusses down the fore hatchway and clamped on the cover, getting a few millionaires in the general rush during the scramble, the lads manned the hose lines and put out the fire. I bumped into Aleck MacDonald on Prince Street today, when I was coming down to the boat. He had dropped off here with Scotty from the Allan liner. He handed it to Scotty as being the top-line lad. Probably, though, Scotty would pass all the credit over to Aleck. And there you have it, as that run o' lads shuttle the praise buck."

"Thanks," said the man. "Now, my friend and I will know how to talk to Scott."

"You will, eh?" demanded Anderson, with an inflection that halted them in their hurry away from the window.

"Why, of course! We can tell him how we feel about a hero and can shake his hand and——"

"You'd better get a good grip on his two hands, both of you, working in team style. And even then I doubt your power to hold him. Moreover, I'd advise you not to let him catch you looking him over too closely. He's notional."

"He must be a queer fellow," declared the spokesman of the admirers.

"I've known him since he came over from Scotland at sixteen, ten years ago, and it's my settled notion you've guessed right about him."

"Most of 'em are ready to gobble all the apple sauce in the dish and call for a bigger spoon," grumbled the trigged sycophant.

The other man added: "And some fellows get their kick out of making believe they don't relish compliments."

"Such may Scotty be, inside," acknowledged Anderson indifferently, "but on the outside, when he isn't bucking against hair-oil praise, he takes every twist of happening for a joke and joshes the thing along to see what'll happen next in the queer line. He's a Scotchman, and from Aberdeen in the bargain, and he says he doesn't want to be bothered by money. Are you hunting for anything queerer than that?"

"Why go on straining the eyesight, looking for something after you've found it? Much obliged. Good day."

Mr. Tuzzer was left at the window.

"Much obleeged, too," he vouchsafed. "I sized him about that way by his sheer and by the style he carries sail."

"Look here, 'Tar-bucket Tommy!' You'll get the tail o' your mother's monkey in a crack, if you go sidling close to Scott. Your windy mouth will slam him shut, and when he slams he slams hard!"

Mr. Tuzzer screwed up a defiant face.

"You have made known to me the kind of a man I've been looking for, and so I'm obleeged. But, as for advice from you—I wouldn't take it even if a free ticket to Sydney went with your advice, printed on the back."

The purser indignantly slammed his glass window. He immediately opened it to predict balefully:

"You'll be getting *yours!*"

"As to *that*, I think you're right, you shilling scaler! And out o' what I get, there'll be a slice for the right kind of a partner. Much obleeged again for vallyble information."

The window was slammed again, and it stayed shut.

With deep-sea patience, which resigns itself to wait in a calm for the breeze that must arise sooner or later, the elderly mariner sat again on his roost and filled his pipe and puffed with serenity, his eyes on the main staircase.

WHEN the steamer was in the heave of the sea, rounding, to settle into her casting, Scott came to the smoking room. He glanced at the closed window of the purser's pen and settled himself with pipe and pouch to wait till his friend had made up the ship's accounts.

Another man was making up accounts in the open, so Scott perceived when he took a look around at his fellow passengers on the main deck. The elderly sea-

man pulled a ditty bag from inside his shirt and smoothed out a roll of crumpled bank notes ostentatiously on his raised knee. Presently he caught Scott's stare and made more marked parade of the money.

There was no mistaking what this performance signified. The old seaman kept sending a shaft of taunt from his eyes across the broad lobby. When he made sure of Scott's amused attention, and was aware that the rebuke was taking effect on this top-lofty chap who had been touchy on the cash question, Mr. Tuzzer stuffed the money airily back into the bag, yanked the draw string, and sunk his modest hoard out of sight inside his neckband at the end of the stout cord.

To denote that he felt at peace with the world, he tipped back his head, set his gaze on the upper deck, and trolled a chantey, careless of listeners:

"Oh, there's naught upon the stern, there's naught upon the lee.
Blow high, blow low—and so sailed we,
But a lofty ship to wind'ard is a-sailing fast and free,
Sailing down along the coast to the High Barbar-ee!"

While the song was in progress, Scott sauntered across and took his seat beside the apparently absorbed warbler. A bit later the young man was able to exchange eloquent glances with the sailor, when the latter gave over his survey of the upper-deck beams and ended his chantey.

Scott laughed heartily.

The other man kept his emotions to himself.

"Me nyme is Ben Tuzzer. *Yours* I know, so you need not waste breath by telling me."

"Another dig at Scotch thrift, eh?"

"If the cable fits the block, let it stay."

"Well, Mr. Tuzzer——"

"I ain't entitled to the 'Mister.' I never got to be more 'n' an able seaman."

"Then, Tuzzer, without the handle, I'm sorry if I was a bit short with you. But you know well what 'Hist, Jack!' usually means on any water front."

Tuzzer nodded. "But sharp eyes like yours ought to size up men better. I've got it over you in that line. I've picked you to sign on with me for a big job. That's settled."

"Truly, you don't waste words."

"I won't let a Scotchman have it on me at the start-off, seeing as how I'm loose as beans, even in langwidge. I ain't going to tell you what the job is. But you're broke, and you're bold. In that case, if you ain't looking for a good thing, you ain't human. But I take it you're human. Being human, you want money. Everybody must have some money. You wouldn't have come across here to me if I hadn't showed money. Want to borry some?"

"Not a cent."

"Then you've got to git it some other way. Come with me and git it."

"What's the scheme?" inquired Scott tolerantly.

"Buried treasure."

Scott clapped his palms on his knees and rocked with laughter. He wiped his eyes with his knuckles, when he turned on Tuzzer and had something to say about the familiar goal for seekers of treasure-trove on the Scotia coast.

"Another loony headed for pirate gold on Spruce Island, eh?"

"Never heard o' the island. And it ain't gold, either."

"What is it?"

"Shan't tell. Look here, me lad: The treasure is still there, just because there's never been no talk about it. Once it wasn't worth nothing much, so why was the need o' talking about it? And since it has growed to be worth a lot, I haven't dared to talk to anybody. And I haven't been nigh this region for twenty years, so I wasn't tempted to talk. Been saving it, as you might say, for my last snug-harbor days—to make 'em easy. Inside the past few years, I've been realizing what a fine, fat thing I had waiting for me. Ain't you guessing something already?"

Scott shook his head.

The old man frowned. "Your eyes ain't so awful good in sizing up men, and your wits might be better. Let's see!"

He bored Scott with a squint, and there was significance in his query:

"Do you drink liquor?"

"I never touch it. I'm a teetotaler!"

"Prejudice against it?"

"Perhaps I shouldn't have. My uncle owns a distillery in Scotland. An uncle that's dead was a partner. Both good men, and I mustn't say mean things against my family."

Tuzzer stroked his nose and looked hard at the cheerful young man and meditated, trying to separate jocularity from earnestness in the other.

"I'm glad to hear you don't drink. Having an uncle who turns out Scotch whisky, ought to make you fairly lib'ral in your notions. So I keep on playing you as my hunch. It's all right, ain't it, for folks to drink liquor if they do it all sensible?"

"I suppose so. If I didn't say it, I'd be putting a smirch on my good uncles and on the father they had."

"You're fitting all my idees, Scotchy. I came over the water to Halifax a month ago. Eyes and ears have been sharp, but I couldn't spot my man. Tested sly and careful, but found 'em wanting. It's touchy business. So I was on my way over to Cape Breton. That hunch must 'a' been a push for me to meet you. You've got your own hunch by this time, eh?"

"I think," admitted the Scotchman circumspectly, "you are hinting of knowledge of a hidden store of liquor."

"I was allowing you a chance for two guesses, but you have hit it the first time. It's Crabbie's Golden El'funt, and it's twenty years in the bottle. All there—no shrinkage." He pulled from his hip a wallet and extracted a paper which bore figures. "I've been ciphering on it. Shipped from stock in bond, like it was, that whisky had value of only sixty cents a bottle. Twenty years ago nobody was minding much what became of stock of that no-'count. I mean, men that owned it and underwriters didn't mind. I didn't mind much, myself," he chattered on. "Nor did the three mates who pitched into a job with me. If we smuggled, we was only in competition against all the whisky in the world, running big risks for a few hundreds o' Yankee dollars.

"You see," he proceeded, finding Scott a tolerant listener, "the mates and meself was killing time, so to speak, in the case o' that whisky. We were on watch over a wreck that was high ashore and battered and like to go to pieces. Seemed like, too, all the bottles would go smash. Seemed a crime to have good whisky mixed into the ocean. Waves was kicking lively enough, anyway. Prob'ly even you, a teetotaler, but no crank, would 'a' hated to see whisky wasted, if you'd been there with us."

"Well, there was plenty to spare in those days," hedged the young man.

"Yep! So we'll say as how being sentimental like we was, that made us dig a long trench in the sand and bury two or three hundred cases. Didn't count 'em. Didn't bother. Worked to kill time. The ship went plumb smash later in a storm that banged onto the coast and scattered the cargo. Nobody was ever able to take account of stock. Same storm hammered down the sand over our trench. And there the stuff must be. My poor mates have dropped for aye over the rail and are getting theirs all free from Davy's locker. All is my secret now. No sentiment about it any more. Cash, son! Buried treasure, eh?" He tapped his finger on the paper where he had made figures. "Setting it awful low, there'll be twenty-five hundred bottles. Some prime stuff, eh, after twenty years? Stuff for millionaires to come acrost handsome for. No saying what a bottle would fetch. But we can handily find the right chap to take it off our hands. We can easy make five thousand dollars apiece."

"How do you come by the 'we' you're dropping off your tongue all so nimble?" demanded Scott, with asperity.

"Because I can't make a go of it alone. I'm only an old sailor, buffle-headed in smart tricks, no style and notions for a big deal, easy to cheat and mighty shy o' smart Yanks. So I'll give you half—else I won't get nothing, so I'm afeared."

Scott rapped the ashes out of his pipe.

"Ben Tuzzer, I'm sorry you spoke so free to me. Now, if anything happens to spoil the mean business you're set on you'll——"

"Call it a mean business, do you, with your uncle making the stuff?"

"Oh, but he makes it where the law says he may. You mean to sell the stuff where the law says 'Nay.'"

"That makes rhyme like a chantey. Why didn't you sing it?" queried Tuzzer, acid with grouch.

"I'll sing you a better tune, old man, if you ever lay tongue to more speech with me on the matter. As for my own tongue, it shall lie low like a dog in the kennel; but mind how you poke sharp sticks." He leaped from the bench, after a glance at his watch. It was meal time, and he walked to the purser's wicket and rapped on the glass.

"I'm holding you to your word to buy me a meal, Jock," he called, paying no heed to listeners, quite unashamed of empty pockets.

Walking away with the purser a few moments later, Scott grinned most amiably into the glowering countenance of Mr. Tuzzer, conspirator.

On his own part, Tuzzer aimed a pipestem scornfully and snarled:

"Begging grub! You've put something in your pocket at last. You've jammed your pride in there."

"Aye! And something else that concerns *you*. It'll stay there all safe. Don't worry!"

"What's all the talk about?" demanded Anderson hotly.

"Oh, this fine sailorman tried to make a hero out of me, and it led to words."

"I have already steered two of the kind away from you. I told 'em it wasn't safe."

"Nor is it," agreed Scott, again on his way, turning his head to give Mr. Tuzzer a meaning glance.

"A fool!" mumbled the old man, left to himself. "But a hero is hungry three times a day, and he doesn't find all and ever so handily somebody to beg vittles from. He's my man, all cut out for me, and I'll keep on and grab him."

CHAPTER II.

A CALL FROM THE LAW.

SCOTT, permitted to straddle over the chain that fenced passengers from the pilot-house alley, propped his shoulder against a window casing and chatted sociably with the veteran captain, who was leaning out, while the steamer headed for the wide jaws of Sydney's harbor.

"Going to stay home for a while, son? I suppose you call this home nowadays."

"I'm making it my hailing port, anyway, sir. The Breton sailormen have a good name." He looked forth at the smoke rolling from the iron mills of Sydney mines, and drifting dun clouds smutching the June sky. "But I'm a bit sour on the sea, sir."

"Not to be wondered at, after the last sad business."

"I might take a turn in the mills yonder."

"Flare and soot, hammer and bang, sweat and smother. Bah!" scoffed the mariner. "That's no place for a lad just off salt water."

"But the bobbies are very strict with panhandlers, sir. I'm a hearty eater, and there must be money in a lad's pocket to buy food."

Mr. Tuzzer, having a sailorman's prudence about venturing into forbidden territory on shipboard, had stopped at the chain, in his last desperate pursuit of Scott before landing. Deep in his throat the old sailor growled:

"Oh! Hear the blymed fool!"

Tuzzer wanted to hoot his sentiments across the intervening space.

But his opportunity came very soon. Scott retired from the window, because the skipper needed all his attention for the channel and shipping. When the young man put up his foot to get over the chain, he was compelled to motion Tuzzer out of the way.

"Excuse me for blocking the gangway! But when your foot was h'isted, I thought you might be liking to kick me for offering you a fortune."

"I do feel like kicking you for keeping after me all the time," acknowledged Scott. "You're slurring me by your thought of turning me into a renegade."

"You won't bend your stiff neck even to save me from going to the parish work'ouse in me last poor days!"

"Go find some young fellow of your own stripe, Tuzzer. There are plenty."

"Like enough! But they wouldn't be honest with me." In spite of the cool,

fresh breeze, moisture oozed down the seams of Tuzzer's forehead. "That's the curse of what I'm up against. If I line along with a scalawag, the scalawag does me. I want you because you're honest; but you're a blooming fool, making too much of honesty. By all good rights, you ought to be the very man, on account of your empty pockets. And it's nothing so wicked. It's all right for your uncle in Scotland and——"

"I argue no more with you, Tuzzer. Look here: They have been spinning old yarns in the pilot house, gossiping to pass the time. They happened to be running over the list of the bigger wrecks 'twixt Sable and Quoddy. On no hint from me, understand, but in that talk I spotted your wreck. Couldn't help it."

Scott looked about him to make sure that there were no eavesdroppers. He pulled Tuzzer by the coat lapel to get the listening ear close to his lips. "After that wreck the shore natives and fisher folks kept finding an unsmashed case of Golden Elephant. Some found many cases and made fools of themselves. So the affair has never been forgotten on the coast. And the men in the pilot house talked of it to-day. Truth is, you were of the crew of the old *Bohemian*. She was a total wreck on Grand Tremont Island. Don't squirm!"

He grabbed both lapels of Tuzzer's coat and pulled the man around, face to face.

"I'm warning you, Tuzzer! Keep away from me, now and ever, else I'll spoil your rascally business. Let me have no more of your nonsense, and I'll keep my lips shut on something that's none of my affair. That's how I'll consider it. I'll make no threat to you of what I'll do if you keep on being foolish. You may guess as to it."

He pushed the sailor roughly away and went below to the main deck, to have a few last words with Anderson, before landing.

Again Scott refused money.

"I'll lodge with 'Bullsteak' Craigie. He still gives tick to honest lads."

"More like he'll slip you change to pay you for hanging up your hat in his place, Scotty. You'll draw trade to him. The boys will flock in to shake hands with a hero."

Honest disgust prompted Scott's mild curses at the prospect.

"But you ought to be used to it by now," declared Jock, grinning. "Over and over again, you have come back in the past after turning the hero trick."

"Aye! To be mauled and to have ale slopped down me front when they tossed their mugs. If it wasn't for my conscience, I'd let things happen to poor devils after this without moving a finger to stop or stay."

Anderson whirled his arm, gave Scott a rebuking slam in the ribs, and hurried away to his duties.

ON the main deck, with his dunnage propped on his shoulder, Tuzzer waited to land. He continually talked to himself in sailor fashion, as sailors, handling a top hamper in a tussle with tough conditions, put their emotions in words to point their convictions as to trouble aloft. Now there were tough conditions below, as Tuzzer viewed them. He was holding to his own skeptical opinion of Scott's attitude.

General disbelief in any good in human nature sanctioned those convictions. Here was a chap who truly could not possess a specially violent prejudice against whisky, even if he did not consume it. His people were in the whisky business, weren't they? And he had not one penny to clink against another.

"Put all your makings into the stew pot, keep your fire hot, and then sample carefully with a spoon, and you know what you've got. And I know what *he's* got! Got all the facts about old *Bohemian* to go with what I told him of the special matter. That's why he's now so offish with me. Plans to get it all for himself. Huh! Needn't tell me anybody grows angel wings in a fo'c's'le! Everything is in the pot, and I'm tasting, and I know what's what. He'll go after the stuff for himself. Human nature, that is! And, if you foller along the line o' human nature, you can't go far wrong. I'll make it a stern chase and keep him in sight."

Scott would have been particularly in-

terested in that line of reasoning, if he could have seen into the mind of the old cap, close beside his shoulder, while passengers waited on the main deck. The young man would have secured the irritating knowledge that by the very means he had taken to rid himself of this persistent trailer he had attached Tuzzer more completely. Youth and age—candor and suspicion—each man was dealing with human nature according to experience and prejudice.

When Scott hung up his cap in Craigie's boarding house, Mr. Tuzzer hung his there, too. With perfect equanimity he endured the young man's menacing scowl.

"You are chasing me, and after the good warning I gave you."

But Mr. Tuzzer was not an object to provoke attack. He understood well how guile must serve his needs. With meek manner and deprecatory smile, he presented a putty surface, and no hearty young fellow looking on that surface could feel an itching either in fists or tongue.

"I was thinking as how business of any kind or sort was all over betwixt us," ventured the old sailor. "I wasn't meaning to bring it up again. I only follered along to this place because I felt you knowed the reg'lar sailor's ground in the city better 'n me. But if you say for me to pull up my anchor, I'll——"

Scott's quick and reassuring clap on the shoulder ended this display of deference and raised Mr. Tuzzer, so to speak, from surrender's humble knees.

"We're all set on a good understanding from now on, Tuzzer. No more to be said."

The hero had already been cordially greeted by the landlord. Scott dragged Tuzzer across the office and presented him.

"Here's a matey of my own stripe, Angus. Cut his steak not so nigh the horn!"

With what seemed to be an excellent understanding, the two sailors strolled about the streets later in the day, and Mr. Tuzzer was cordially introduced here and there as "one of the right sort."

Friendly impulse surged in Scott after some hours of experience with the old man's new and admirable attitude in regard to the forbidden topic.

"I don't want you to carry the idea, mate, of me being a little tin god passing down the word as how the other chap should live and act. I have my own faults, and I allow some to the other lad, according to his notions. I still say I think it's bad business, digging up the old devil out on—well, we'll not name the place. It's my plan to forget all I've heard."

HE looked down at Tuzzer's bowed shoulders and the gnarled hands hardened by many years of toil.

"If any man deserves a few easy years after all the hard ones, matey, it's a sailorman. I am only an apprentice in tackling any snarl in the law rigging. The law says 'Yes' in one place, and the law says 'No' in another—and concerning the same thing. But the stomach is in all of us, and it calls the same for all. I'd hate to think of you going hungry in your last days."

The light of mingled appeal and hope in the ancient mariner's eyes was revelatory.

"Don't mistake me, Tuzzer! I'm not going in with you. But I see your side of the case, and we bogglers will not try to reeve the law's running rigging, because you're an apprentice, like me, in handling rights and wrongs. Perhaps I can come across the right party to take a hand with you without minding whether it's wicked or not."

"It ain't wicked, no way you look at it," insisted the old man. "Killings, and things like that, is wicked. It never used to be wicked to put over a deal in liquor. Nowadays it's only being a little shrewder, like some men make millions when they sail close to the wind in big money deals. Look at the cases the smart lawyers are trying all the time."

"Aye! It all makes a poor man scratch his head and wonder whether being honest pays."

"The line 'twixt honesty and damn foolishness is a wiggly one, Mister Scotchy."

"Then I'll try to keep away from it

and be what you might call safe, by staying medium. But what say, if I peer about a bit to find a handy mate for you?"

"I'm afeared!" whined the old man. He tried a bit of probing. "Look at the big chance I took in bracing up to you, a plumb stranger. But I was desperate."

"Does your mind still run that the chance you took stays a chance even now?"

"Yes! I can't help the feeling. You know the whole thing. You seem square enough. But human nature ain't nothing to depend on in this life."

"So you've made fast to me and double-hitched your suspicion bowline!" But the bitterness in Scott's tone was promptly washed out by his laugh. "Oh, matey, you're sailor all through. Always have been dipped, like the others, and it's small wonder you're as you are. I'll let you keep a sharp eye on me, without resenting any more," he went on genially. "Else I'd be making life miserable for you, and it's not in my nature to plague and tease. When you have me well tested, we'll see about testing somebody else for your helper, eh?"

"Well, I don't know," complained Tuzzer. "I've got to have a young feller, and young fellers in these days seem to twig everything as soon as half a dozen words is spoke. If I have to watch two ways at once, I'll be twisting the head off me shoulders."

Scott treated even that implication with humor. "Ah, matey, we'll let her run easy, as sails are set. We won't shift tack or sheet just now. Stay on deck and hold watch with me."

"I'll try hard not to be underfoot," promised Tuzzer humbly. "I took to you on the start-off, as you know. I'm pretty lonesome over here in a strange country."

Scott patted the bowed shoulder. "We shall see! It's a crooked channel with plenty o' reefs, but we'll do our best to keep the water of good sense under us."

They walked back to Craigie's. The landlord hastened to Scott and handed him a bit of paper.

"You're to call that telephone number."

"I'm a bit raw at managing the contrivance, Craigie," confessed Scott, with a wag of his thumb at the instrument on the counter. "Get the mouth open at the other end, and I'll set my ear to this end. If it's the police, give me a tip-off, and I'll be running."

Craigie made the call, got his party, and reported that Argyll Scott was ready to talk. In a moment Craigie clapped his palm over the receiver and announced across his shoulder:

"It may be as bad as the police, Scotty. It's the law, all right! It's Notary James Cowie."

"Ah, I know him for an honest old chap. I'll run my chance with him."

The young man took the receiver and listened, with a respectful: "Aye—aye, sir!" Then he hung up.

"I'm called to jig-step it to his office. He says it's important. Plain it is that there's too much jabber about my being in town. Now the law has heard and is after me."

"Did he say what?" asked Craigie anxiously.

"He, too, was born in Aberdeen. He does not toss speech about in the air: he's as careful of it as of his coin."

Scott clapped his cap on his head and started for the door. He passed Tuzzer, meek, waiting and wearing the demeanor of a dog appealing for the word to follow his master.

A ready grin creased Scott's features. "You'd like to trot along, eh?"

"Not to be underfoot! But it's a blooming treat to be out and about with you."

"Some fine dusty stairs lead up to the old notary's den. You may sit in the dust, while the law has its will o' me, if such wish to go along is yours."

CHAPTER III.

A GOOD, ROUND SUM.

SCOTT, after installing Tuzzer on the stairs to keep what the young man termed "first dogwatch," tapped under the sign, "J. Cowie, Counselor and Notary," and went in.

Dusty staircase, dusty office, dusty papers, dusty garb of the old man, who

pointed to a dusty chair at the end of a dusty table! Even J. Cowie's stubby whiskers looked as if dust would puff out if the whiskers were spatted.

He was square and solidly Scotch, saturnine and directly to the point with thrifty speech.

"Ye need not identify yirsel' as Argyll Scott. I ken yir luks fr'm twa years agone."

"Yes, sir! I was here at your call because my uncle asked me to report to you and show myself for inspection."

The young man smiled, in full understanding of the uncle's cautiousness in getting an unbiased estimate of what the nephew had become in the new world.

Notary Cowie held forth a paper. "In view of what happened in yir case, it may please ye to note what I repor-rted to yir Uncle Alex. This is a copy of the letter sent by me."

Scott waved the paper aside.

"Oh, I'll not need to read it, sir, so sure am I that you rated me A1."

The old man's gray brows knotted, but there was a quizzical gleam in the eyes below the tufts. He had Scotch humor of his own. "From that confident stand o' yirs, I might guess ye had fresh news fr'm Scotland, young man."

"I have been out of reach of messages, sir. To be sure, I was in Glasgie not long back, but I had not my say about time ashore. Some mates and myself were transshipped at quarantine, being charity passengers."

"I noted somewhat o' the case in the public preents," returned the notary quietly, nipping his lips on further comment. "But to get to the e-e-empor-rtant business in hand! As you know, yir Uncle Alex depar-rted this life not long after he heard frae me concer-rning you. I do not juxtapose the twa happenings as having relation. I mention them to refresh yir memory. In my letter to him I did such justice to ye as I could and abide by my conscience." He patted the paper in his hand before pushing it aside. "Upstanding youth, I said ye were. Roving and rambling frae here to yon, and with too little steadiness for settled occupation, where he could save and set aside. I'll say I had a letter o' thanks frae my auld friend Alex, and he revealed to me, with a flash o' humor, that ye were doing what it was e'er his craving to do, had he not been so bound to the whusky vats. He said it was a waste of a long life to give it to making o' whusky. Being a bachelor, he said he was glad he had no son to follow the Scotch custom o' succession, in which that son would feel it his call to keep on making o' whusky."

Notary Cowie bored Argyll with a keen stare. "So I hear, ye're nae sort of a consumer."

"Though the family has made whusky, I have never sipped a drappie. It would be keeping it away from cash customers."

The old man chuckled briefly, making a noise as dry as the rasp of a locust's wings.

"Yir other uncle is still vatting, and I trust ye'll keep on in abstinence. Ye'll be leaving that much more for the customers. But I have wasted much time in idle chat, young man. The business I have with ye is to inform ye that yir uncle, deceased, has divided his estate among his nephew and nieces and other heirs and charities, and yir share, now in my hands in a draft on a Sydney bank, comes to the round sum of twenty-five thousand dollars."

IT was a laconic statement, without stress of emotion. Cowie's matter-of-fact manner put the young man into a similar mood. He nodded, apparently accepting the news in casual fashion.

"Ye seem not o'er set up," suggested the old man, lifting his eyebrows.

"Mayhap it's like a bit tunk on the noddle, sir! I may come to myself and dance around your office and give loud hoots o' joy."

"It would be unseemly, and I dinna think it's your nature," declared the notary, fumbling with packets of papers, opening sheets, and spreading them on the table. "In any case, hold yir nerves steady until ye sign all these documents, clearing the matter for the estate."

The heir signed, as each paper was passed across the table to him. Then he received in his hands the draft.

Counselor Cowie leaned back in his

chair and clasped his hands behind his head.

"Now ye have it. May I ask what ye'll do with it, young rover o' the world?"

Scott laid the draft on the table, cocked his elbows on the arms of the chair, and locked his fingers in front of his breast. "My first thought is, sir, that this gift spoils my plans."

"They must needs be strange plans to be spoiled by a snug little fortune."

"That's it—the fortune!" the young man went on, manifestly whimsical, noting how much he was mystifying the old lawyer and enjoying the situation. "You see, sir, in the storybooks, the worthy fellow always wins his fortune and his wife at the end, and that finishes the story nicely. I have been thinking of inking my fingers and chewing at the penholder and putting down my adventures for print. I think they would make a fine book."

"Ye have a good bit o' the peacock in yir nature, eh?"

"That may be what has prompted me to the notion I've mentioned—yes, sir. But now the plan is all spoiled because I cannot lead up handsomely to the fortune for the bang-up end o' the tale."

"And the lassie?"

"I haven't found her yet. The story is all knocked sixes and sevens, you see!"

"And ye'll now go about to make ducks and drakes o' the fortune, so ye may not me hampered in the spinning of yir yarn, eh?"

"I may be so tempted, sir, even though, like yourself, I'm from Aberdeen."

"It's not my wont to spend so much time in frivolous speech," snapped Notary Cowie. "And ye're making sport of the grand bounty from a good uncle. And ye're talking of wasting gold. Such talk should not long continue betwixt Scotchmen. Have ye aught to ask of me in the way of counsel?"

"For counsel, as I'm thinking now, I'll make shift for myself when my thoughts are settled. After a night of sleep, the thoughts will be steadier. But this much I'm asking of your kindness, Notary Cowie. Will you take that bit of paper," he jabbed a gesture at the draft, not touching it, "and lock it in your safe till I come again in the morning?"

"I'll gladly be of service in helping ye to put a few hours between a gift and the spending o't," said Cowie. "I hope ye come wise frae yir slumber."

SCOTT leaped from the chair and left the office, having the appearance of one who was making haste to get away from something in the presence of which he did not dare trust himself. He did not cast another glance at the draft.

Absorbed in thought, he nearly tumbled over Mr. Tuzzer, who was sitting humbly midway down the stairway. The latter followed the hurrying young man to the street, and then was obliged to trot to keep pace on the sidewalk.

"Hit must 'a' been blarsted bad to work you up to this style," gasped the trailer.

"Yes, it was!"

"Is he setting a peeler harfter you?"

"No, he isn't."

After scampering for a block, the old sailor grumbled: "I picked you for a bold lad, that's why I myde the blymed fool o' meself by spouting out to you! Telling you of me chanst for me fortune. And now you're running from something."

"Yes, I'm running from twenty-five thousand dollars. Notary Cowie had it waiting for me."

"Where is it?"

"Didn't I tell you I'm running from it? It's in his office, of course." Then Scott slowed down and succinctly disclosed the facts.

Tuzzer twisted his fingers, cracking the joints, while he listened. "And because it's whisky money—is that why you're running? Are you that much of a fool?"

"The good die young, matey, it is said. If I were as good as you hint, I'd have never lived to wear breeks. No, I would not insult my good uncle's soul by heaving his bounty to the breeze."

"So you'll take it. But what'll you do with it?"

"That thought sent me into the quick step."

"Hah! So merry!"

"No! So worried. When a Scotchman gets much money he worries; he can't help it. I've been having a good time all my life till now."

"You're spoofing—that's what!" declared Tuzzer with indignation.

"No; there's a queer streak in me, so it really seems. I've been set upon a fling-about, all on my own. Now I must consider responsibility."

Tuzzer was silent until they were near Craigie's. Then he plucked Scott by the sleeve and halted him.

"Lad, you'll keep the money, o' course. And I'm to be excused for mentioning that it's whisky money, because I must lead from it to a point o' me own. It's whisky money *I'm* after, meself—maybe nigh as much as you've come into. In your new spirit, having your whisky money, are you still splitting hairs on me own prospects?"

"You old marlinespike—it's plain how different is your case from mine."

"But the money is money the same. I need money more'n you do—you so young and spry and hearty. You ought to be having more lib'ral views, as the matter stands now, Scotty."

"I'll never be liberal enough in any views to help you break the law. That's settled, Tuzzer."

The other released the sleeve and shook his head.

"Aye, yes! That's always the way. The man who has his own pile don't much care how the other fellow has to suck his forefinger, making b'lieve he's feeding himself."

In the doorway, Scott said:

"Give me a chance to settle my own puzzle before I give thought to yours."

BY the next morning the heir had decided on a temporary plan. At nine o'clock he went to Notary Cowie's office.

"Will you go with me to the bank, sir?"

"Yes! The fun begins, eh?" The old man dusted his hands significantly.

"From my standpoint it will begin now, sir. I am asking you to introduce me as a depositor who intends to leave twenty-five thousand dollars in that bank and forget it for a long time. The more and the better I forget it, the easier will my mind be."

"All the money, eh?" The notary screwed up his eyes and twisted his features, as if he wished to distort and make vague the expression of the real emotions of the moment.

"Well, sir, I'd honestly like to leave it all in one lump, as the draft stands. But, by the hard luck of a castaway, I've come back to Sydney with empty pockets. So I'll be obliged to draw——"

"Ye shallna nick the round sum, lad!" It was cordially blurted. "I'll advance you the bit o' money for your present needs, and ye may gie me an assignment of the interest money till the debt to me is paid." Then he added: "With due and pr-roper deescount, o' course!"

"I'd like to arrange it that way, and thanks to you, Notary Cowie. A nick out of the round sum—well, it would be like spoiling a fair round apple by a bite."

"And one is sair tempted to tak' anither bite," agreed the counselor.

When the banking arrangements had been concluded, Scott insisted on leaving in the notary's hands the bank book. "If some foolish notion urges me to take out money, sir, I must come to you for the book. Then you can talk up very sharp to me about folly. I shall expect you to convince me that I am a fool, and you can be thinking up speeches ahead o' time. And I shall not take it amiss if you swear at me."

"Ye're setting stumblingblocks in the path of a religious man, lad. But I may be inclined to descend to profanity if ye come for yir money without warrantable excuse." Then Notary Cowie did something he seldom permitted himself to do; he clapped Scott's shoulder heartily when the two parted.

In making his visit to the notary, Scott had slipped out of Craigie's when Tuzzer had slapped his pockets after breakfast and had gone up to his room for his pipe, growling profanely about the forgetfulness of old age.

Mr. Tuzzer was waiting anxiously and reproachfully outside in the street when Scott swung jauntily around the corner.

"Thought I'd run away, eh, matey?"

"It's hard to tell when new fancies will wing aw'y wi' young fellers as soon as they got rich overnight."

"But I've safely lashed down fancy's wings, me man. All the fortune is safe in the bank, and it's a solid-stone building, and I have left orders to kick me out of the place if I forget myself and come for cash. Now I'm all carefree and with me it's—what next?"

"Aye! What next?"

"Oh, I thought in the dark night what I'd do wi' the money. Now in the bright day I'll set myself to think what I'll do wi'out it!"

Mr. Tuzzer was dour in the face of this jollity.

"What old ship-rat notion is gnawing your timbers?" demanded Scott.

"I'm hoping."

"It's a sour hope if it matches your phiz."

"Now, when your notion about whisky money is mellower, I'm hoping the bank will fail. And you'll know where to find more o' the same sort."

Scott flung up his arms in an extravagant and mock gesture of hopelessness at Tuzzer's obsession, and went into Craigie's, the old man at his heels, grumbling.

CHAPTER IV.

A PICARESQUE TOUCH.

PERHAPS young Scott could not have picked upon a queerer bit of business for immediate activity, according to the view Mr. Tuzzer took of what was undertaken. For the asking, Scott secured space in a rigging loft on the water front and set about building a thirty-foot canvas canoe with sponsons.

Tuzzer sourly and secretly resented this hold-up of those more important plans to which his own covetous thoughts stuck tenaciously, but he consented to lend a hand in the making of the canoe.

He had served his trick at sea as ship's carpenter, along with turning his hand to various jobs in all-around service. Much of his willingness to work on the canvas craft was based on his firm and proud conviction that he would be able to show Scott what was what in handicraft. Tuzzer did display much aptitude. But he soon found he could not tell Scott everything.

The young man showed a great knack with tools. Also, he revealed some of his sentiments.

"You see, Tuzzer, it's long been my dream to make a fine canoe. In this world, every man has his pet odd hankering, some for one thing, some for another. It's all to coddle the particular hobby. For the first time I see my chance to have my bit of fun. Notary Cowie advances me my interest money by the week—on a discount." The beneficiary grinned and winked. "He stretches kindness to that point because I surprised him by what I did in the matter of the draft. He gets a relish by knowing I'm under his thumb and out of mischief."

"You myke *this* canoe, and you sell it, eh? Then another and sell it! It's a slouchy business for an up-and-coming lad who has his life ahead and his fortune to make. Excuse me! I was forgetting you already have your fortune."

"We're matched in that slip of the mind, you and I. Likewise, am I forgetting it as best I can. But am I asking you to work for nothing on what I mean to *sell?* I'm not stretching my Scotch that far! No! You're putting your hand with me to a toy in which the two of us will have a fling of fun before the tug and tussle of hard life begins all over again."

This was a gracious promise, slicked by a smile, but the old man looked startled. All through his life of toil on the seven seas, he had been wonted to rebuffs and ourses, and he had known how to take them. But how to take this generous proffer of partnership in pleasure, sociably tendered by one of higher standing in the world—Tuzzer wagged his head and blinked.

Scott perceived and understood. He laid his palm on the old man's shoulder.

He was conscious of mingled emotions, as he looked on the seamed face that was twisted into lines of bewilderment. He had grown to enjoy the company of Tuzzer, that veteran of the seas, with his tales and his snatches of chanteys. Even the old mariner's growls and grumbles and

his warped estimates of humanity had their everlasting fillip to keep interest awake.

SCOTT also took an amused and tolerant view of the selfish reason which motivated Tuzzer in hitching himself on at first. Latterly, the old man had made plain his admiring and humble spirit of more unselfish attachment. Thought Scott, hand on the bowed shoulder:

"Poor old chap, there's a dangerous bomb waiting for you on Grand Tremont. If you go out there to it with fire, you'll be blown sky-high. I'll do my best to keep you from the sad mess."

However, impish jocularity flashed in what he said to Tuzzer.

"You know I'll not be running to that mischief you suspect of me, not till the canoe is finished. And I'll keep you with me on the job, so you may sleep well nights and eat hearty three times each day."

Tuzzer's features crinkled queerly.

"Is that your only thought in keeping me with you?"

"No, matey!" acknowledged Scott, contrite. "I like your jib-cut, old style though it is. And that's said hearty, sailor to sailor."

A tear on each cheek trickled down grooves when the old man mumbled: "I ain't nohow used to sirup, lad. Vinegar has most al'ays been put onto what has been handed out to me in my life."

"I've given you some sour sauce, myself."

"But it didn't sour me on *you*. Now, as how you're forgetting your own fortune, a blooming-fine ass would I be, to go thinking any more o' mine. Through you I'm getting something better nor whisky."

With that fine understanding they fell to work.

"When the last slap of varnish is on, we'll take the craft to Lake Bras d'Or, and we'll cruise to our content," pledged Scott.

Tuzzer came back with a scoffing grumble:

"Ow! Is that the best you can think of for fun? With your feet now back on turf and only of a mind to hurry to put more water under you, with an eggshell to keep it away!"

"Always when I'd be in Boston, coasting, or with fish fare, the boys and I would take our time off to go to the park and ride in the swan boats," declared Scott.

"For me, gimme a 'oss when I'm ashore. But, lad, I'll cruise with you on a chip, for syke o' being along with you."

"Oh, probably we'll be off and away on salt water ere long, matey. After the frolic, then the work."

"I've been offered a lay already. What you've just said about work makes me bold to say something to you. The chap who's signing up was harsking if I thought you could be fetched along."

"Why hasn't he come to me himself?"

Tuzzer suspended work, with his draw shave on a thwart. "Lad, I put that same question to him, because I have no mind to be go-between 'twixt you and your business, unless you so give me word to act. Says the chap to me about you: 'E's notional in the case o' strangers, I've been told, and you,' meaning me, 'seem to be hand in glove with 'im. So, if you'll ask him if he means to take to the sea again, we'll give you a berth, too, for your pains.'" Added Mr. Tuzzer candidly: "Unless I'm all mistook, he's only willing to take on an old rab o' my kind because he thinks I may be able to bring you along with me."

"I'm a sailor and best leave tar on my paws instead of getting the smooch of the iron mills on my snoot, I suppose," stated Scott resignedly. "What's the ship, the lay, when to go, and how long to stay?"

"You'd best talk with him yourself and get it firsthand. You've seen him about in Craigie's—with that bowsprit o' long nose atween black cat heads o' eyebrows."

"Aye! I spot the chap now. I don't like his looks."

"I've seen 'em as would make a better picture for a lass to wear in her watch," admitted Tuzzer. "I'll tell him to fend off."

"You needn't. I'll listen to his talk and keep my eyes off his looks."

That evening, in Craigie's, Scott gave

attentive ear to the rangy, black-browed man, who nervously crossed and recrossed long legs, kicking high a foot to do so. He was cocksure, however, and talked well.

Scott, of nature avid for adventure, found his interest piqued by the man's piratical demeanor; he looked like a reanimated figure from the old days on the Spanish Main. The young man was inwardly amused by his thoughts, while the stranger declared plans. Scotch wariness suggested that a man with that face must be dangerous for a consort; on the other hand, one felt that exciting events must needs travel in the train of such a character. Scott was feeling less repelled by personality and more interest in possibilities, though he realized how whimsical was any such interest in prospects, considering what the man was offering for an expedition.

HE and others were taking a cargo of pickled alewives to the West Indies. There was no peculiarity whatsoever in such a project; Scott knew how insistent and regular is the native demand in the tropics for pickled fish.

The man's name was Tom Kragg; so he had confided.

"Y' see," explained Mr. Kragg, "this ain't a case of me mastering the *Canaquin*. Brig, she is, under British registry. As things set, I'm only one o' the crew, but put to the job of picking the pull haulers. Business gents stock her galley and put cargo aboard. Instead o' wages and primage, we as take her down sell off the cargo that's placed with us. It's billed to us for a flat price. It all depends on how well we can dicker for cocoa kernels and what not, how much profit we can pick up. The owners have arranged ahead, so we'll be allowed to drop in here and there and retail the fish. Not a penny of our money resked —a lot of profit to be figgered."

"I wouldn't wonder," admitted Scott, adding hopefully: "Also, it gives a fellow a good chance to see the inside of life down there, and he will have plenty of time to look around."

Mr. Kragg noted shrewdly in the young man's eyes the glitter of longing for adventure. "Never nothing better offered in that line. We need lads who ain't afraid. I hear you're that brand. Your friend over there," he nodded at Mr. Tuzzer sitting at a discreet distance in Craigie's front room, "he's old, but he seems to be well toughened."

"He's all right," affirmed Scott loyally. "I won't think of going unless he's taken on."

"So I reckoned," returned Kragg. "And are you going?"

Scott came back with an important question of his own.

"Who is to boss the outfit—who'll have all say? There'll be the very devil to pay if it's left go-as-you-please."

"I know that, of course. Do you understand navigation?"

"Yes!"

"I may be able to pull one or two others who can shoot the sun. But if there's only you and me—or if there are others able to master—we'll have election of officers before sailing. That's the kind of square shooting there'll be aboard, Mr. Scott."

Mr. Scott grinned.

"With you doing the enlisting, I take it there'll be small doubt about who's elected to command. But I don't mean any slur, Mr. Kragg. It'll be quite all right with me, even if I go before the mast."

"I'm asking you again—will you go?"

"How soon do you sail?"

"It may be a week, even more. The brig is over at The Island now."

Scott had no need to ask: "What island?" Kragg had used the customary designation of Prince Edward Island.

Kragg went on: "She's taking on cargo there. Part of the crew will sail her over here, and the others will be taken on then—and away we go!"

"I'll sign on," declared Scott, with his wonted quick decision, when his mind had been cleared ready for action. "But I'm asking a favor."

"Name it!"

"In a few days, now, Tuzzer helping me and both of us working hard, I'll be finishing a canoe. I want to take it with me, lashing it on deck."

"I ain't the one to say no, not being

master," vouchsafed Mr. Kragg, showing little enthusiasm. "But it seems to be a queer idea, shipping it."

"It's a queer trip, isn't it, even to the plan of electing officers? The fact is, Mr. Kragg, I'm at last scratching my back—my notion back, as you might say—where it has itched for a long time. In my noddle is fast fixed the plan to have a fling of vacation in a canoe of my make. I'd as soon have the fling in the West Indies as on Bras d'Or. There must be many a shoal and reach where I can catch the time to see how the folks down there live and perform in the tucked-away spots. When I started my job on that canoe, I must have had a hunch that I'd be called to make this voyage." He displayed boyish zest. "I think you'll be having a grand time of your own, with me in that canoe."

"That may be," admitted Mr. Kragg sourly. "Outside the canoe and the man Tuzzer, have you any more extra baggage?"

"No!" declared Scott, chuckling.

"Then we'll mark it as settled you'll go, and I'll keep you posted as to the day of sailing. I'm telling you again, we're taking only bold lads, and you seem to have been well tested out."

Scott was guilty of a bit of sarcasm, for he was not liking the manner in which Kragg was squinting.

"My grit may fail me in the dare-devil business of peddling pickled alewives."

"That won't be quite so good," retorted Kragg sardonically, and he rose and walked out of the room.

To a former decision that he did not like Mr. Kragg's looks, Scott added the firm conviction that he did not relish the man's tone, either.

But a character of that type should be able to put a picaresque touch even to the peddling of pickled alewives. Therefore, the recruit determined to hold to his pledged word.

CHAPTER V.

ONE ARGYLL SCOTT.

OF a piece with the other peculiarities of the projected expedition, was Manager Kragg's style of keeping Scott and Tuzzer posted. He did not show up again at Craigie's for almost ten days. In the meantime, the two artificers had finished the sponson canoe, and they loafed around in considerable of a stew, fretting in idleness, swearing at Kragg's methods.

Then he appeared without advance warning. He came and rapped on their respective doors at midnight and announced himself cautiously. Strictly a sailorman, afloat or ashore, Mariner Tuzzer needed merely to yank on trousers and coat to be ready for any call on deck. He trotted into Scott's room, where Kragg was waiting, and laced his shoes, hearing what the new arrival had to report.

"She's down in the roads, men. I took a shoot up with the motor yawl."

"Seems like you might have sent us a bit word to be ready," complained Scott, fussing with more details of dressing than had been necessary in Tuzzer's case.

"Too busy to write letters, and a word straight from mouth to ear isn't so apt to miss fire. And, in the case o' sailors called to duty, why expect a thirty-day notice or a post card dropped down the hatch?"

Mr. Kragg was even more disagreeable in tone and manner than he had been in the past, Scott reflected. But he did not retort. He had no stomach for a wrangle at the start.

"Go wake Craigie, ask for the reckoning, and pay my share," the young man requested of his fellow lodger, tossing his purse to Tuzzer.

Within ten minutes the two were away with their leader. Each new recruit carried his dunnage bag on his shoulder. On the water front Scott entered the rigging loft, having his own key to the place, because he and Tuzzer had been working nights on the canoe.

"Still of a notion to tote along your canvas sailing dish, eh?" Kragg had followed into the loft in the trail of Scott's pocket flash.

"She goes, else I stay!" The young man was curt.

"You have a mind of your own, I note," growled the other. "The canoe goes, of course, if you say so. But the

running rigging of mind or mainsheet shouldn't be tied into hard knots. Sometimes it's needful to shift tack quick, when reefs show up."

"Man, you have something in your thoughts back of that remark." Scott spoke sharply. "It'll be best for us all, if you open out free and full."

"I was only remarking that it's better for a man to change his mind for his own good, rather than stick on in an idea that'll bring his hang-up against his hurt. You're willing to admit that much, ain't you?"

"Yes! Else I'd be a mule instead of a man!"

Kragg cackled a laugh. "Sure! That's it! The smartest man is the one who has his ear out for reason. Oh, you and I will get along, all right. Having a mind of your own shows your grit. I'm set in my notions, too, but I never let 'em make a fool o' me."

He offered to help with the canoe and lifted sturdily, midship, by the thwarts, while Scott and Tuzzer managed the ends. The craft was eased down the gangway of a public landing stage, where the motor yawl was moored. Kragg had come unattended. Giving the canoe's painter plenty of scope, in order that the little shell might ride easily behind the wake of the yawl, they set off down the harbor.

Scott was entirely content in that calm June night, under the stars. A start for adventure by the garish light of prosaic day would not have suited him as well. Now wide awake, and his zest in the unusual whetted, he was glad because Kragg had come at midnight with his summons.

Tuzzer, squatting on his dunnage bag, added his personal touch to the occasion; he hummed a chantey, keeping time to the beat of the motor. The words were not distinct, but the appreciative listener heard something about:

"For I am a noble pir-ut, a-looking for his fee,
Sailing down along the coast of the High Barbar-ee!"

There was only a straggle of night breeze off the harbor jaws. Kragg drove the yawl outside to come upon the brig. Considering the lack of wind to make much progress, Scott had expected to find the vessel in the lower anchorage. But she was drifting, with her foreyards braced.

WHEN he climbed her ladder, after the yawl was brought alongside, he caught himself wondering at the extent of free board. According to Kragg's statements she had taken on a full cargo of pickled alewives at The Island. As Scott made an estimate, from his familiarity with burdens and build, the *Canaquin* was riding mighty light.

However, Scotch taciturnity was always a safe resource for the young man when he chose to let his nature hold sway; he said nothing to Kragg about the brig's apparent buoyancy.

Recumbent figures rose and straggled forward when the new arrivals stepped on deck. Scott counted ten men.

"Your new mates!" announced Kragg, making the introduction general for all parties concerned.

The crew turned to and hoisted yawl and canoe on board. Then Kragg issued sharp orders, and tacks and sheets were eased off and the brig began to make slow progress.

Scott set his foot on his dunnage bag, leaned forward, and crossed his elbows on his raised knee; his was the posture of waiting for orders.

Kragg fingered his bowsprit of a beak and squinted at the young man, in the pallid light from the stars. "Want to know where and how you fit aboard, eh? Maybe you'll remember what you said to me about that election. You're a good predicter."

Scott nodded, fully informed.

"The boys wouldn't have it any other way. They wouldn't wait till we got to Sydney. Made me agree to be master."

"That suits me perfectly, sir. I'd have voted that way if I'd been on board. And you'll remember something on your own part. I said I was perfectly willing to go before the mast."

"No! I'm making it more worth while for you. You're to be second mate, and I hope the job will start up your inter-

est and make you go to it root hog! You will pitch your dunnage aft, Mr. Scott!" He turned on his heel and walked toward the break of the poop. Over his shoulder he said: "You may give your first orders as second mate, Mr. Scott. That jack tar goes forward."

It was the usual procedure on shipboard—the master used a mate as mouthpiece.

Mr. Tuzzer ducked his proper salute and lifted his bag. He waited until the master was out of reach of a hoarse whisper: "Sir, it's as slick as if I had planned it ahead. I'm forrards to keep my eye peeled. You're aft to know for yourself the which and how."

Scott was as cautious in reply:

"You're quick to get a whiff that isn't from pickled alewives, eh?"

"Aye! From a dead rat, mebbe! All is, we must find out how long his tail is."

Tuzzer trudged forward, and Scott joined the master who had halted at the head of the companionway.

Kragg flourished a gesture at the officer who was patrolling behind the helmsman, from rail to rail.

"Mr. Mawson, first! Mr. Scott, second! Meet!"

The two saluted.

"Follow below, Mr. Scott. I'll show you your quarters."

After the bag had been deposited under the second mate's berth, Kragg and Scott stepped into the main cabin. The master opened a locker and produced a bottle from which he scrubbed a wrapper of tissue paper.

"I take it you'll join me in a little nightcap, Mr. Scott."

"All thanks to you, sir, but I'm a teetotaler."

Kragg set the bottle down with a bang and scowled at Scott.

"Carry a grudge against rum, do you?"

"By no means!" declared Scott, with a disarming smile. "My family in Scotland has made whisky for three generations."

"Huh! Then it comes sort o' natural for you to do without it. All the years I was a bartender in the States, after leaving the sea, I never touched a drop. That's why I was a good bartender." He replaced the unopened bottle in the locker.

"If you please, sir, you'll now direct me as to watches. I'm ready to stand my trick, if it falls that way."

"It does not, Mr. Scott. You're to turn in and sleep the rest o' the night. I'm looking for wind at the turn of the tide, and you'll need to con the brig by daylight, so as to know her tricks."

THAT was wholly reasonable. Scott went to his berth. His second installment of interrupted slumber was solidly sound. When Scott awoke, of his own accord, it was broad day. The lisp of the sliding waters and the mellow *boofle* of breeze across the mouth of his open port informed him that the brig was getting a bit of a push along her course.

He dressed hastily and ran to the quarter-deck. Kragg and Mawson were there. The master nodded a greeting. Scott's first sailor impulse was to take a peep under the binnacle hood to note course.

Kragg was posted near the standard support. Without appearing to note the second mate's quest, the master languidly backed to the compass and leaned his elbows lightly on the brass lamps, screening the binnacle glass effectually with his body. He grinned amiably and made his attitude seem a mere thoughtless blocking of view.

"A sleep till two bells, forenoon watch, will sure send you fresh to your job, Mr. Scott. Go into the house by the coach door, and you'll find the 'doctor' waiting with your grub. Then make a careful job of it, getting the lay o' the ship, starting in forward."

The queer doubts of the night had come awake as soon as Scott opened his eyes. But it would scarcely do to push the master away from the compass in order to learn the ship's course.

"Get to work, if you please, Mr. Scott," admonished Kragg, when the young man lingered for a moment.

To his breakfast, then to his work, the second mate went. Mawson joined his associate in the waist, when Scott headed aft, some time later in the morning.

"Break out paint and brushes, Mr.

Scott, and set a gang on the forehouse and rails."

This was a pretext to keep him engaged, and Scott was fully aware of the fact when he inspected the surfaces to be repainted. They were barely past the stage of being still tacky.

BUT he set the men at work and supervised, and found an opportunity to exchange a few words with Tuzzer, under pretense of showing the latter how to handle a brush.

"What's your finding forward?"

"Them that gabble know naught except about the plan to peddle pickled alewives. Them few that don't gabble may know something else, but they keep it to themselves. What's aft for news?"

"They're that snug about it they wouldn't even let me get a peep at the course this morn. But they're fools to deal with a sailor that way. Unless yon sun has been slued from his regular road, we're heading northeast."

"It m'y be, o' course, the West Injies has been moved in the night. Latest news, but it ain't got to you and me. But I've heard of having a nose for news, and Kragg's long beak can reach far."

"I'll get some news from him. I'll get it in a hurry!" Scott spoke with determination. "If he's thinking he can use a far offing to make us swallow any dose he's holding for us, I'll be grabbing in before the jump ashore is too long to make."

Scott marched aft, scampered up the short ladder to the quarter-deck and confronted the master, who again lounged, with his back against the binnacle, taking the pose when he saw the second mate coming.

"Excuse me, sir, for talking out——"

"I don't excuse any talk, except it's on ship's business, Mr. Scott."

"We'll call it ship's business, sir. You promised the West Indies, and this ship is heading a big slice north of east."

Kragg stepped promptly away from the compass.

"I'm asking no officer to guess at bearings, Mr. Scott. And you'll be taking over your watch directly. What's the course as we're sailing?"

Scott peered and named it.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Scott?" There was a sneer in the query. Kragg turned away and looked into the southwest, beheld a clear sky line, and grunted his satisfaction, while he waited for a reply.

"As she heads, sir, it's the course for either Miquelon or St. Pierre."

"Very well, sir! Take the ship. Hold her as she heads."

"Not by a——" Scott checked his outburst of impetuous nature and bowed. "Excuse me, sir, but my understanding is for the West Indies, and if your plans have changed, the bargain is off."

"Who in thunder are you to stand up, out here on the high seas, and willy-nilly over bargains, like you were in a hand-me-down shop?"

"I'm one Argyll Scott, Mr. Kragg. Plain such, now, without the handle of 'mate,' if you please. If I'm not aboard here, shanghaied by deceit, I'll be glad to know different. But, if I have been shanghaied, I'll right soon be doing my best to be a free man."

"Threatening mutiny?"

Scott caught the other's gaze and held it steadily.

"Don't talk nonsense. This is a man-to-man business, without shipboard frills, and you'd best come down to business, Kragg—free and open. It's making me a simpleton, as you're trying to do your trick! So it seems—and that style is what I never could put up with. But I'll listen to good reasons, any time, and respect 'em."

Kragg took a moment for thought, then said:

"All right, Mr. Scott. Step below with me. Come, listen to reason."

CHAPTER VI.

CHINESE STYLE.

POISED behind Kragg, on the tread of the upper lift of the companionway, Scott subdued the hankering to hop down and kick the descending knave. That the fellow was truly a knave had become no longer a matter of any doubt in Scott's mind.

Kragg had asked him to listen to "rea-

son." Instead, so Scott realized, he would be asked to listen to *reasons*. He had too much knowledge of the present conditions between Sable Island and the Delaware Capes not to be fully informed at this point as to what sort of a cruise the *Canaquin* was on. Simply another adventurer in the far-flung fleet of Rum Row. She was only that; therefore the situation became hackneyed stuff where Scott was concerned.

"You needn't bother to tell me what you're out to do," Scott said, when the two were face to face in the cabin. "You'll be carrying bottled stuff to pickle poor fish down the coast in Yankeeland. And that's as nigh as you'll come to the business of pickled alewives. Count me out, Kragg!"

"Are you planning to give me a Sunday-school lesson?"

"I'd be wasting time."

"You're damn well hooting, when you say it—you, with your folks turning out the whisky——"

Scott clacked a hard finger in a palm under Kragg's nose. "I've been hearing full enough on that point lately. For another slur I'll ask you to put up your fists, and we'll discuss without words."

"Then, you sweet little angel, you're balking because of your own high notions."

The mutineer had already decided on his course, and he doggedly held to it.

"Look you, Kragg! I'm in no frame o' mind to preach. If you like the business you're taking up, go to it. It shall be no affair of mine. But as to your taking a clutch of *me*, and dragging me along, that much *is* my business. I put all concern of mine outside your selling of liquor on the high seas, where even the law allows it may be sold, as I hear it. But I'm telling you now why you're carrying along bold chaps, as you have said in compliment to me. You want to be backed by huskies who will fight off renegade hijackers. I'll fight for most anything, but for whisky I'll never fight. And now your mouth is all puckered to call me a coward. Better not—else you'll be called on to prove it."

Kragg took a step backward, as he would have retreated from a fire that was too hot. Under the bronze, the cheeks of Scott were flaming.

"This is mutiny, and it can be handled as such, for the maritime law will back me!" He pulled a cord and flipped a boatswain's whistle from his pocket. "I'll give you a snug berth in the lazaret, man, till you think better o' things."

Scott raised a hand, palm out, and Kragg did not put the whistle to his lips. "Little use for you would I be in the lazaret! If you'll look me square in the eyes, you'll note I've done my thinking on one point. You'll see such, else your judgment of men is no good. No use I'll be in the lazaret, and I'll hurt you and your business very bad, Kragg, when I get out. Why try to use bluff on such as me, Kragg? You've played the fool long enough. I'm leaving you."

"Going to use your angel wings and fly ashore?"

Scott grinned, and this patronizing attitude worked for Kragg's discomfiture better than violent threats would have served.

"I have a very fine canoe, and I built it for a fling of vacation. The vacation starts promptly."

He snapped about and ran up the companionway, Kragg close at heel.

"He's quitting," reported the master to Mawson.

"Like hell he is!" barked the first mate.

Immediately it was borne in on Scott that Mr. Mawson was of more importance in the affairs on board than his subordinate position indicated. First off, he cursed Master Kragg roundly. He made no secret of the affair; he did not subdue his tones for the exclusive benefit of the quarter-deck. Men forward could hear.

"A fine piece of cheese you are as a man picker! Confound you, Kragg, you've only half done your job in sizing up this crew. How can I be sure of what ye've got forward, if a thing like this happens aft?"

"The rest will turn out all right," protested Kragg. "This one, here, is the trouble maker, and we'll take care of him—that's all!"

"I can take full care of myself," de-

clared Scott, leaping to the top of the house to be away from treacherous moves by the other two men.

"A pretty big brag!" derided Mawson, now in the full swing of complete authority.

"It's not meant for a brag—only for a promise to rid you of useless truck. Let me set off in my canoe, with Tuzzer, of course, and I'll be taking care of myself, with no thanks to you."

"But with all kinds of danger to us in our plans," hotly declared Mawson to Kragg, in his wild ire discarding caution. "A fellow like that, out of the fishing fleet on these waters, knows every trick of the rum trade. He knows we mean to take on stock off St. Pierre. He'll get to Sydney, or report us to Halifax, and blow on us for breaking registry regulations. Then, what good will the twelve-mile limit be for us?"

Scott made no protestations. This Mawson was plainly in no mood to accept palaver of promises.

The god of the machine stepped to the side of the house and shook his fist to point his declaration.

"You're going to stay aboard here, Scott. If you proceed to make too much trouble *on* board, you'll go *over* the board some night, along with the rest of the garbage. I reckon you know considerable about this business we're on. So you must know how cheap we hold men when whisky fetches its price."

A raucous howl drew all attention to another party in the affair.

In his best sea tones Tuzzer yelled: "Cheap it is, eh, for man! The syme plan goes with *me!*"

Only the top of his head was visible over the break of the poop. Aimed, one leveled on each side of the head, were the ominous muzzles of two long-barreled pistols—huge weapons.

"Myke a move to pull a gun or to go below for one, mate or marster, and you'll be doing without conks from now on. Come forrard to the waist, the two o' you, one by each alley."

Mawson moved only his mouth. He opened and shouted:

"Swarm aft, crew, and nab this lunatic!"

"I've a'ready told 'em what would happen to all as bothers me," bellowed Tuzzer, in tones that carried to every person aboard. "Look at these two bow-wows in me mitts! When they bark they scatter their teeth!"

They were baleful objects, those guns. The men on the *Canaquin* instinctively wondered what sort of lethal charge would pour from the big muzzles.

"Step forrard and hands up!" called Tuzzer, with menace.

Mawson and Kragg obeyed. Tuzzer was displaying in tone and manner the unstable qualities of a madman.

WHEN the two stepped on the main deck, going respectively by port and starboard alleys, Tuzzer swung about and herded them against the rail in the waist, along with certain others of the crew, as to whom he loudly, profanely, and frankly expressed doubt of all decency.

"You all belong together, you rum sculch! But there are five of you I've tested out," he reminded certain others, "as knowing no more than I know o' this cruise, except as it was to be a peddling of alewives."

Scott noted the division in the crew. He took heart. In a house divided against itself, even temporarily, there was opportunity for snap of action, before conference or change of heart could affect coalition.

"Give off your orders, Mr. Scott," shouted Tuzzer, his eyes and his guns on the group at the rail.

The young man did not confine himself to mere orders. He leaped down to the deck, scurried forward, and set about getting the canoe over the rail, appealing for assistance.

"I'm holding nothing against ship or men, lads," he assured those who lent a hand. "Go your way and do as you like. The man who spouted his say aft, a bit agone, was not at all right in his guess as to me and what I'll do, and I'll hint no more as to his sheer from the truth." He was talking while he worked. "I'm leaving, all friendly and pleased—pleased to be shut of a job that's not to my liking. Every lad to his own choice."

"Well, a lot of 'em is follering this line," said one of the men. "I suppose we others may as well stick along, now that we're offshore."

"Aye! The thing you're at seems to be setting half the world crazy," admitted Scott. "Whisky! Whisky! I'm sick o' the talk of it. Thanks, lads, for the help. Easy over the rail. We did take a lot of pains with every slap of varnish."

The canoe was swinging out at the end of tackles. The helmsman proved a good sort in this emergency. He put the wheel in beckets, after he had swung the brig up into the wind. Then he dove below and came back running, with Scott's bag. "As long as you're leaving us, you may as well leave right."

The brig's cook brought Tuzzer's bag.

Mawson called, making the best of this mutinous coöperation, in order to save his face in some degree: "Off with you, cowards! Good riddance! Cook, throw in grub and a can of water."

"I guessed ahead. I've already sneaked the stuff into the bag," owned up the cook, grinning. He heaved Tuzzer's dunnage sack across the rail into the canoe, whose gunwale lay abreast the bulwark, the tackles holding the craft over the water.

Scott and Tuzzer took their places and were lowered. They cast off grapples, took their paddles, and swung from the brig.

They looked up into Kragg's savage countenance, his big nose thrust out over the rail.

"Now you'll drown yourselves. and we'll be saved the trouble of doing it."

"Then I'll not thank you for any kindness in letting us off so easy," retorted Scott. "You were thinking only of your own convenience."

THAT was his farewell, except for the flourish of a wet paddle. There was fair bit of kick in the sea, but, with two men to manage the canoe, good sailors both of them, they were not apprehensive.

"Well," said Tuzzer, from the bow, taking a spit of spray into his eyes without blinking, "she ain't no jim-built, boughten contraption. She's able!"

"Able she is, matey. There's a smart bit if paddling ahead of us, but land is ahead, too."

Scott was obliged to trim course with a guess as to bearings, but the flashing ridges of the sea were piling from the southwest, he knew, and he quartered to bring the Cape Breton shore fair ahead. By night, so his hope ran, they would raise one of the island beacons as a sure guide.

"Well," vouchsafed Mr. Tuzzer, after they had paddled sturdily in silence for some time, "like the feller said when he tumbled from the top of St. Paul's in London town: 'That was quick over!' "

"But it wouldn't have been over nigh as quick, Bold Ranzo, had you not stopped long argument. With that battery you had even me so scared I was slow in getting into the swing of the jubilee aboard."

"Yus; they sure be savage looking," agreed Tuzzer. He had laid the weapons under a thwart. "I got 'em off a junk in Hongkong. And you know how a Chinaman makes every fighting tool look savage, from paper dragons to popguns. Looks—that's what a Chinaman bears down hard on. I don't have the least idee whether one o' them sallyboos o' mine will shoot powder and bullets or not," he added complacently.

"What do you mean, man?" demanded Scott amazedly. "Were you not primed as well as armed?"

"Ow, they wasn't loaded," said Tuzzer indifferently. "I fit Chinese style with 'em. As I tyke it, it's best to use a thing as it was meant to be used. Aim a couple o' them jeewinkers and holler loud enough, and it seems to turn the trick!"

"Much have you amused me in times past, Mister Ben Tuzzer," declared Scott, after he had put down his paddle in order to have full swing in his mirth, "but little have I realized what a comic actor was spoiled in the making of a sailor." He caught up the paddle to point the canoe to the course.

In a few moments he found the glum silence of Tuzzer very puzzling.

"What is on your mind, man, when you should be having a laugh with me?"

"I don't feel like snickering. I've been thinking. And the more I think, the more I'm sure I'm a big fool with me mouth." Tuzzer rumbled on: "I blatted to *you*, didn't I—testing you out? And I was testing last night, like I said to you I'd do. I was sizing up the sheep from the goats aboard there!"

He settled into silence, his shoulders hunched up, paddling.

"Out with it, matey!" Scott prompted curtly. "Was it on that same topic—the one you set about at first with me?"

"Yus! Whisky! Whisky—of course! Cuss it, nobody on these waters seems to want to talk anything else except whisky. So I blatted."

"Told 'em of the store on Grand Tremont? Do you mean to say you're such a fool?"

"I was a fool, but I didn't say Grand Tremont. I was supposing a case, to get their notions on the right and the wrong in handling the stuff. And the more I think now on what I said—getting excited in trying to test 'em—the sharper I'm tyking the notion to meself that they'll be able to guess the rest."

"If there are men among 'em who know the coast and the yarns of wrecks, they'll probably put two and two together, and they won't make three of the sum, either," admitted Scott discouragingly. "It will be a shame if men like Mawson and Kragg and their gang manage to dig up the old devil on Tremont."

"A blooming shyme!" mourned Tuzzer. "I don't feel the syme as I felt about the stuff at first, now after being this long with you, Scotty; but to have them robbers grab it in—ow, it's a tearing shyme!"

"Leave me alone to my thinking a bit," said the young man.

They toiled long at the paddles.

"I'm thinking we'll not go back to Sydney, Ben Tuzzer," announced the stern paddler, the steersman, at last. "That's part of the sum of my thought to date. I'm heading to round Cape North, as you may be guessing. Do you guess anything else from that?"

"I'll not allow meself to do any more thinking. I'm leaving it to you. And, I tyke it, you'd better do my talking for me after this, when anybody else is in hearing."

"If it's on the matter of whisky, that plan may work best," returned Scott demurely. "And the matter of whisky is now on my tongue. Yesterday I'd have promised you with a swear word or two that I'd never step me foot nigh the trouble that's waiting for silly meddlers on Grand Tremont. But overnight, and all due to gentlemen we have met and parted with, all cheerful best wishes to and from, my mind has changed. I'm not promising you, Ben Tuzzer, that you shall make your fortune from what's buried on Grand Tremont. On the other hand, we'll both do our best to keep scalawags from turning the trick for their wicked profit. Heh! That has been said in a highly moral way, such as it might come from the worthy Notary Cowie's lips. Mayhap, with some of his coins in my pocket, I have a bit of his virtues there, too."

He broke out of his jesting tone because Mr. Tuzzer had hooked his chin over his shoulder and was surveying him anxiously, mutely pleading for an understanding.

"We'll go to the north of Breton and Scotia, down the safer waters of the big bays, finding a lee from the sou'westers. We're on the way to Grand Tremont, matey. Are you suited and hearty for the paddle?"

Mr. Tuzzer laid the paddle across the gunwales, moistured his palms, one after the other, and settled into his task without a word.

CHAPTER VII.

INDIAN GAMES.

AS is usual in summer weather, in northern latitudes, the wind went down with the sun, and they made fine progress in the night over the slow heave of the long rollers. Neither man felt any inclination to sleep. As Scott remarked, every now and then, pausing in his paddling to fill his pipe, their vacation had begun, and it would be too bad to waste any of the start-off fun in silly snoozing.

Rounding Cape North, they made their first lee of Breton along the shore of Bay St. Lawrence. They had seen North's

light wink out before the glory of the dawn. On the shore of the bay they landed and bought breakfast at a fisherman's house and later stocked from a farmer, buying a ham and loaves of bread and plenty of eggs. Then, with his jovial permission, they napped for a few hours in his haymow. They were circumnavigating the big island, they told him.

Without tiring themselves, they reached Margaree Harbor, where they spent the night. This port was across the island from Sydney. Though Mr. Tuzzer proffered all his cash to finance the expedition, Scott stoutly refused.

"It shall be fifty-fifty, man, even as you are partner in the canoe. I intend this morning to get at the ear of Notary Cowie over the telephone, report myself as doing well on a vacation, and ask him to advance a few weeks of my interest money, making himself whole by the regular *deescount*, o' course." He winked at his mate when the word was stressed. "He's to send it to Pictou, and there'll be plenty of time for it to get there, because we have all of two days' paddling to make the port."

Notary Cowie, speaking at his end, seized the opportunity to roll out sententious criticism of the haphazard manners of youth, roving and rambling, here to-day and there on the morrow; but he promised to send the money in cash to Pictou.

It was waiting—and was needed. From Pictou they were required to transport themselves and their canoe across a fifty-mile portage by rail to Truro. In the Basin of Minas they again wetted the canvas and went on their way, passing under the loom of noble Blomidon into the Bay of Fundy.

There were adventures, of course—mostly gay ones—comings-up with odd casuals of fisherfolk along the Scotia coast, evenings in inns, where yarns were wreathed with tobacco smoke. Scott extracted his most acute fun from the infinite variety of Mr. Tuzzer's statements regarding this cruise in the canoe, no two stories ever alike.

"I can't help gabbing," confided Tuzzer to his companion. "but lemme tell you, if anybody ever again twigs, from what I say, anything about where I'm headed, or what it's all about, then he's so uncommon smart he can give music-hall shows of mind reading. And, even if he could read my mind nowadays, he'd be mighty mixed, because I've told so many stories I can't be sure meself!"

"In spite of yourself, that's the truth out of lies," commented Scott dryly. "Little do we know what's ahead of us or what shape the thing will take. As it comes to us, day by day, that shall be our plan, and it saves foolish planning, if you get what I mean."

"I git it!" acknowledged Mr. Tuzzer. "I ain't going to be surprised at nothing."

But he broke that pledge one day later.

Heading across the mouth of Fundy from Digby, meaning to explore the Passamaquoddy waters, they were having their work cut out for them in earnest. The rush of Fundy's outpouring tidal flood, lowering its thirty feet from spring-tide to neap, produces an area of turbulence called The Wolves, and that rough water is dreaded even by mariners whose crafts are stout and able. Scott and his mate were obliged to fight every inch of the way, dodging queer twists of high-sided waves in the rips, using all their strength and skill.

However, this ordeal was not what provoked Tuzzer to break seal on the mental tin where, so he vowed, he had put away surprise. As a sailor he was prepared for the inconstancies of the sea.

"Thank the Lord for the sponsons," he muttered. "She's riding like a feather from a gull's wing."

Then, all at once, when he was heaving high on the pinnacle of a wave pyramid, astonishment burst from him:

"Scotty, d'you see what I'm seeing?"

"Aye! More dare-devils of our stripe," bellowed the other.

FAR ahead of them, crossing their bow in the welter of foam-streaked surges, was a flotilla of canoes headed out to the sea.

After a few moments Scott announced a decision.

"Matey, we're making another feather

in that fleet to find out what the other fools like us are out to do!"

Making toward the flotilla, the two men were able to note that at least two-score canoes made up its complement. In each craft were two paddlers. Quartering and nearing the flank of the fleet, Scott and Tuzzer were truly amazed to discover that these men were Indians, with beaded tunics and feather headdresses.

They gave no heed to the strangers who had joined them. For that matter, attention was fully taken up by the hazards of the sea at that time. Joining the course of these voyageurs, Scott was immediately informed as to their intended destination. Ahead, off the coast, loomed the great mass of Grand Tremont, like a crouched buffalo bull.

Vouchsafed Mr. Tuzzer irefully over his shoulder:

"I'll s'y my blabbing mouth has started up the hexcursion business good and proper. Even a tribe of Injuns is out to beat me to it."

"Don't be foolish, matey. Something else is afoot in this case, and we'll stick along and find out. We're to our place a bit ahead o' time, that's all."

It developed into a long, strong pull with paddles, but the sea was quieter after a time, when the lee of a great headland gave protection. The fleet lined out into single file and passed along, close to frothing cliffs. Then, far ahead, the leading canoe turned into the mouth of a cove, and Scott and Tuzzer, meekly tailing along as file closers, entered the deep bay, where a placid surface had only the slow heave communicated from rolling waters outside. On a spacious beach of white sand the Indians were depositing their canoes, out of reach of the tide.

The slopes bulwarking the cove were wooded, and no buildings marred the haven's seclusion. Scott backed water with his paddle and halted the canoe a few yards from the beach.

"This seems pretty much a private party, Ben Tuzzer. I wonder if we dare land."

"Anyways, I've got proputty rights here," grunted the old man.

"This is the spot, eh?"

"I-den-tickle! And by the same token, I don't want to have my scalp tickled by a tommyhawk."

An Indian, distinguished by a special array of feathers, sauntered down to the edge of the water and gazed at the strangers.

Scott raised his voice.

"Excuse me, sir! But do you mind if we rest here a bit after our tough tussle? And you know what a tussle it has been."

The Indian flourished an inviting gesture, and the two men drove their canoe up onto the sand and stepped out.

When Scott, as spokesman, hesitated, not knowing what to say, the Indian smiled cordially, advanced, and shook hands. "You are good men in a canoe. Very brave men."

"We thank you, sir! That's a fine compliment from one who is so much braver." He directed attention to his canoe. "You see, we had the advantage of sponsons. I note you have none of the sort in your fleet."

"But it's a real man's fight with The Wolves out there, sponsons or no sponsons. I am Niketah Neptune. These are the men from our village on the mainland—Abnakis."

Scott promptly introduced himself and presented Tuzzer, who ducked profound salute and was much impressed by the Indian's headdress and beads.

SCOTT took a quick side glance and saw that the other Indians were showing no interest in the conference; they were busily removing certain lading from their canoes. His gaze returned to Neptune and encountered a distinctly quizzical smile. The latter pointed at the big pistols in the sponson canoe.

"I hope you're not out to slap redskins, Mr. Scott. Those guns seem to belong to the times when Indians were fair game for any white man."

It was the speech of a cultured gentleman, and the manner of the speaker harmonized. Neptune chuckled when he surveyed Scott's bewildered countenance. "I must not seem to take advantage of you in any way, Mr. Scott. This affair,

dress and all, has a very odd appearance, no doubt. But it's only because I have been able to interest my people of the ancient Abnaki race in reviving some of the old customs of the tribe. I have felt it would be a shame to have all the old things forgotten. If you'll pardon my particular reference to myself, I'll mention that I am a graduate of Carlisle, and I am writing a volume devoted to the Abnaki language and customs, and I find that actual practice of the customs freshens my point of view."

"I should think it would," stammered Scott.

Mr. Tuzzer scratched his ear and was more than ever impressed.

"I come home to the old village each summer," continued Neptune. "My brother is the tribal governor. I am allowed to have a courtesy title of chief while I am leading off in affairs like this. You must understand that in the old days the tribes came down from the Northern forests to the shore, each tribe to the chosen island. They made camp and caught fish and baked clams and had a jolly time. The white folks do the same in these days, without giving the Indians credit for starting the custom." Once more he chuckled.

"One time our smack crew landed on an island in the St. Lawrence gulf to gather mussels off the reefs for our trawl bait," imparted Scott, feeling less embarrassed. "Some lad chanced to be digging about a bit in the soil and came upon a layer of clam shells, almost a yard deep. It was said the Micmacs came there to have feasts in the old days."

Neptune agreed by a nod. With the air of one who had fully explained in regard to himself he asked:

"To what parts are you bound, Mr. Scott?"

The young man hesitated. It would not do at all, he decided, to state that this island was the ultimate destination.

There was not a bit of hesitation in Mr. Tuzzer, however. He had been having plenty of practice in lying about the reasons of this cruise. "Chief, this is the gen'ral idee o' what we're doing. The principal cuss o' trawling is the dogfish, that gobble bait 'fore it gits over the rail out of the trawl tub." The old man had absorbed that information in a talk with a fisherman at Truro. "We're out studying dogfishes' style, and we feel we can git clusser to 'em in a canoe than by any other manner or means. Yuss'r!"

Scott had never heard that lie before, but he kept his face straight.

Neptune was apparently satisfied with the explanation.

"I've been told how much fishermen are bothered by dogfish. So, in a way, you two are students like myself. I'll be sorry if you feel that you must hurry away from here at once."

"Having met a gent like you, we'll be sorry, too, if we hurry," declared Mr. Tuzzer. "But we don't want to be underfoot in a private party."

"You'll be welcome here," Neptune hastened to promise. "There'll be games of the old Abnaki style. We shall live here according to the ancient customs. We have Indian costumes you see, to put us into the spirit of the thing!"

"We'll be mighty glad to hang 'round," stated Scott eagerly.

"I'll say we will!" Tuzzer indorsed as heartily.

The two adventurers swapped glances of triumph.

Neptune turned from them and raised his hand, palm outward, and addressed his tribesmen in the Abnaki tongue.

They hearkened, smiled, saluted, then devoted themselves to their tasks.

"Make yourselves at home," invited the chief. "The men are about to weave spruce-bough shelters. If you go and watch how they work, you may be able to make a tepee for yourselves." Then he went about his own affairs.

Tuzzer blinked up into Scott's face.

"Harfter all the warnings you've handed me about what might be expected to happen to me on this island, I s'pose I ought to 'a' been primed and ready. But to land here with a crowd o' war whoopers and be asked to be Injun, along with 'em—well, if I had two bottles o' that Golden El'funt inside o' me, I couldn't feel any crazier."

"Remember your failings in the way of gab, matey. If you slip scent to 'em of what's under the sand here, and they

war-paint themselves inside, even that college Indian may forget himself and tell his crowd to scalp you. And I'll be that mad I'll whet the tomahawk for the job."

"From this minit on, I don't know there's a drop o' whisky in the world—and I'm tyking in London town, yus, and Aberdeen!"

A few minutes later they were watching the tribesmen and receiving instructions in the work of making their own tepee.

In spite of the feathers and the accouterments of the men, Scott and Tuzzer noted that fully half of them showed only traces of Indian ancestry. One of them politely explained, after a rather blunt question put by Tuzzer:

"Many of our people have married with the French Acadians." He added humorously: "Your young friend, with his high cheek bones and his tan, could pass better for an Indian than many of the rest of us."

In high glee, Tuzzer transferred that remark to Scott's ears and put on him the nickname, "Tarramuk."

"And you needn't tyke it a bit amiss, lad. He says it means upstanding chap—smart chap. All that you are, as I've grown to know you!"

"I'll ask what's the name for flapping mouth," promised Scott, "and I'll call you by that name, and I hope it sounds mean enough to fit you."

"I don't blyme you for al'ays reminding me o' my prime failing," contritely acknowledged Tuzzer. "And keep it up. I don't even dare look the way o' that patch o' sand where the old devil is buried."

"Thank you! You've adopted my name for the stuff. There let it rest."

After a long, sociable talk in the evening with Chief Neptune, Scott and Tuzzer rested, too, within a hut, with wafted odors of balsam in their nostrils. With balsam was mingled the scent of the wood smoke from the fire, where sea food had been roasted for supper.

Before they slept, Tuzzer whispered: "Say, you, Tarramuk! We can let 'em come on, that Kragg and Mawson gang—wot? We've licked 'em once, Chinese style o' fighting. Now we're well fixed to give 'em a taste of Injun, hey?"

"I've been thinking of the chances of their coming," owned Scott. "And I'm also thinking that they won't waste much time in trying to get ahead of you here. We may have some games of a kind that Chief Neptune hasn't thought of as yet."

Then the two went to sleep in much contentment.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIEUTENANT SACHEM.

IN the morning the two adventurers set about getting the lay of the land in order to forfend against what might be expected to happn. Once more Scott turned Tuzzer wrong side out on the subject of what the old man had dropped in the forecastle of the *Canaquin* in the process of his "testing."

Said the young man, after reflection:

"I think you did say full enough to 'em. If you had talked of anything else than whisky, the words might have dropped all harmless to the deck. But I'm taking it as everything you let out was whipped quick into an ear and stayed there. Whisky is their main concern. Whisky is the torch that sets 'em all aflame on these waters nowadays. And we'd best settle ourselves into the firm thought as 'ow Kragg and Mawson mean to come, because the whisky word sure went aft mighty sudden."

"'Twas bound to," admitted Tuzzer ruefully. "Twenty year old and to be 'ad for the grabbing. They'll be splitting it to make four bottles out o' one, and that's five years to a bottle. Ow, if 'twas buried gold they wouldn't be 'alf as 'ot on the chase."

"However, with our minds made up that they'll be coming, we can do our best to be ready for 'em. Then, if they don't come, so much the better."

The two were left to go about their concerns wholly untrammeled by espionage. They launched the canoe and paddled about in the cove. Its sheltered area, they perceived, was too shoal to permit the entry of any vessel except mosquito craft. From the tip of the stubby arm of the shielding headland, open water made the main cove unsafe

for an anchorage. Tuzzer had brought a lead line from his dunnage bag, his repository for a remarkable collection of salvagings. By means of the plummet they discovered that all was bold water directly offshore in the open part of the cove.

"No chance for them to set the mud-hook and take their time about the hunt," affirmed Scott with satisfaction. "They must find haven some place else. Where'll that be, Mr. Tuzzer? You must remember the island fairly well."

"It'll be three miles or so to the s'uth'ards. That's where the village is."

Scott looked up at the bulging hills that framed the cove. "If they tramp down here from over the high land they'll be making a noisy scramble of it, night or day. If they come by water in small boats it will be a long job and a hard shift to take so big a load away. So we need have little worry about not catching 'em at the work."

Later they went ashore.

On the far end of the beach, away from the Indian encampment, Tuzzer slyly indicated a stretch of hard sand. "It must be somewhere under this shell —about here. She was hove in from the sea by a no'theaster, because her course wasn't made good in the rip tide. Fog, o' course! Miscal'lated in weathering the 'igh head. It's only a no'theaster that piles the big seas in here."

HE walked across the beach, close to the fringe of stunted growth that marked the limits above high tide. He kicked his heel upon the hard sand.

"Your stone bank in Sydney ain't no syfer, Scotty! Blymme! It's tough to stand here over it, thinking it's ready money—and I can't stop from so thinking. Ow, hell! Why ain't it fixed so I can walk up to the cash wicket, as you might say, and draw like you can draw from your stone bank?"

"You know well why you can't! Why unload your folly on me?" reproved Scott.

Mr. Tuzzer's emotions were not under control now, when at last he stood above this tomb, where both treasure and hopes were buried. Under the exasperating conditions, hope did seem everlastingly interred.

He railed:

"Easy for you to scoff at me for my folly, with your whisky money safe in the bank! And my own whisky money 'ere, and not to be come at, all on account o' cussed law!" He jumped up and down on the sand, almost hysterical in his anger.

Scott endured considerately. It did seem hard lines for the old man.

"Look you, Ben Tuzzer," the partner broke in after a time, "this is not Yankeeland here. I know not so very much about the law concerning treasure findings. However, the goods below here are derelict, anyway. You're a fine and handy liar, and you might make up a good yarn of how you chanced to come across this stuff out here, when you were camping on your vacation. Then, by telling responsible parties over yonder in the Canadian province, they'd take on themselves the digging it up and the handling of it as rare good liquor, and a snug little sum they'd be paying you."

Mr. Tuzzer was not a bit uplifted by that suggestion.

"Blymed little more it would fetch me that way than in the old days. But over there," he pointed in the general direction of the States, "they're paying ten smacks a bottle, retail, for only beeloozylum—and that means just as bad as it sounds! No telling what I could get for——"

"Tuzzer, it's no use to try to do you a service by a sensible plan. It's plain that when you're mixed up with whisky, you turn into a scalawag, even like the gang on the *Canaquin*. A devil is buried here, and I was a fool to come along with you, meddling."

Scott strode away toward the canoe on the strand. Chasing after him, Tuzzer whined dolorously, trying to recant.

"I'll have naught to do with your concerns in that line," insisted the young man.

"Going to let them devils grab it off?"

"That's wholly another matter, Ben Tuzzer. I feel somewhat of a personal interest in it." He softened out his resentment, even to the extent of a broad

smile. "I'll not let the chance for a good fight pass me by when the fight is offered by parties who yet owe me somewhat to settle grudges betwixt and between."

"Well, you do talk sense part o' the time!"

"I feel," went on Scott, "as if your Chinese fighting made us something of sneaks in the way we left the *Canaquin*. Bluff is comic, to be sure, but banging is more satisfying when your knuckles are left itching. I was picked upon as somebody who could be made a fool, and the thought keeps with me and is a nettle."

"Glad of it."

"We'll let it all rest with both of us suited, each in his own mind. It shall rest till what is bound to happen does happen."

They pushed off the canoe and paddled up the cove to the encampment. The Indians were exercising with spears and with bows and arrows. Chief Neptune was directing and was easily the champion. Resting from the sport, he politely asked Scott what new thing about dogfish had been learned that morning out in the cove.

The blunt Scotchman was no longer minded to allow Tuzzer's lie to stand. Looking ahead to possibilities, he wished to be placed more securely on a basis of candor with Neptune.

"That little yarn was jolted out by my mate's jumpy nervousness, chief."

Neptune's smile was appreciative.

"I took it for what it was worth. I did have my doubts, however."

"Will you likewise take us at face value, as a couple o' sailors, paddling about these waters to see what we can see? That's about all there is to this vacation cruise." Scott was prudently hedging to that extent.

"Certainly, Mr. Scott."

"I try to be fairly honest, sir. A question may come up later—something a bit ticklish in our concerns. Having made this fair start in honesty, I hope you'll put faith in what I may have to tell you, in case of need."

"Have no fears," he was assured by Neptune.

THE chief walked away abruptly. A new circumstance was calling him to the shore. A small fishing smack was jockeying off the cove; two men were rowing toward the beach in a tender.

Neptune called to them:

"We're not in the market for fish. We catch our own."

"Ain't trying to sell you no fish," shouted one of the men in the boat. "We're coming ashore to see what kind o' capers you're cutting up."

Finally the chief announced: "We are not giving public performances, men. We want no visitors here."

"Pretty high-and-mighty stuff for an Injun, ain't it?"

"We'll have no argument about that. You are not to land, that's all! I suppose I have no right now to ask any favors from you, but if you'll report down in the village that we wish to be let alone, it may save your friends and others the trouble of coming up here."

"None o' your business what we report," was the sullen reply. "What we say won't be o' no help to you critters, you can bet on that!"

The men rowed back to the smack.

"I feel now as if Tuzzer and I are butting in where we have no business," declared Scott, walking down to meet the returning chief.

"That is not so—not at all. Consider it this way—that we adopted you out in the dangers of The Wolves! You were in a canoe, not in a fishing smack. If you go away we shall think you do not like our society."

"Then we stay—and more thanks to you, sir."

"In the case of those men, I didn't mean to be uncivil or unjust," explained Neptune. "But if stragglers come flocking here, it will be to mock our doings. My men are trying to get back into the spirit of the old days. Silly bystanders will spoil it all."

However, soon after the noon hour, it was made apparent that the word carried to the village by the fishermen had not been of a nature to keep away spectators.

Frothing around a headland to the south, came a speed boat with roar of

exhaust; the steersman could not hear hails and paid no attention to Neptune's gestures forbidding a landing. The craft came easing its way to the shore and shoved its prow up onto the smooth sand.

"We don't care to have visitors here," stated the chief, standing very erect under his imposing headdress.

A young man who had a yachting cap pulled arrogantly down above one eye did the talking for the party of young folks, men and maidens.

"Is that so? My uncle has all the say about this land around the cove." He leaped out upon the sand and offered his hand to a girl in the bow. "Come along, Tamlyn."

She pushed aside the hand and drew back. With distinct apprehensiveness, she surveyed the massing Indians uncertainly.

"Don't be afraid!" insisted the young man.

She looked at Neptune when she replied, finding courtesy in his demeanor, though he was grave.

"I'm afraid only of showing bad manners, Louis."

"What? To Indians?" He was insolent, looking over his shoulder at the chief.

The girl sat back upon the cushions.

"You should apologize. Come, push off the boat. I'm sure the rest of us have no wish to land."

Neptune stepped forward quickly.

"I thank you for being considerate, young lady," he said in his best manner, and the young man raised his eyebrows, hearing the little speech.

Neptune paid no heed to this gesture.

"I hope you'll not carry away wrong thoughts as to our own manners, young lady. Will you not step ashore with your friends and look about?"

She rose, then hesitated.

"It will be forcing our company on you, sir."

"No, I now invite you, with best hospitality, asking one little favor in return. Please tell others at the village, if you come from there, that we'd like to make this camp private." He added dryly: "I'm sure you can put the matter more thoughtfully and gracefully than did the fishermen by whom I sent such a word earlier in the day."

THE young man who headed the party turned his back on the boat and was scowling at Neptune.

"You're talking high and mighty, as if you own this beach."

The chief loftily disregarded the speaker. Again he addressed the girl.

"Perhaps I seem too much of a savage with these feathers. And so," he patted the shoulder of Scott, who was standing near, "I'll appoint my friend, as lieutenant sachem, to do the honors."

For some minutes Scott had been studying the girl, with admiring attention. He was conscious of an unaccustomed thrill when she looked into his eyes; she did so as soon as her notice was diverted to him by the chief.

Scott was also aware of another emotion of the moment. He had developed a cordial dislike of the young chap who was making himself so important. To dance attendance on a very handsome maiden and at the same time twitch the file rawly across the feelings of the hateful swaggerer were temptations which Scott made no effort to resist.

With alacrity he flung himself forward, his hands outstretched to assist her. He bumped against her other escort, who had stepped into the path.

"I'll attend to my own lady!"

"Heard you not my appointment from my chief who must be obeyed?" demanded Scott, resolved to throw himself fully into the part.

The two men swapped long stares and mutual hostility was born in that instant. It was frank and malefic exchange of challenge. Then, when the visitor attempted to shoulder Scott away from the boat, the chief's temporary chamberlain set clutch on the other and sent him far in a spinning effort to save himself from tumbling on his nose.

Scott leaped into the water beside the boat, stretching up his arms.

"You shall save a jump and the chance of wetting your feet."

She impulsively put out her hands, and he swept her into his arms and car-

ried her up onto the dry beach. He looked into her flushed face, where a frown struggled to blot out the smile that persisted.

"I ask you to forgive me if I was overhasty in my help; but it's my fault when I'm too anxious."

"I'll look more kindly on it if you'll perform the same service for my girl friends, sir. Otherwise, I'll be singled out for silly jokes."

He ran to do her bidding, making a lark of the affair, exciting great merriment. He stood three more girls in a row, bringing them, one by one.

"And there's Jimmy Borden!" declared the laughing lass, who had been his fourth fare.

One young fellow had been left in the boat. He was teetering at the rail, as if in doubt whether to jump or ease himself down to the sand.

Scott rushed to him, set a broad palm under his waist, and bore him far up on the beach, poised as easily as a waiter carries a tray. The chap whom the girl had called "Louis" stood in the tracks where he had recovered his balance; he surveyed with a scowl this display of manly muscle. When the group started along, he walked apart from his friends, who went up the beach escorted by Neptune and Scott.

Mr. Tuzzer was posted at one side, knuckling his hips and taking in the affair with infinite relish. His roll of beard and type of features proclaimed him as one white man, at any rate, in the assemblage. Such was the muttered comment of the angry chap who had been manhandled. He swung across to the old man and demanded hotly:

"What's the name of that fellow who is so stuck on himself?"

"That's Tarramuk, and the name means he's smarter 'n' blue blazes."

"Oh, what the deuce! He isn't an Indian!"

"It's 'ard to tell nowadays who's Injun and who ain't," returned Tuzzer serenely. "Even me—I'm some Injun!"

The chap surveyed the faces of some others who strolled on the beach and found sufficient evidence to confuse his judgment. He went away, protesting.

TUZZER followed the group of visitors and found an opportunity to accost the young fellow who had been carried ashore by Scott. Tuzzer got his chance by performing a service. The young man was trying to balance himself on one foot in order to shake sand out of a shoe. His manifest love of ease could not endure such discomfiture. Mr. Tuzzer propped him up, asking:

"Who's the lad who 'ad to be fended off?"

"He's Louis March." It was delivered with scornful impatience.

"Outside o' being all that, and mebbe more, who is he?"

"Why, he's Fletcher March's nephew. His uncle owns the big store in the village and about half the island. Where'd you come from not to know about the March family of Grand Tremont? Don't bother me any more."

"Ow! I've been locked up in a insane horspittle most of my life," confided Mr. Tuzzer amiably. "Don't 'ear much news o' the world there. I'm all right now, o' course!"

Tuzzer was obliged to hold firm clutch on the young fellow's sleeve to keep him from running away in a panic. The captor's sage reflection was that scaring a man was a fine method of breaking down reticence; the other would hurry to tell all he knew in order to escape quickly.

"I wouldn't 'urt you a mite for all the world—never 'urt nobody when I ain't crossed. Who's the awful pritty girl—that one he lugged ashore first?"

"Tamlyn Osborn. She's Fletcher March's stepdaughter. I suppose she's engaged to Louis. Anyway, Fletcher March wants it that way, so as to keep all the money in the family. Say, I don't like to be gossiping to a stranger in this fashion about the folks on Grand Tremont. I'm only a stranger here. I'm from the city. I was in school with Louis, and I'm having my vacation with him, and you ought to know better than to cause me to talk about my host." He tried to pull away his arm.

"I did know a whole lot afore I was took crazy. But ev'rything seemed to slip away from me, including etiket."

"And right here is where another thing

slips away!" The captive yanked his arm with all his strength. He broke the clutch and ran up the beach.

"Wull," mused Mr. Tuzzer, "as the pirut said when he chawed fast on his quid, 'tween the setting o' the black cap and the yanking o' the noose: 'I've myde the most o' my short time.' Only thing else I could have asked was whether the pritty girl is wysting any love on that imperdent rake hell. She's all too good for the likes o' 'im—and I'm minded as how Scotty has took a big tumble for her right now."

Ten minutes later, after much shrewd skirmish work on the flanks of the strolling party, Mr. Tuzzer declared definitely to himself that Mr. Argyll Scott was hard hit. "And if 'e wants her 'e's going to git her. If he's anyways too bashful to fix it up, after his fine bold start o' grabbing her in a hug at the send-off, I'll 'tend to the business for him, meself."

In a short time the visitors returned to their boat. Scott and the pretty girl were getting along bravely, Mr. Tuzzer noted. The young man seemed to require no admonitions from the elder in conducting affairs bravely. Attended by much hilarity, Scott carried the young women in his arms to the side of the craft, setting them carefully over the rail, one after the other.

As Mr. Tuzzer put it in his thoughts, the best plum of the cake was reserved for the final titbit. Scott bore to her place, last of all, the pretty girl, and she allowed her hand to rest in his when she thanked him and said good-by.

"Our village is not as interesting as this camp, Mister——"

When she hesitated, raising her brows a bit in query, Mr. Tuzzer shouted convincingly: "He's called Tarramuk, meaning he's smart and able, miss!"

The girl went on quickly, and Scott did not dare display protest at this introduction, because of the danger of interrupting her charming tones.

"If any chance takes you down to the village, Mr. Tarramuk, we'll return the courtesies."

"It will be hard staying away after that fine promise," he assured her, releasing her hand.

ROUGHLY young March ordered the Indians to push the prow of the boat. He started his engine and churned the propeller in a roiling of sand and water.

Scott, as the boat swept away, gave his full gaze to the face of the girl. Mr. Tuzzer studied the expression on the face of Louis March. At the first opportunity to speak privately, the old man said:

"Ow! What a pickle he's chewing on, by the look on his physiog!"

"Confound you, old flap chops, what meant you, giving that name to me?" Scott growled.

"It seemed to be my only way of tossing a compliment, in her hearing, that you are smart and able. The girl looked like she'd relish it to be sure o' that much about you."

"She'll think I'm one of these Indians."

"Yuz; and in that way think twice about you. And that's halfway in the winning of a lass. She wouldn't come up here to take a look at two sailors, would she? Nor go away and think of a tar-paw a second time. You're now in her mind, lad—in there, all romantic-like."

"You're a nibbling, nosing old rat, Ben Tuzzer, with too free a mouth. And you're talking now as if I had started to court the lass."

"You have!" declared Mr. Tuzzer firmly. "And I've never see'd faster work, from the time you grabbed her off the rail for a good hug!" Then he ducked from a mighty swing of Scott's palm.

After the old man had scampered for a few paces, he turned and said:

"Go on and be Injun, all romantic, and she'll fall in love with you and wet her handkerchief with tears because she can't be married to you. Then you can give her a rise high up to heaven with the news of what you true are—and you'll catch her in your arms when she comes down full o' glory—and the rest will be—well, the storybooks has printed it a million times."

He went up the beach with mincing steps, his arm curved out at his side; he crooked his neck and made pretense of looking down fondly into the invisible

countenance of an imaginary bride. He trolled a verse of the old "Roll Home" chantey:

"'Ow, the wide, deep sea for a sailor's life!
Haul home! *Roll* home!
But snug is a nest when he gits a wife.
Roll, roll home."

Scott snapped looks around on the beach in search of a rock. But the hard, smooth sand gave him no opportunity to get his hands on a missile.

CHAPTER IX.

MARCHING ORDERS.

ON the following day Tuzzer made a few wary attempts to bring up the subject of the pretty girl. When he disclosed to Scott what had been dug out of the frightened city chap, the listener scowled and commanded the informer to say no more on the subject.

"I'm only a rover and a no-account, Tuzzer. I permitted myself to frolic like a wild Scotchman for a few minutes yesterday, because fun is no harm for young folks, myself among 'em. But to-day I'm only a very sober Scotchman, which is the safest manner for the race. We'll let it all rest as it stands, and if she thinks I'm out o' her reckoning, as an Indian, so much the better is it."

Nevertheless, Mr. Tuzzer took credit to himself.

"I'm long-headed in fixing things for a jump either way. You say, let it rest! But I hope you ain't going to squat here and not go to the village. Putting girls all outside, as you told me to do, we ought to go and size up the harbor down there, because that's where rum pirates will hook mud for their stay."

"We'll go to the village. It's part of our business," agreed Scott, with a cheerfulness that did not escape the old man.

"I've been doing a lot o' projicking in me mind, night past," stated the other. "Long-headed I am, as I've said, and it was more'n a joke when I told 'em you was Tarramuk."

"Go you to hoot and cry, Tuzzer! I say it was only a joke that was rattling yesterday in your noddle."

"Wull, there was instink behind that joke, at any rate. That's the way my mind works for the good o' things. And by thought during the night I've been making the most of 'ow I'd left things ready for a jump."

"Jump, then, old owl of wisdom, before I push you off the perch."

"We're considering it settled as 'ow the rum pirates will come. As it stands now, no word will be gossiped ahead to 'em in the village that two men are here, easy to be spotted as Scott and Tuzzer. Kragg and Mawson won't know we're 'ere. Let's keep it up! Chief Neptune has spare feathers and beads, as we've seen. 'E's already proved 'imself a good chap for a joke. 'E'll lend us costumes, if we ask 'im."

The two were sitting on the grass in front of their hut. Scott, resting his chin in his palms, with his elbows propped on his knees, took thought on the suggestion. More than ever, that whimsical mood of his nature actuated him in this search for adventure. Tuzzer had truly paved the way, though the young man was giving his mate little credit for forethought.

The pretty girl was not for him, of course! Scott was definitely settled in that conviction, deriding any other hope as the height of folly. All right! He would go on with the masquerade for what fun there would be in it.

The other plotter had something to say in the way of a real clincher.

"And we've got to keep Mawson and Kragg fooled as much as we can, Scotty. I don't know about meself, with these whiskers under my chin, but I'm betting you could walk past 'em and never be twigged as your real self."

"They'd have to be nigh blind, then!"

"Anyway, it's giving 'em a slant on the wrong tack, lad. And there'll be no call for you to march up close and stick your face into their mugs. They'll be looking harder at feathers than faces."

"Leastwise, we can make it a part of the funny business," admitted the other. "And no great harm, if they do spot us for what we really are. Sooner or later, if they show up, they'll know we're here and on the job," he added significantly.

Scott led the way to the headquarters hut and made known his request to Chief Neptune. "It's in the way of a lark, sir, if you don't feel we'll be shaming the dress. But the young folks yesterday took us as belonging here, and we may as well make 'em think so in better earnest."

"It's a very good plan to make them keep on thinking we don't welcome palefaces in our camp," agreed Neptune, in high good humor. "I wish you had been wearing feathers and beads yesterday. You can do much toward settling doubts if you dress the parts when you go to the village." More gravely he said: "Visitors, gaping at us as if we were show people, will quite spoil what we are here to do."

He took pains in attiring the novices, even to the extent of staining Tuzzer's skin to make him less characteristically a white man.

"But *you'll* do as you are, Tarramuk," declared the chief, much amused when he spoke the name. "Go look in that calm pool left by the tide."

Scott turned from his survey of the new guise and grinned delightedly at Neptune.

"Aye! I'm quite all Indian, sir!"

"But speak little to any man. And if you meet a young lady be careful your smile is not too broad," added the chief knowingly. "Remember you're wearing a sagamore's dress, and even a secondary chief is much on his dignity in the presence of squaws."

"I'll mind the hint," promised Scott. "And I'm trusting the stain on my mate's face will keep his mug straight, though I wish it were plaster instead of stain, and that it had been caked very hard around his mouth."

"I'm not even answering you," mumbled Tuzzer. "That's how I'm starting in me practice to say not a word."

AFTER the noon meal they started their canoe down the beach, launched it, and went along the coast to the village, following the indentations of the shore line. They came at last to the mouth of a deep bay, at the head of which a straggling village was clustered on the hillside, behind wharves and fish houses of the water front. They passed smacks at anchor in the harbor. From each craft they were hailed mockingly. Usually the salutation was: "Hooh! Big Injun!"

Neither paddler took the slightest notice. They landed at a float and pulled their canoe upon the planking. Close at hand a man was dredging lobsters from a storage "car," with a net scoop. He was one of the fishers who had been rebuffed by Neptune.

"Be you the same redskin who shooed me out o' Osborn Cove yistiddy?" he demanded with some truculence.

Scott confined himself to a simple negative.

"Well, you're *one* o' them, anyway. What goes up there, the same goes here from your betters. We won't have your breed hanging round our village."

Scott made no reply. But to Tuzzer he said in low tones: "You'd better stay by the canoe, matey. That rab looks as if he'd like to try with his big boots to find how tough the canvas is."

"'Ere I st'y," grunted the old man. "And I note a fine 'andy cudgel on the flo't." He picked up the handle of an ash oar and took his seat on the gunwale of the canoe.

The imitation sagamore walked up the slatted runway, from float to wharf. The lobster dipper flung down his scoop and followed, not meddling with the armed and ominous guardian of the canoe.

Close by Scott, on the wharf the native declared:

"It ain't going to take me no time, Injun, to do a little war whooping in my own line. I'll call my gang, and we'll find out how long you can peerade around here after being ordered away."

The young man realized that any sort of retort would cheapen the situation. From his six feet of stature, topped by the towering headdress, he looked down on the stubby, bow-legged man and fairly stared him out of countenance in silence. He turned slowly and stalked away, chin high, his face set into a mask of impressive gravity.

The fisherman mumbled and shuffled after, keeping his distance, peering to

right and left to catch sight of men who might be induced to fall in with him and make up a posse to handle this brazen invader.

Scott had no notion of wandering aimlessly about the village. He went directly toward the March store, as one who had business to attend to.

No stranger in the place needed to ask to be directed to the March store. It loomed on a rise of land, a broad, two-story building, across the front of which was painted the legend: "F. March. Groceries and Fishermen's Supplies. Sails and Cordage."

Scott strode in at the open door, his beaded wampum bag in his hand. The spacious interior was cut up by many counters, on which goods of all varieties were heaped. Scott accosted one of the several clerks, a grizzled man, who was looking the customer up and down with frank curiosity. The visitor, sticking to his Indian rôle, was laconic:

"Tobacco!"

"Yes, chief! Nice tobac' for big Injun!" declared the clerk, with the air of a man who prided himself on knack in languages.

Scott had the comfortable feeling that he was passing muster better than he had hoped. Calmly he selected his brand from the canisters spread before him.

He took his own time, rather hoping that if he remained long enough in the store he might be able to get a look at Fletcher March. Scott was aware of some curiosity in regard with the head of the household of which Kathlyn Osborn was a member. She had spoken cordially of courtesies to be shown in return. However, if the uncle proved to be at all like the nephew, the prospects for a genial reception were not bright, the visitor was convinced.

THE nephew came into the store before Scott turned from the counter with his tobacco.

Louis March entered with a precipitateness that revealed a foreknowledge of Scott's presence in the place. March carried a tennis racket, manifestly called away from his game, and so greatly interested in the nature of the summons that he had not taken time or thought even to discard the racket. He did not speak to Scott, hurrying past the young man toward the rear of the store. The hostile stare he bored into Scott was sufficiently eloquent and needed no words.

Almost immediately the invader on enemy ground became fully informed as to the prompter of March's action. When Scott walked toward the broad doorway, he beheld the lobster man posted just outside in the sunshine, displaying a grin of triumph. Then overhead on the ceiling of the store, a gong clanged A call was relayed by the voices of clerks, one of whom had shouted from the rear of the emporium. The man who had served Scott hurried to overtake the customer

"Mr. Fletcher March wants you to step to his office. chief."

This was getting his secret wish quite handily, was Scott's thought, even though Louis March was plainly and ominously behind the summons. He turned and followed the clerk along the aisle.

Elevated in the center of the rear wall was the eagle's eerie, an office with glass windows to inclose it from the main store. At the foot of a flight of steps the clerk ducked to one side and allowed Scott to ascend alone. He stepped into the office and confronted Fletcher March. Scott did *not* receive courtesies, nor did he expect them, after one look at the island magnate.

March's bare upper lip was an index to his character. It was broad and bulging and looked as if it would give forth a metallic sound, if one rapped on it. When it had been clamped down after a declaration, nothing short of a steel pry could raise it for a change of decision, Scott was sure.

Louis March was roosting high on a bookkeeper's stool in the corner of the office. He still held to the tennis racket.

Without moving the upper lip, Fletcher March spoke the harsh demand: "Are you some sort of a chief of that tribe up in my cove?"

"No!" Scott grunted the negative, doing his best to keep in his rôle.

The uncle flashed a side glance at the nephew.

"Didn't you just tell me this fellow is one of the chiefs?"

"The big chief said he was."

The elder March gave closer scrutiny to Scott.

"There isn't much more Indian in you than there is in a lot of the Abnakis these days. It would be better for that half-breed gang of yours to make the most of the white blood that's in you. It might bring you up a few steps in the world and turn you into something more decent."

Out of his recent experiences with certain white men, so Scott felt with a touch of ire, he could argue the contrary with Fletcher March, but he remained prudently dumb.

"Who *is* your head chief up there?" rasped March.

"Niketah Neptune."

"Huh! I've heard of that fool. Trying to ram his people back into heathen ways after the government has spent a lot of money trying to educate them to be up-to-date workers and worth something. White men can't afford to drop their jobs for weeks and loaf around, trespassing where they're not wanted."

SCOTT folded his arms across his breast and stood very straight and said nothing.

"Use some of your white blood to get your tongue moving," commanded the autocrat. "You're trying to insult me, standing there like a damn cigar-sign Indian."

"Nothing to say. You say."

"All right! I *will* say! You go back and tell that Neptune to pack his gang off this island. I have *all* the say here. I'm the magistrate, understand?"

"We mind own business careful. Hurt nobody!" Scott was prompted to assert himself to that extent for the benefit of Neptune and his men.

"Oh, is that *so!*" snarled March. "Here's my nephew who says a damn sight different. You yourself laid hands on him yesterday, when he had landed in my cove with his party of guests. Your old bull moose of a chief insulted them by ordering them off. And, after all that performance, you have the infernal cheek to come strutting into this village—into my store—parading this play-actor rig, when you ought to be wearing blue overalls and earning a living by honest work." He waved his hand to dismiss the visitor. "That's all! Go tell Neptune my orders."

He swung around in the swivel chair between the arms of which his blocky figure was jammed; he busied himself with an account book.

Scott looked over the uncle's head into the sardonic grin of the nephew. Seldom in his life had the raging Scotchman felt such an impulse toward violence. He had taken a variety of wallops in his many experiences, but never before had he suffered the indignity of being treated otherwise than as a white man. He managed to control a quick prompting to grab away the account book, whack it over the uncle's head, and then smack that grinning face with it. At any rate, he could refuse to be an errand boy for the convenience of this arrogant old spike!

"No take word. Not my business! You have something to tell the chief, go say it to his face."

March whirled and glared over the upper edge of the book. "So you and your gang are looking for trouble, eh? Well, you'll get aplenty of it, all free and damnation hot, if you are not off this island in twenty-four hours."

Scott controlled an impulse to tell March where the latter might go if he wanted to get his supply of heat without paying for it. Playing Indian had its disadvantages, when one was swelling with appropriate language acquired in a fo'c's'le!

Scott turned slowly and walked out, his resolution to stay on Grand Tremont now thoroughly clinched. The probable descent of Mawson and Kragg was enough for an anchor. But now that Fletcher March had stirred all the hot resentment in Scott's nature, both bowers were down and firmly hooked.

As soon as he got outside, the young man determined to make a display of his rebelliousness. To go directly to his canoe would appear like flight. Therefore, he glared defiance at the lingering

lobster man and began a leisurely and dignified promenade about the village.

CHAPTER X.

TROUBLE IN TOWN.

EVEN as there had been no doubt at all regarding the headquarters of Grand Tremont's autocrat, so there was little question about his home. Aloof from the small cottages, a mansion, with portico and gambrel roof, crowned an eminence; there were gardens and grounds of some pretensions to elegance, and a tennis court, the only one to be seen, suggested to Scott the sport arena from which young March had undoubtedly been called by the lobster man.

On the court were players, and from some distance Scott recognized Tamlyn Osborn. He halted at a respectful distance and watched her at play.

When he had lifted her in his arms the day before, he had discovered that she was no mere fluff ball of a lass, lax in muscle and soft from idleness. On the court she was revealing real prowess as an athlete, playing alone against two opponents. She was wholly intent on the game, but one of two girls, who were sitting in wicker chairs under a lawn umbrella, called to her, and she turned quickly and peered under her palm at the stalwart figure of the distant observer. She waved her racket in greeting and came running down across the sward.

He walked to meet her, after he had stepped over the low stone wall that bordered the estate.

She stopped suddenly, displayed a bit of confusion, and stammered what was half apology, half explanation:

"I thought you were Chief Neptune."

"And do you mean that, if you'd known it was only the understrapper, you would have come slower, or would not have come at all?" queried Scott, smiling in appeal.

"Oh, I owe you a debt for much kindness, sir, and perhaps it was right for me to come racing to thank you, after all."

Then she looked him up and down with interest.

"You are much more imposing to-day, Sir Chief. Yesterday I had some doubts of your being an Indian, even though the old man called out your name."

Scott had no reply ready. He felt equally loath to lie or to confess to the girl at that juncture.

"I think now," she declared, breaking the silence, "you are really an Indian. You keep from chattering nonsense. I like that in you."

Giving him all sorts of fine opportunities, she was! In a jolly way, not a bit serious, of course, and yet not too forward in her jesting, not hinting by manner nor tone that she was taking advantage of an inferior. But Scott dared not seize upon this chance to return something in the way of gay retort. Indians were not supposed to do much joking, he reflected, and, if she did think he was truly a redskin, she would probably be highly offended if he presumed to pass compliments in the manner of a white man.

When she looked from him to the group at the tennis court, showing a bit of hesitation, he spoke out frankly:

"I feel I ought to tell you I've just had a meeting with Mr. Fletcher March. We didn't get on together at all well, Miss Osborn."

"Mr. Fletcher March had something to say last evening about our Indian visitors, after receiving a report from Mr. Louis March."

"I can guess what was said, and I'd better move along."

"I'm not a bit afraid of Mr. Fletcher March," she protested.

By the way she persisted in stressing the handle on Fletcher March's name, he made a shrewd guess at certain sentiments entertained by this stepdaughter.

"But it looks like he has put the trouble tag onto me," Scott declared. "Little taste have I, miss, for passing the tag on to you, making it unpleasant in the family because I've been hankering to have another peep at you. There! It's out, in spite of my meaning never to speak it. But you'll forgive it, maybe?"

"Oh, I know you intended it for a compliment, sir, and I'll accept the intent," she said demurely. "But remem-

ber what I said a few moments ago about my dislike for nonsense."

He was very bold out of impulse.

"But you said you liked something in me."

"Common sense!" she retorted tartly. "If you really have it, as I supposed at first."

She took advantage of his embarrassed silence and moved away.

"I'm honestly tempted to do my best to make up for Mr. Fletcher March's lack of good manners, just as I did in the case of Mr. Louis March yesterday. But it would only mean more trouble for all concerned and no possible benefit to anybody would come from it." She halted at a little distance and said, with a formal coldness that rebuked her previous unconventional manner: "I thank you again, sir, for your courtesy when we visited your camp. I'm sorry circumstances here will not let me keep my promise to be equally polite at my home village. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" faltered Scott.

IT was the end—the inevitable conclusion of the little drama, of course. The affair was narrowly missing the peril of romance in his case, for he was hard hit the moment he held her in his arms the day before. But what could he, equally humble as sailor or putative Indian, expect for return from this heiress and beauty?

He was, he knew, a fool to think otherwise—even as babbling Tuzzer had been idiotic in his talk about the possibilities of interesting this girl.

At this juncture Jimmy Borden unwittingly relieved the situation by turning the thoughts of the embarrassed pair from all consideration of mutual courtesies; from all pondering on mere mental abstractions, for that matter. He introduced something of an alarming nature, of purely physical portent. Borden came trotting up from the direction of the wharves, a fishing pole over his shoulder.

"I say, Indian," he called. "What's your name? I've forgotten it. You'd better clip it away from here, over the hills."

Tamlyn quickly retraced her steps, looking from Borden to the water front, where men were massing near the head of the wharf, at which the public landing was located.

"What's going on down there, Jimmy?" Her demand was sharp; her demeanor determined.

"A gang is getting ready to tackle this Indian when he goes back to his canoe. They say they're going to put more feathers on him and give him a ride on an oar. Such rough-and-tumble actions make me cringe."

Without a moment's halt for thought, she ran past Scott, her tennis skirts not hampering her haste.

"You stay where you are, sir, until I attend to this business."

He called after her, striding in pursuit, speaking sharply in his own turn.

"It's not a matter for you to be mixing in, Miss Osborn."

She stopped and faced about, self-willed, indignant, imperious.

"This is my home village, and fools are setting about to disgrace it. If you go rushing down to that wharf ahead of me, you'll be helping to start a disgraceful brawl—you'll be merely another of the fools."

"But I'm not letting a girl lift what belongs on my own shoulders."

"I'm lifting nothing, sir, which belongs to you as a man. It's my own affair, keeping my home place decent. I'm only asking you to help."

He kept on toward her.

She flamed into furious authority, looking up into his face.

"You're an intruder in my village. I command you to do as I say."

Mere appeal would not have swayed him, he knew. Just as keenly he felt that disobedience in this climax of their affairs would put him beyond the pale of her forgiveness for all time. Her pride was in arms. Her determination to handle this matter was asserting itself inflexibly.

He said, meekly deferring to her:

"I'll not put a foot ahead of you, Miss Osborn. I'll mind your word, even though you're asking me to play the coward."

"And that's asking much, I realize," she returned, complimenting his brawn by her quick appraisal. "Your obedience is now making the case very important to me."

She went on toward the wharf at her best pace. He sauntered slowly along her path, sizing up the situation as best he was able. Six or eight men were in the party that had been characterized by Borden as hostile. At a little distance from them lounged Louis March, his nonchalant attitude stressed by the manner in which he nested his head against the web of the tennis racket that was carelessly propped behind his neck by both hands.

Tamlyn ignored the massed men; she hurried directly to Louis and spoke out, with no attempt to guard her tones:

"Order these men to go about their business."

"I have no right to give them orders, Tamlyn," he drawled. "They aren't hired help of mine."

"I'll have no silly excuses of that kind from you, Louis! You know very well they'll pay heed to any word from you. Unless you speak out, I'll accept it as settled that you're behind what they intend to do."

"You're better posted than I am on what they have in their minds. Where do you get your information?"

"You know very well where I got it. Moreover, I saw you shaking your fist at Jimmy Borden when he was talking with me."

"Oh, he's like most city men—scared by the prospect of a little fun. I refuse to meddle in what's none of my affair."

She turned from him and went to the men.

"Is it true, what I hear, that you mean to lay hands on a visitor in this village?"

The vindictive lobster man spoke for the others.

"That Injun threatened to knock me in the head if I tried to step foot on shore up in Osborn Cove. He caught me alone to-day, down on my lobster car, and he handed me a belt in the jaw. And I hadn't said a word to him!"

"I don't believe any such story," she declared hotly.

SHE intercepted the look the man directed past her to March; it was revelatory, that look! In it was the satisfied triumph of one who had promised and was keeping his word. She snapped about in time to catch March's grin and significant wink.

But Louis quickly straightened his face and declared to her:

"That low-bred Indian swaggered into Uncle Fletcher's office right afterward and insulted him. You're simply making a spectacle of yourself, Tamlyn, rushing down here in this way, interfering in men's affairs. You run back to the house, or I'll step into the store and report you to my uncle."

Scott, moving at a slow pace, had come close to the girl.

"Please remember what I said about the trouble tag, Miss Osborn." His speech was hurried and low. "I won't allow you to stand for any more of this. I can't and won't be such a coward. It's my nature to speak out, and if you turn and hate me forever for breaking your orders, I must take it as part of the punishment due me." Stepping aside to pass her, he said earnestly: "I hope you'll do as he advised, even though he tacked on a mean threat."

Face to face, with the lobster man Scott said: "Man, I gave you no touch of my hand and you know it. But, if you must have an excuse for a rough-and-tumble, come far enough away, where a lady cannot see nor hear, and I'll tell you what you are, liar and else, till you do have your full excuse."

"Huh! I'll take no chances on being everlastingly hooted for letting a low-down Injun lick me. And on this island we take no orders from Injuns, either. You're going to be handled by us, like we've made up our own minds how to handle you."

Again the resolute girl tried to put herself into the affair, stepping between Scott and the men. Louis hurried down the slope, expostulating, developing fury as he talked.

"You're shaming our family—disgracing yourself in public. You're a silly fool!"

Scott flung himself at the railer, poised

open hands, but held himself in check in that pose, before clutch or blow.

"Warning take! I come of a race that the devil drives with whip and spur when we can hold tether of temper no longer." In the stress of his emotions he was speaking of his traits as a wild Scotchman, forgetting his incognito.

March, with an enlisted band to back him, ventured to sneer:

"Indians are not what they used to be." He clutched his tennis racket, ready to use it as a club. "These boys are going to show you something, and after what you did to me yesterday, laying your dirty paws on me, you may as well know I told 'em what to show you."

Scott had previously leashed himself at the girl's behest. Like most men who realize how unstable their natures are, he had trained himself to jest in crises, in order to keep out of the clutch of blind fury. But in this maddening situation he found no opportunity for humor. He glanced over his shoulder and perceived that the gang had unmasked ammunition for his shame—a pillow tick of feathers, a pail full of steaming tar, and a sweep from a launch.

HE took no more thought as to the presence of the girl, except for a resolve not to be humiliated beyond his endurance before her eyes. He let himself go recklessly to the full extent of a rage that was mania for the moment. With open hand he flailed flat young March, then swung him up by the ankles and drove at the group of men, revolving on his heels and whirling his human weapon in a wide circle.

They fled from the path in order that their patron might not meet with harm by colliding with an obstructing body. Scott kicked over the pail of tar and dragged March through the smoking flood poured on the ground. Leaving March in the mess, the single-handed combatant picked up the big sweep and backed down the wharf. The men cursed and threw stones at him, but they had not the hardihood to come within reach of the great oar.

At the head of the float's gangway he stopped for a moment, gazing at Tamlyn, who had held her ground as an observer. He knew that she was returning his survey, but he could not mark the expression on her face. Nor did he have any regret because he could not see it. The expression was undoubtedly a mingling of scorn, disgust, and hatred, after this treatment of one who had been advertised by Borden to Tuzzer as her future husband.

However, Scott took a good look at her, in the complete conviction that this was a farewell forever. Truly, she was a pretty girl, and she had put in his mind thoughts such as no other girl had ever put there before.

He hurled the sweep back at the men with a mighty heave, and they went crowding out of range, dodging to right and left. Falling and bounding, it narrowly missed March, who was sluggishly crawling from the sticky mess of tar, his flannel trousers plastered with it.

Mr. Tuzzer was sitting on the gunwale of the canoe, his weapon of a broken oar upended. "All serene as a tinned sardine, down here," he reported when Scott ran down the gangway. "Thought I just heard some kind of a hollering and ruction up on the wharf. Giving you a sociable send-off, eh?"

"Aye! And they wanted to do more for me, but I wouldn't have it. Lend a hand. Get the canoe overboard."

A big rock bounced on the float and indorsed Scott's urgency. More rocks splashed about in the water, while they were paddling with vigor out of range.

"Nowise stingy with their bokays, so says I," avouched the old man. "You must 'a' run acrost some lad who spotted you as Mister Argyll Scott, the well-known hero."

"Ye've used steam enough for your babble, old man. Put the rest into the power of your paddle. I'm not in the spirit, at this time, to listen nor to talk."

FOR a mile or so they paddled sturdily and in silence. Then Scott heard the pur of a speed launch's exhaust and looked over his shoulder. It was not the craft in which Louis March had brought his party to the cove. Scott's sailor's eye noted that much at first

glance. This pursuing boat was smaller and nimbler. It swept abreast the canoe, passed, spun about in a smother of foam, and came alongside, drifting by its momentum after the clutch was thrown out.

The navigator, sole occupant, was Tamlyn Osborn. She wore no hat, her short curls were wind-waved, her features, resolutely set, revealed that she had come upon an especial mission and was very sure of herself in that business.

She leveled self-possessed eyes at Scott when he laid hands on the rail of her launch and checked its slow motion.

"I have followed you for two reasons, Mr. Tarramuk. I'll mention the first and have it off my mind. You were insulted in our village when you came there, practically on my invitation."

"I'm making a small matter of what happened, Miss Osborn."

"Probably! That's the man's view. Mine is the woman's view. Politeness and fair treatment of others are rules to be considered first in all affairs. If that plan were followed generally there wouldn't be so much trouble in the world."

He bowed. Once more he had decided that it was unsafe to let himself go in too much speech with her. His talk in the village had been unfortunate.

"I apologize to you for the actions of certain men. If you had handled them even more roughly, I would have been pleased."

His heart gave a queer little kick of joy; evidently one Louis March was far from being the white-haired lad in her case.

Mr. Tuzzer was looking at the sea, turning his face from the couple. He was getting a hint of how Scott had performed on shore, and ineffable satisfaction settled on the old man's features.

"Now, with regard to my more important errand, having disposed of the matter of mere politeness," she said, with a hint of acid reproof for his blunted sensibility in that line. "Mr. Louis March, of course, reported promptly to Mr. Fletcher March."

She put emphasis significantly on the formal "Misters." Scott was again gathering satisfied convictions from her tone.

She went on briskly:

"Mr. Louis March exhibited his decorations to Mr. Fletcher March. And Mr. Fletcher March is furious. I heard some of his threats, because he is taking the whole village into his confidence by the way he has been shouting. He is now waiting for one of his fishing smacks to come in, with the day's catch, so he may secure some of the men who serve him as island constables. Mr. March, so I warn you, will be coming to Osborn Cove. He is the only magistrate on the island. He means to arrest you for what you did to his nephew. I suppose, considering the nature you showed me a little while ago, this means another fight. Will your Indians be backing you up, in making a battle of it, to the further shame of Grand Tremont?"

"I'll not allow the Indians to be mixed in, Miss Osborn. I take full responsibility on myself."

"With me to help you, of course," declared Tuzzer, over his shoulder, not turning to look at the others.

"So Mr. Fletcher March declares that all the Indians must leave this island before night. He intends to hurry to Osborn Cove and enforce the command. If you all go away he may let you off with the others," she suggested.

Scott declared himself with sharp decision on that point.

"Such trouble shall not fall on Chief Neptune and his men through me, Miss Osborn. I'll take what may be coming to me. The others are not concerned."

"You'll not get justice from Mr. March," she warned. "He has no right, of course, to sit as a magistrate in his nephew's affair, but Mr. March always suits himself as to rights. And he means to send the Indians away, no matter what he may do in your case."

"I don't know how Chief Neptune may act on his own account," Scott returned, adding doggedly, "but I shall give myself over to March and run my chances. I'll be hurrying to the chief to tell him all." He released his hold on the gunwale of the launch and picked up his paddle.

"I wish you'd tell the chief something more, as coming from me," Tamlyn requested earnestly. "Osborn Cove gets its name from my family. My father was John Osborn. My mother, after she was widowed, married Mr. March. My mother is dead, and Mr. March administers the Osborn estate." She allowed herself to say with bitterness: "I cannot express to strangers my opinion of his administration. But you can draw your own conclusions from what I do tell you. Say to Chief Neptune that the land about the cove is mine—my inheritance from the Osborns. He is to tell Mr. Fletcher March that I have given full permission to have the Indians camp there as long as they like. No matter what the administrator may have to say about the law that backs his acts, the word of the owner should go far in helping the chief in any stand he may take, if he wishes to stay for a time."

From the drifting canoe Scott said, after a moment for thought: "I don't presume to speak for Chief Neptune, Miss Osborn. No doubt he'll be grateful for the word you send. But I'll do my bit in advising him to say naught to Fletcher March about that word."

He met her indignant gaze with equanimity.

"Will you not remind yourself of what I said about how I would not be a trouble tag? Nor will I be, nor will I allow the chief to be, if I can help it. We'd better keep it all, man to man."

"Meaning to be very chivalrous, eh?"

"I know somewhat of the meaning of chivalry," he replied calmly. "In this case, we men up in the cove will do well to keep a young lady out of all trouble."

"Too proud to hide behind a girl's skirts—that's what you mean," she declared, with heat.

"I did not say it, Miss Osborn. I'm not apt in anything I *say* to you, it seems. But in whatever I *do*, I'll keep all on my own shoulders, where trouble sits easy, after all the load of it I've carried in my life."

"I am not afraid of Mr. Fletcher March," she insisted.

"So I remember, holding in mind everything from your lips. But, if there's gunpowder in your house, I'll not be the one who'll set match to it."

"I suppose I should consider yours a very high and noble stand, and I may be able to put a better value on your nature when I'm not so angry," she retorted with petulance. "I ought to go on and take my own word to Chief Neptune. But I'd have to listen to more Indian heroics, I'm afraid. Do as you like!" was her tart final suggestion. "You'll do so, anyway!"

She threw in the clutch of her motor and sped away.

Tuzzer obeyed a curt command from Scott, and the two paddled on toward their destination.

After a long silence the old man asked: "May I be allowed to make a remark on 'ow fast something grows in a girl's mind, after she has made the roots good and hot, by gitting mad at a feller for something she knows he was right in doing?"

"If you waste breath that way, I'll dust your head with the blade of my paddle. Dip fast, otherwise old March will catch us before I've squared things with Neptune."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LORD OF TREMONT.

IN Scott's prejudiced opinion, Fletcher March was merely putting another touch on his insolent attitude when he came in the afternoon and brought only two helpers to cope with a tribe of Indians. Both men wore conspicuous badges, though they were in fishermen's clothes. One of them acted as the engineer of the speed launch in which Louis March had made his visit to the cove.

Chief Neptune did not walk down to the strand to greet or to rebuff this latest party. He sat on the tussock in front of his hillside camp and waited. March strode up across the beach; his attendants followed, as soon as they had secured the launch by dragging its anchor up onto the sand. Scott, with some others, was sitting on the ground below and near the chief. The young man still wore his sagamore's regalia.

March disregarded Scott entirely, speaking directly to Neptune, without the

preface of a title or the courtesy of a greeting.

"I'm ordering you off my land. Grab your stuff and be quick about it."

Neptune's impassive countenance did not give a hint of any knowledge that March was claiming as his, this land which he did not own. The chief had required no appeal from Scott in the matter of keeping the name of the girl out of the affair. He had informed Scott that he had his own rights and needed no permission from anybody.

What those claimed rights were, and of which Scott had not been informed, were now disclosed.

Neptune was holding on his knees an ancient bag of black leather, on which was worked the totem of the Abnakis. Out of the bag he drew documents stained with time and handling.

"These are the old treaties, signed by sachems and agents of the English crown."

"Are you trying to tell me that a lot of moss-covered treaties have anything to do with conditions in these days?"

"I well know that white men choose to disregard treaties, denying rights to Indians," returned Neptune coldly. "However, the Indians do choose to hold them sacred. The blame of breaking faith does not lie on the Indians. Probably you don't know what rights are reserved by my tribe in these treaties."

"No, and I don't give a damn! Ownership and the law behind my ownership give me full say as to this land. I tell you again—get off!"

"You shall be told by me what is in our treaties. The writing is dim, and a man with angry eyes will not be able to see clearly. I say, you shall listen!" His tones bore down March's scornful protests.

"I must listen, eh? Well, while I'm listening, the time won't be wasted. Here, you!" He turned on his constables. "Pitch into your job of tearing down these huts."

"Mr. March, you are three against many," said the chief with significance.

"Threatening assault, eh? One point extra for the court. Trespass and now threats. I ought to have brought two more men, but I didn't think I'd be called on to lick the whole tribe."

March satisfied himself with that sarcasm and waved his subordinates back to heel. "What are your out-of-date rights, as you claim them, my man?"

"We hold, granted to us forever by treaty, the right to make provision for ourselves according to tribal custom. To hunt, fish and trap at all seasons. To go upon land, anywhere, for basket material, wood for needs of shelter, cooking, warmth and for bows and arrows, and the right to camp. In particular, we hold the right to go upon islands for our pilgrimage to the sea in summer."

March flapped his hand, loftily dismissing such rights.

Neptune went on, as placidly as before: "Our treaty right to hunt and trap in seasons now closed by white men's laws, we have given up by our own will, because such laws are wise and save game; and we get our food and our clothing more handily in these days. But the right to go about here and there and make camps, doing no harm to property, that right we have not given up. We are on this island by that right, and here we stay until we have finished."

"Quite a speech, professor!" sneered the autocrat of Tremont. "Right in line with what I have heard about you. But I don't intend to get the name of being backed down on my own island by a pack of Indians, led by a crank. If you don't scatter away from here, I'll be back, bringing plenty of trouble for you."

"I am not passing to and fro, threat for threat, in white-bully style," replied Neptune, rising and towering over the paunchy magnate. "But, if you come back here with more men to deal blows, the blows will not be taken with a laugh. There will be scandal. There will be something for the Province courts on the mainland. And we shall see what will be said by honest people about a brutal attack on peaceable Indians who can show their treaties. There's still a sense of justice in honest white folks."

He noted the grimace which signaled March's sour and saner second thought.

Neptune put away stilted speech. He smiled and said, with human directness:

"You see, Mister March, I have called your bluff."

The other was rancorously admitting as much to himself. To spread the story of a questionable encounter under the critical nose of a Province judge was not in the island lord's calculations. He had no relish for the searching stare of triumph from the chief, and he shifted his eyes to another object. This was legitimate quarry for the law—Tarramuk the trouble maker, the invader of the village, the assailant.

MARCH perked up the crest which had been ruffled and flattened by Neptune. The magistrate stepped close to Scott and wagged a forefinger under his nose.

"You're arrested for assault and battery, brawling and rioting. Have *you* any treaty," he sneered, "giving you privileges of that kind?"

"I haven't looked carefully through the black bag, but I think there's none," Scott admitted. Purposely he made manner and caustic tone an affront.

March squinted evilly at Neptune.

"Are you and your men going to start trouble if I take this man out of your camp?"

The chief did not reply, and his stony visage revealed none of his sentiments.

"Go ahead!" railed March. "Start something! And I'll have you and your whole gang in the Province court for aiding and abetting, for harboring and protecting a criminal, and——"

Scott leaped to his feet and swept a checking gesture in front of March's face.

"There's been enough of stump speaking. My doings in your village were my own doings, and I stand responsible. That is all understood between me and Chief Neptune."

"Only after much argument," the chief put in. "I say now to you, Mr. March, what I have said to Tarramuk: I believe he did exactly the right thing in your village. I stood ready to use all our power here to protect him from you. There'll be no justice in what you intend to do in his case. But he will not allow me to help him, and I am doing out of friendship for him what I would never do from any fear of you. I am leaving him to act as he chooses."

"And so I choose to be arrested. I'll go the way you point your finger. What need have you to prance about and bellow so much?"

This time surrender had the effect of leaving March sprawling, as if he had pushed with all his strength against an unlatched door. In his rage he had sense enough to know he was cutting a ridiculous figure. His two constables put their palms to their mouths to hide grins, when he turned on them to give commands.

Mr. Tuzzer added a final touch of hateful comedy. He went cringing to March and stuck out crossed wrists.

"Put on the twisters. I'm savage, but I know better 'n' to stand out against a high-muck-a-muck like you be!"

"You don't belong in this. I never saw you before," declared March.

"If you go back without me, they'll be asking where is the man who mowed 'em down on the wharf."

"He was with me in the fracas," reported Scott, obeying certain previous and profane commands from Mr. Tuzzer. "If now he is willing to go along quietly, Mr. March, you're lucky to be having no trouble with a dangerous man."

March tried to wither the two with blistering stares. "Damn you—both of you—you're trying to make fun of me!"

"Don't add that onto the other complaints against us," pleaded Tuzzer. "We might be hung for it!"

MARCH flung himself away from the unendurable situation and tramped toward his boat. "Bring those prisoners along," he commanded.

"You'll be called on to use none of your muscle, men," Scott amiably informed the constables.

He plucked the headdress from Tuzzer's brows and lifted off his own adornment, giving the articles into the hands of the chief. "So we'll not be shaming the tribe, Chief Neptune!"

"But you shall not put off the rest of the dress," insisted the chief, when Scott started to remove the beaded jacket.

The constables had retreated, having no stomach for making any show of com-

pulsion under the eyes of the amused, Indians who had massed to view the proceedings.

"These headdresses may be a bother to you," Neptune admitted, muting his tones. "But you'd better keep on with the pretense of being Indians, so far as you're able. At any rate, you'll be confusing March. You are anxious to remain on this island for a time, so you said just before he came after you."

"I can't tell you all the reasons right now, Chief Neptune, but Tuzzer and I have great need to stay here."

"In handling you as white men he must watch out for the law, and the law, as I have learned in past time, obliges him, as a magistrate, to bind over offenders for trial on the mainland. In the case of mere Indians, he may take a notion to twist the law to suit his particular grudge in your case. Therefore, he may hold you on the island."

"Accommodating me in handsome style and earning my thanks," declared Scott, grinning.

The chief carried the regalia to his hut and came out with two fillets, each provided with a single feather from a hawk.

Scott's adventures had kept him long from a barber; in Sydney he had not bothered to have his hair trimmed. He had a thatch suited to an aborigine, and the fillet gave an admirable touch. On his part, Sailor Tuzzer had plenty of hair.

In the bland weather of summer they did not require caps and left them with their other possessions in the care of Neptune. He promised to guard their canoe.

In parting from them, Neptune frankly owned to Scott that the latter's previous suggestions, as to how the situation should be treated, had now proved to be much wiser than the chief's first indignant resolve to protect the guests from arrest.

"He thought he could frighten us, and that we'd all run away. But he has only made himself seem foolish and wished he could drop the business before he gets in a worse mess by holding you as prisoners. No; he'll not relish sending you to the mainland for a trial. Too much truth will be brought out about that mob, egged on by his nephew." Neptune surveyed the distant magnate judicially. "Unless you hurry," he suggested with a bit of a chuckle, "he may run away without such troublesome captives."

"Then we'll be making a scamper of it," said Tuzzer, and he set away for the boat, running at top speed, Scott close behind.

When they slid along the hard sand, digging their heels down to halt their rush, March gave them a wicked look. "You two are already in bad enough for what was done to my nephew. But as for making a monkey of me by your cheap fun—well, you'll pay high for it."

"We're only showing how scairt we be when you give off orders, and you call it making fun," complained Tuzzer. "You're sure hard to suit, Mr. March."

"You're sham Indians, making me more ridiculous," blustered March. "What is your game?"

"If you can prove we ain't Injuns," taunted the old man, "you can prob'ly find some law you can use on us for claiming to be what we ain't."

A side glance informed the magnate that the constables were at some distance, coming slowly. "Look here, you two renegades, Indians or not, my word is law on this island. I have plenty of grounds on which to punish you, but I'm willing to be rid of such rubbish, if you'll take to your heels and escape up into yonder woods. Off with you!"

However, Scott and Tuzzer set clutch on the gunwale and vaulted into the launch.

Scott, grimly silent, was allowing Tuzzer full swing as the sardonic spokesman.

Protested the old man:

"Trying to make us do a real crime! Telling us to run away from justice! It's a trick, so as to complain later and get us hung by the neck. Mebbe to send a gang to shoot us as being at large and dangerous—eh? We're too foxy to be gulled that way, Lord o' Tremont!"

March climbed with difficulty into the boat and thudded himself down upon the cushions in the stern sheets. He growled:

"You two are hankering for the hot end of this thing, and, by the blue gods, you'll get it!"

Tuzzer bestowed beaming gratitude.

"Thankee for the kind promise, however 'tis meant."

The constables arrived and pushed off the craft. Before the roar of the exhaust started and shut off all remarks, Mr. Tuzzer vouchsafed:

"I myke it a rule to be cheerful and forgive my enemies. Even as a prisoner I mean to stay perked up."

March was quite willing to keep on blustering at a nobody.

"I have a way of finding out whether Scotland Yard wants you, my man! You're a cockney Englishman."

"Ow, no! If I slip into the slant o' the accent, it's because I was once a smoke-shop sign for a Cheapside tobacco seller."

Then the motor started.

CHAPTER XII.

A JOB AHEAD.

ON the wharf, so Scott judged, most of the population of the village had assembled, awaiting the return of March. From the float the parade proceeded in proper order. Ahead was March, tramping pompously, now determined to make the best of a show of power and authority. Next after him came the prisoners, meek in surrender. The two constables brought up the rear.

The men of the village formed double ranks for the passage of the arrivals and jeered loudly. Scott saw Tamlyn Osborn with her friends. They were grouped in front of the big store. Louis March was with them.

"First of all, I reckon, it'll be the calaboose—with a parson talking through the bars to tell us how the ways of the wicked lead to the noose," confided Tuzzer to his companion.

However, so it was immediately made plain, Magistrate March had quick methods of his own in adjudging criminals. He led the way to the porch of his store, mounted the steps, and faced about. The prisoners halted on the ground near the edge of the platform. The throng hemmed them.

"The trial will be held here and now," declared March. "You prisoners, do you wish to have the charges against you stated?"

"You do the talking, matey," commanded Scott in an undertone. "You seem able to rasp him best."

Accordingly, Mr. Tuzzer piped up:

"We know what was done here. Our feelings is tender, Mister Jedge, and they'd be hurt by having the whole thing gone over with again, out in hearing of all."

"Do you plead guilty to the charge of assault and riot?"

"Yus!"

"You big fellow, there! Haven't you a tongue?" demanded March, with ire roused by a silence which seemed like calculated insult.

"Injuns ain't 'andy with talk, Mister Jedge," apologized Tuzzer. "I've got more or less white blood, and it makes me gabby."

"I can bind you two men over for trial in the mainland. That will mean you must be taken there at once and put in jail."

"It's putting you to a lot o' trouble, and we'll hate to bother you, Mister Jedge. Seems like a trial over there will spill beans that better be cooked and et right here on Tremont."

March winced in spite of himself. He knew perfectly well how much scandal for the island would be involved.

"But suit yourself, sir," allowed Tuzzer humbly. "We'll go all quiet, hoping to do what we can for ourselves by telling the truth about what happened here."

March went on, after a moment's hesitation:

"We have a form of island justice which most of our offenders agree to. I sentence such men to hard work for no pay; thirty days or more, as I see fit. I'll give you your choice. Stay here and work, or be penned in a jail on the mainland."

"We're outdoor fellers, with no taste for the jug, and working here will suit us best."

"Very well. I sentence you to thirty days of work—such work as you can do best—fishing from one of the smacks. Smack fishing will permit you to report in harbor every twenty-four hours." He

signaled to the constables. "Take these men to my smack."

"We work thirty days for *you*, is that it?" asked Mr. Tuzzer blandly.

"You work because you have broken the law. The work happens to be on my smack, because I operate all the fishing boats from the port."

It was surly glossing of the peculiar situation, spoken more for the effect on the island men, who were obliged to accept this form of justice, and less for the information of such a worm as Tuzzer. On the latter, March glowered balefully.

"I have made your punishment lighter than you deserve. But you are prisoners for thirty days. Mark that well!"

Tuzzer observed to Scott in a whisper:

"Meaning we'll get ours from him, when the thing ain't out in the open and so public."

One of the constables stepped to the prisoners. "I'm master of the smack." His hard features were set into grim creases; he had no more symptoms of the mellower side he had displayed at the cove when the magnate was baited. "Get to your job, men!"

SCOTT swept a glance at Tamlyn's face when he turned around in obedience. He detected no favor there for this humiliated convict, who was deferring so meekly to the lordly March. On the contrary, she appeared to be rebuking the young man for his tame surrender. Perhaps she had hoped, Scott reflected, that in his person there had happened along somebody who could defy the tyrant and gratify the spirit of hostility she had so plainly disclosed, when she had followed up the shore and had urged a stout stand. Clear enough it was, that the relations in the March-Osborn family were much strained. But those relations could become no business of a mere rover, penalized to servitude, which was shameful, even though the sentence had been imposed according to his own choice in the matter.

"This is a lark, sure enough!" muttered Tuzzer gleefully, when the two prisoners marched along ahead of the smack captain.

Again the saving grace of whimsical humor came to Scott to cheer him in this latest adventure.

"It's best to look at it that way, matey. Anyway, it's nice to be here on the job, if the pirates come along, and we're tied to the place, all by the special invitation of the boss of the island."

The smack was named *Tamlyn*. Scott beamed on the legend decorating the stern when the dory swept under the overhang. He and Tuzzer were rowing, part of their first service. The captain and the other fisherman constable were passengers.

When they were on deck, the master informed the mate, who lounged in the waist:

"Two more! This time they're Indians. Next we'll be getting real savages."

"Tumble forrard, 'War' and 'Whoop,' " commanded the mate roughly.

The forecastle was below the flush deck, in the forward end of the vessel. Scott and Tuzzer found there two men who were slapping down greasy cards.

Said one, squinting at the arrivals:

"Gybed in a March wind, eh?" He and the other man laughed.

"Oh, we spot you, all right," said the humorist. "Else, you'd be let to run ashore, with the rest o' the crew at this time o' day."

"We're thirty-day men, that's what we be," confessed Tuzzer. "But we're not a speck wilted."

"Same here! Fifteen more days to go." He stared at Scott. "You're the guy the word has been passed about, eh? Say, you only wrecked the pants of that poor hunk o' mack'ril roe, when you had a chance to crack his conk against a mooring spile. You're too slow, Injun! Howsomever, we'll shake on what you did do!" He reached his hand over the table, slung from the ceiling, and pump-handled Scott.

"You don't love young March too much, eh?" queried Scott provocatively.

"Say! If he fell overboard, he'd poison sculpins, if they didn't know more than to try to eat him." The fellow was holding back none of his sentiments from this stranger, whose actions had already betrayed his sentiments in the case of

Louis March. "How much longer can he put it over on old March, or on that girl old March has fixed it up for the rat to marry?"

Scott turned away and perched himself on the edge of a lower berth. His wink at Tuzzer informed the latter that he was expected to do the rest of the quizzing.

The old man hopped into the thing briskly.

"Being born a murderer, like we'll all admit, how nigh has he worked his way up to where he belongs?"

"He's right there now, damn him! He has done his killings. It's murder, so I calls it, shoving men into places where they're snuffed, while he hangs back and saves his own hide."

"Better hang up, right there!" interposed the man who sat at the table, riffling the cards. "It's resky business, blabbing too much. Injuns ain't our kind, Timmy!"

"They're all right along one line, at any rate. One of 'em has mauled that son of a gun, doing a part of the job, till the whole of it can be done better by me. And who will take any stock in a Injun, no matter what he says about my talk?"

Scott grunted and remarked with indifference: "Better do not talk so much. I don't like long talk."

THIS new and interesting attitude in a stranger piqued Timmy. Solicited to make talk, he would have cursed the questioner; rebuffed, he was the more determined to free his mind.

"Who the blazes are you, to butt in here on two gents and say what you don't like from us, Indian? I'm going to git something off my chest, and if you don't like the sound of what I'm saying, climb back on deck and listen to the birds over there on the reefs."

"We'd prob'ly git more 'ead and tail out of a story from them birds," affirmed Tuzzer irritatingly. "All you're doing is raving nothings about young March and cussing us out for being Injuns." He packed his pipe. "Gimme a euchre hand, and I'll wallop you to a finish," he said to the other man.

The other profanely expressed his opinions on that point, lighted his pipe, and the two sat into their game.

Timmy was not to be calked by any indifference on the part of listeners.

"He owes me a lot o' money, that dirty whelp!" There was no need of asking the accuser to be more specific as to the name of the party concerned. "He pulled me into his game, like he done with the others. Promised a rake-off! Dammit, taking all them resks, it ain't no day's-wages job. And he goes to work and sells off the stuff, because he has to handle that part for us poor cusses, who couldn't get next to the market. He fingers all the money, and he keeps it, too, for himself, except for a dribble to us that ain't more than what we could earn by honest fishing. And, when I kick good and proper, he hatches up a story for old March, as how I'm drunk and disorderly, and I git jammed aboard this smack to work for nothing."

The dam of all reserve was down, and the flood poured on.

"And he swells it round on the money, he does! How comes it he owns speed launches and other yachts that old man March don't know anything about? Goes onto the main reg'lar and cuts a big dash with dames and ortermubbles. And wait till old March takes account o' stock some day, and he finds how much he's shy on canvas and tackle, sold off on the sly by his r'yal nephy!"

"You know so much, why don't you say it to the big man?" demanded Scott, suiting speech as best he was able to his masquerade.

"A fat chance of old March listening to a feller like me! Guess you never got the slant o' them eyes o' his when somebody he thinks is low-down tries to tell him anything. I tried to yip something, and he threatened another thirty days for trying to slander and blackmail."

"Young devil, he buys rum *there*, sells rum *there?*" Scott jabbed finger thrusts to east, then to west, pointing first to Canada, second to the States.

"Buy!" squalled Timmy. "Him—buy? Say, I've got respect for any smuggler who stocks up all honest, paying his cash on shore. But that young skinmaree is only a hijacker. And he ain't even

coming clean that a way. I've got respect for a chief hijacker who pitches in at the head o' his gang and takes his cracks along with the rest. But the rat plays dude buyer, with his speed boat, and carries style enough to fool new operators, one after the other. He trades and pays his money. Then backs off in his speed boat and sends 'longside his cargo boat, and his gang has to light into the schooner crowd—he picks on only schooners—and they gaffle the booze and grab back the coin. And men have been killed, fighting to pull off his tricks." shrilled Timmy.

Mr. Tuzzer, though apparently absorbed in his game, spoke past the pipestem clinched between his teeth. "And men keep on doing that for him, do they? He must be one o' them hypnotickers."

"They don't keep on! He pulls together fresh gangs o' tough guys on the main. Uses 'em and dumps 'em. It's all easy these days to git men to tackle rum ships, promising 'em a big stake. Talk whisky longshore, and you've got 'em r'aring to go."

Tuzzer exchanged a glance with Scott.

"Yus! The devil never got a-holt of a handier bazoo to toot on. I've knowed many a good man go prancing to the tune." He turned back to his game.

"Must be rich, young March!" prodded Scott.

"Rich—hell! He's broke all the time. Blows it, didn't I tell you? I'm of the island breed, here, and I know what I'm talking about. Old March don't slip him much of anything. Too stingy, anyway. He's holding a tight rein so the nephew will settle into harness and marry the stepdaughter, and then all the proputty will be in one lump. Old March promises to loosen then, I guess. But his big scheme, o' course, is to have all the say about the proputty."

"Much liked by gal, him, young fellow?"

"Liked your eye! She's bright. She's on. Old March has been trying to use his twist on her as 'ministrator o' the mother's estate. What she ought to do is go to law and have a show-down. But girls are so cussed scared to start a scandal. She ought to be married to some chap who'll roll up his sleeves and stand the Marches on their heads and shake 'em down. Some queer stuff would drop out of the devils' pockets!"

A belaying pin was banged on the hatch.

The mate bellowed, varying the usual command to tumble on deck:

"Rise to the top, scum!"

The others of the crew were coming off to the smack, so Scott perceived when his head rose over the hatch coaming. He understood, of course, the usual routine of the men on a trawl—to sail in the night to the grounds, set by first peep o' dawn, haul a few hours later, and clean fish on the way back to the harbor. He turned to, with the others. The dories were nested, sails were hoisted, and the anchor brought up.

Scott and Tuzzer were set with helpers to the job of baiting trawls, hooking clams onto the ganging lines, and coiling the set carefully into tubs.

The mate kept swinging past, peering sharply for inspection.

"He's got his orders. He's trying to git something on us," said Tuzzer covertly.

"So we must run no risks," returned Scott. "I fear me much if I get a bad crack I'll be coming back with another, and then we may find ourselves in jail, over on the main, right when we need most to be out here, all in readiness for what may happen."

"Looks to me like there's quite a job ahead for somebody."

"There is!" snapped Scott.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAY O' THE LAND.

FOR seven days and seven nights of an experience which was nothing short of torture for a Scotchman, with a high-pressure temper, Scott held himself under control. If he had shown less skill in the work he was set upon, he would have invited indignities, which he would have been able to endure. But, though he was everlastingly put upon as a supposed Indian, he received no slurs as a trawler.

He went alone in his dory to set the

gangings. With a rag of sail to give him steerage way, he scaled off down the wind, maneuvering his dory by the cant of the hull, standing erect and braced, sowing his gangings without catch or kink, with the regular arm swing of the sower moving across steady acres.

When the trawl was ready for the pull, Scott took along Tuzzer as helper in gaffing and stowing. The rest of the old man's work was to prepare vegetables for the cook and to galley-wallop in general. He was having less trouble than was the case with Scott, in taking the eternal "guying" on deck in the forecastle. Sailor Tuzzer had been through many ordeals of a like nature in his lifetime. When they were out in the dory, Tuzzer devoted himself to entreaty, begging Scott to grin and bear the ridicule.

"I'll bear it, matey, but I'll be damned if I'll grin, not till I have my chance for a comeback, when no damage can be done to our plans for hanging on. But where in the devil is that pirate gang?"

"Prob'ly they was all sewed up to take that other lo'd down the coast, and are running their chances on finding the buried stuff when they git around to come for it. Ow, I didn't let on as how I was anyways set on running all alone and right away to dig for it," declared Tuzzer, for his consolation.

Scott took what virtue he was able to extract out of the situation and endured the ordeal valiantly.

Every twenty-four hours the mate reported to Fletcher March, as to the attitude and the affairs of the two captives, against whom the autocrat maintained a continuing animosity, making no secret of his feelings when he talked with his henchman.

"You're giving them no sort of punishment, man."

"Excuse me, Mr. March, but it ain't good sense, is it, laying 'em up with hurts, when they're pulling good money for you?"

March scowled and muttered something about being willing to do with less money and more satisfaction. Then he blurted:

"The men are pests, anyway, under my very nose, keeping me in a stew, thinking about them and their infernal cockiness. I wish I could handily rid myself of the pair."

"Well, sir," affirmed the mate stoutly, "you'll have to tend to that side of it yourself."

At this moment Louis March intruded on the conference in his uncle's office.

"Talking about those low-down Indians, eh? Uncle Fletcher, you must be feeling as I feel—they're playing some kind of a game. Why not beat 'em to it?"

"How?"

"Next time there's a fog, tell the smack master to duck for shore, when those two fellows are out hauling trawls. They won't be coming back to bother you."

"Not by a long sight!" exploded the elder. "Young man, haven't you any more decency than that, in the matter of human lives?"

The mate turned away to hide an expression which suggested that he had some private knowledge of Louis March's lack of regard for certain lives on occasions past.

"I only meant we'd be giving them their chance to get away," hedged Louis.

The mate expressed himself resentfully, out of his spirit as a man of the sea.

"Leaving two shipmates off in a dory, in a fog, ain't no job of my reckoning. I was lost once by accident, and I ain't no kind of a party to be putting other men through that hell."

"Of course you're not," declared Fletcher March. He squinted balefully at his nephew. Paying no heed to the mate's presence, the uncle grated:

"I've been hearing stories about you, young man! I haven't believed them. Nor will I ever believe a March can be a mucker, not unless I get strong proof. What you have just said about a way of handling those prisoners, has made a very bad impression on me. You'd better be almighty careful in your talk and actions from now on." He waved his hand. "That's all for now. Step outside."

March turned to the mate, after Louis had sullenly obeyed.

"I know better than to ask you about

those stories. Do you want to say anything without being asked?"

"No, sir! I don't pay much attention to any talk that's being passed round about anybody."

"A safe plan, sir. Now to that other matter. Have those two men shown any disposition to run away?"

"No, sir."

"If they do make a try of it in the harbor, I'll ask you to be blind in both eyes. Tell the master how I feel."

"Yes, sir!"

The autocrat was talking freely to a trusted servitor.

"I was made very angry by the attitude of that Tarramuk, if such is the fellow's name. My nephew knew it, and I partly excuse his actions in prodding on the mob. But I have been led into antagonizing that whole tribe of Indians, and I wish I could slip out of the mess in some easy way. That's between us two, of course! If you see any way of helping, grab in."

"That I'll do, sir," promised the mate. He saluted and went about his affairs.

AT that moment Scott and Mr. Tuzzer were in a new state of anxiety which would have been immeasurably relieved if they could have known the condition of Fletcher March's mind, and how admirably the way had been paved for action which they desperately wanted to undertake.

The brig *Canaquin* had entered the harbor.

She splashed her killick far down in an anchorage well removed from the wharves and the fishing fleet, displaying a suggestive prudence, making it appear as if she were merely a coastwise transient, halting to repair rigging or to replenish supplies.

She needed supplies, so the water-front observers concluded, for a motor yawl put off from the brig and came popping up the harbor.

It passed close under the counter of the anchored *Tamlyn,* and Scott and Tuzzer risked the chances of detection and peered over the rail.

The three men who manned the yawl were from the common run of the brig's crew. Tuzzer, having forgathered forward with the hands of the *Canaquin,* was able to identify them more accurately than Scott could do.

As soon as the yawl had gone along, the old man imparted:

"Two of 'em is of the tough rabs that knowed what the cruise was all about. Tother feller owned to me on the side that, if it was anything diff'runt from the pickled-alewives plan, he wasn't in the know. Jee whigger! I wisht I could git to him right now! Bet he'd blow to me."

Scott looked helplessly at sky, shore, and sea. He had speculated as to certain alternatives in case of the brig's arrival, but it had been impossible to formulate a plan. The preceding circumstances had been linked, and the chain of them had drawn him into his present position. He was on the scene, to be sure, and, to his satisfaction in that respect, being present, without attracting attention as a mere intruder who might arouse suspicions as to his intentions in those parts. However, now he felt himself to be too securely present.

The crisis was at hand, and here he was, penned away from participation.

He had not ventured to expose the situation to Chief Neptune. Lingering doubt as to whether the *Canaquin* gang had really used their wits and had guessed at the location of the buried whisky, this doubt had urged Scott to adopt a sensible precaution. But now, if Mawson and Kragg were sufficiently bold to run the chances, they might land their men at the cove and dig the stuff up. Naturally, Scott reflected, Chief Neptune and his followers would offer no opposition to parties who were salvaging goods concerning which these persons manifestly held the secret.

An exasperating situation it was for a chap who had made up his mind to mix in and balk the plans of rogues.

"It's little I love whisky," Scott mumbled in Tuzzer's anxious ear. "But to think of those pirates getting it—it's—it's like——"

"Like being lashed to the mast and seeing your sweetheart eloping off with a hound who's laughing at you," declared Tuzzer. He added in his desperation:

"Le's peel off and jump overboard and swim ashore. I'd ruther drowned quick than die here by inches."

The free men of the smack's crew were ashore. One watcher loafed at the taffrail, guarding the four timeservers.

"I'm of a mind for the venture," Scott agreed. "There seems no other way for it."

The tide was making. The brig had come in with the tide.

WHILE Scott and Tuzzer were discussing that good feature of the situation, the man Timmy came from the smack's capstan, where he had been perched, making a critical survey of the new arrival in the harbor.

"She's a rummy," he reported to the two, making an important parade of knowledge. "She's the brig *Canaquin.*"

He was showing evil relish—malignant hope.

"If she is under the same ownership she was a while ago, I hope her boss comes ashore and flashes an eye on that damn Louis March. There'll be doings such as I'd like to do meself. I've been praying for something like this."

"Nobody but Satan himself would answer any prayers o' yours," averred Mr. Tuzzer, in no mood to say a decent word to anybody.

"It would have to be the devil, wouldn't it, to take any hand with a rum ship? It would have to be a prayer, too, that would bring one in here where they don't have no business."

Mr. Tuzzer had private knowledge on that point, but he did not impart it. Nor did he check Timmy's natural garrulity by displaying the least interest.

"The rat done up *Canaquin* proper a few months ago," confided Timmy. "That's the time I was along. Nobody killed on that ruckus, but there was sure one hell of a fight. Always is, o' course, and always with the rat loafing off outboard and then coming on, after it's all over, and grabbing his money back. Never'll forgit the look on the head rummy's face when the rat pawed him over and got the cash. Head rummy had his hands tied, o' course. That rat, March, wouldn't go near him otherwise. Mawson, I b'lieve the name was. March never tackles the same feller twice," Timmy maundered on. "So, whoever's aboard the *Canaquin* these days, he's likely to be one who has been tackled on another rummy, and I feel the devil must have answered prayers by sending in any kind of a rum runner."

"If you feel that way, better swim down and post the feller as how a friend lives ashore here and may like to do the honors," suggested Mr. Tuzzer, with rancor.

Scott walked to the rail and folded his arms and surveyed the shore with yearning anxiety. He was ripe for desperate venture, and only his emotions in that line could have served to actuate him in what he did a bit later, when the mate came clambering on board, returning to the smack from the village. Scott marched directly to the officer, saluted, and pleaded:

"May I speak out to you, sir?"

"Yes, man!"

"Mr. March wants all Indians to go away from this island. At the cove you heard all the talk."

The mate nodded.

Scott's concern was wholly for the exigency of the moment. He wanted to give Tuzzer an opportunity to get at the sailor from the *Canaquin.* On his own part, he was vitally anxious to explain the situation to Chief Neptune. It was not in the young man's mind to urge the chief to back up any promises made relative to abandonment of the camp. On the contrary, it would best serve Scott's turn to make sure that the Indians would remain. But a brief truce with March was desperately required.

"What's on your mind?" blustered the mate.

"Mebbe, if Mr. March let me and him go to talk"—a jab of Scott's thumb indicated Tuzzer—"we can speak right words to chief so all Indians paddle away from island."

The mate's visage revealed his quick interest in this proposition, and Scott took heart.

"If Chief Neptune say no go, then we come back and work hard. That's honest word!" pledged Scott.

"You're asking a whole lot, man. But it's to Fletcher March you must talk, not to me. Pile over the rail into my dory, the two of you, and we'll see what the big boss has to say to you, after you've said your say to him."

Never before in their lives had Scott and Tuzzer applied themselves so diligently in raising an ash breeze. They tugged at the oars till their muscles cracked. Apprehensively they hearkened, fearing to hear the pop of the motor yawl on its return to the brig.

Scott handled the stroke oar, and Tuzzer was right behind. The old man found his opportunity to say, unobserved and unheard by the mate in the stern:

"Our best hope is that the men are ashore to make a gen'ral size-up o' the lay o' the land and won't be hurrying away."

The hope sustained Scott.

CHAPTER XIV.

CRAFTY DIPLOMACY.

THE mate marshaled his charges up the wharf, heading straight for the office in the big store. Over and over he repeated the declaration that they were asking "a whole lot." As well as he was able, he strove to put a premium on the favor to be granted by March.

"If he does give you the chance you're asking for," warned the subaltern, "and you fall down on the job, you needn't expect no mercy if you git aboard the smack again."

He commanded Tuzzer to remain on the platform of the store.

"No need o' two Injuns traipsing into the office."

The three sailors from the brig were sitting on the edge of the platform. They stared frankly at the pair thus advertised as Indians.

"Come along, you other war whoop! And you wait at the foot o' the office stairs till I can tell Mr. March what you promise, and I can coax him round to the idee—mebbe!"

The mate was intending to take much credit to himself in that preliminary talk with the magnate, explaining to the latter that a good scare had been thrown into the pair by threats of what would happen to them if they were put aboard the smack again. "I'll tell him these two, at any rate, will scoot, even if the rest of the tribe ain't teamed off."

Mr. Tuzzer, apprehensive as to results from a too-sudden recognition, posted himself on the farther edge of the platform and turned his back and waited till the mate and Scott were inside the door.

He then swung his head to face about and perceived that the three men were regarding him with curiosity. He winked slowly, significantly, and ran the back of his hand under his sailor's roll of beard, drawing attention to that characteristic decoration.

He was following an impulse to grab the situation by the horns. His natural shrewdness in getting at men was operating. And, so he felt, he had no time to waste.

Two of the three must be in the confidence of Mawson and Kragg, as Tuzzer had surmised in the forecastle of the *Canaquin!* He was hoping that the other man had not become reconciled to the job of rum running. In such a case, two men would be hurrying to the brig's bosses, with the news that first claimants of the buried whisky were on the scene. That would be quite all right, as Tuzzer figured, because the situation needed to be tripped properly and promptly by a word to the pirates. The other man, were he still more or less a rebel, would be a handy fuse for setting off an explosion in another quarter.

Between Scott and Tuzzer a few words had been exchanged on the way up the wharf. They had not been able to plan with any surety; but the drift of things was in a certain direction, and they had agreed to push with all the power that was in them.

The two whom Tuzzer had tagged as pirates were mum, sour, and a bit flabbergasted. The style of the other man suggested a less hostile attitude. He snickered.

"Well, carve me for a catfish, if it ain't old Two-gun Tom! What's the rig-out mean?"

"As how I'm more or less Injun," retorted the old man, flinging a challeng-

ing glance at the sullen two. "Take that as it suits!"

One of them slid off the platform. "Come along, Spratt. We've got to get back to the brig."

"We haven't done what we've come ashore to do," objected Spratt, the man who was showing a more fraternal interest in Tuzzer.

"Shut up! Stay shut! Our job right now is back aboard."

Spratt kept his seat.

"I'm a great hand to carry out orders from them above me. You two are only understrappers. Go out aboard, if you want to. I shan't go."

"If you don't come, we'll lug you!"

"Try to pick me up!"

When the two hesitated, Spratt remarked balefully:

"When I'm tickled under the arms, I do a lot of hollering. Better be careful how you start any holler out o' me right now!"

TUZZER was taking only casual interest in this colloquy. He was giving attention to the March mansion. It was in his mind that the arrival of Tarramuk had been observed by Louis March, or, at least, had been reported to him by a fisherman who had gone scuttling up to the big house. The closeting of the enemy with the uncle would surely be of portent enough to deserve the personal attention of the nephew.

Tuzzer grunted with satisfaction. Louis March was hurrying down the road toward the store. He leaped upon the platform and went in through the broad doorway, manifestly too much absorbed in his immediate errand to waste thought or glance on the loafers outside.

After he had passed, the two who had offered violence to Spratt lost all interest in that gentleman. They were cursing horribly in muted tones. Paying no more heed to Spratt, taking no chances on a disturbance by attempting to carry him along, they started on the trot toward the wharf.

"Seem to have something important on their minds, all of a sudden," suggested Mr. Tuzzer blandly.

"Something has come over 'em all at once, that's sure," agreed Spratt, looking honestly puzzled.

Tuzzer, armed with information from Timmy, was able to guess what ailed the two fugitives.

"Le's see, Spratt," he drawled, dismissing the flight as of no importance, "speaking o' you, is this your first cruise on that brig?"

"You betcha! My last, too."

"Ever git pulled into the rum game afore?"

"Nossir! And didn't you have me sized up on the *Canaquin* as being a greeny?"

"Have you fell in love with the bus'ness since I seen you last?"

Spratt rasped out a line of invectives like chain links running from a hawse pipe.

Broke in Mr. Tuzzer:

"Nice words and many of 'em, but you ain't telling me nothing!"

"Then lemme tell you this much: I got my chance to come ashore to-day by lying and saying I knowed an old settler here. Guess you know, after what you dropped about a wreck on an island, why a old settler needed to be located."

Mr. Tuzzer made up a face, damned his gabby nature, and admitted that he knew.

"I'm ashore," stated Mr. Spratt, "and if they git me off the shore onto that brig again, they'll have to poke sticks into all the holes on Tremont. Meantime, I'll be digging acrost to another hole."

"It's bad business handling rum these days—anyway, any lay," declared the old man loftily. "There's a cuss hitched to the stuff!"

"You needn't try to throw me off the track o' what you mean to do yourself," growled Spratt. "For me, I wouldn't pick up a bottle if I'd stubbed my toe over it." Rage flared up in him again. "We got hijacked down the line—that's what happened. They come after us in a ironclad. Mawson, he'd been hijacked afore, and he thought he was all fixed for anything this trip. Had all kinds of guns. But that thing heaved 'longside, and we shot onto it ev'ry cussed thing we could stick into a gun barrel, and then

some of our gang went all crazy and throwed their guns. Might jest as well have heaved stewed beans, for all the good the whole shooting done us. And when we didn't have nothing more left to fire, they all climbed aboard and kicked us round and took what they wanted; and what they took was all we had left after a couple o' reg'lar sales to honest smugglers."

Mr. Tuzzer was blithe when he said: "Looks like Mawson and Kragg is busted and expect to stock up here out o' something they think they can grab off free—and without a kick left for their guns. It's plumb hawful 'ow rum raises 'ell with jedgment!"

"What are you prancing around here for, trying to play Injun?" Spratt demanded.

"None o' your cussed bus'ness!"

"Here I've been all free and friendly with you," complained the other, "and you snap me short on a perlite, sociable question!"

"Well, I might say it's kind o' fash'nable to be Injun on this island right now."

"Looks like that much might be so. The brig jockeyed off the mouth o' that cove up longshore, and a whole tribe was seen camped there. You should 'a' heard Mawson and Kragg swear. Injuns on top o' hijackers! The rum bus'ness is sure gitting too blasted mixed up. Glad I ain't in it no more."

Crafty calculation rather than friendly impulse moved Tuzzer when he blurted: "Spratt, you've got a pretty good streak in your hide, and I'm going to pat it. There's a feller on this island who'll know where that wreck 'appened, and I'm going to point him out to you. He'll be coming out o' that door pretty soon—the dude that went in a little spell ago. Sidle up to him and tell him what you told me, about that gang on the brig not having a blamed shot in the locker. Ask to be took in on the rum split, for the tip you're giving him. In any case, he'll see to it as how the other gang don't grab you back aboard."

Spratt flashed sparks of oaths and suspicions.

"What you giving us? What's your game, right now?"

Naïvely Mr. Tuzzer confessed.

"Late days I've been playing euchre quite a lot."

"Well, you can't euchre *me!* A reg'lar fool would I be to think for a minute you're passing up your chance to turn the whole trick for yourself."

"I can't turn it with the 'elp o' the dude I'm speaking of. Mate and me 'ad a bloomin' bust of a run-in with him on another thing. Besides, I've made up me mind as 'ow whisky is bad stuff to meddle with these days, and this is what I'm doing in the case o' rum and ev'rything 'itched up with it." Mr. Tuzzer elaborately dusted his palms, squinting into the disgusted skepticism of the other. "Don't b'lieve it, eh?"

"Not by a long sight!"

"Didn't figger you would. Ain't even putting much stock in me own idees and feelings. I'm mixed, right now. 'Owsomever, 'ere's one thing, Spratt, that's blarsted str'ight. Lis'sen! The dude 'ijacked Mawson on a time, some ways back. Are you better able to size up the new angel nature I've took on all of a sudden?"

"I see a bit more sense in what you're letting out," admitted Spratt grouchily. "You've got it in for Mawson and the dude—both—and you want to set 'em at each other."

"Aye! Two cats tied over the same clothesline," acknowledged Mr. Tuzzer amiably.

"What do you and me git out of it, 'sides watching the clawing?"

Mr. Tuzzer exhibited sympathy.

"Too bad you ain't got more relish for comic things, Spratt. With a hole like you seem to have in your disposition, you're missing a big line o' laughs in this life! We'll put it down all solemn, where you can understand. Up to date, me 'n' my mate hasn't 'ad a show for digging that stuff up. Injuns! Now worse! As soon as them two rabs get to the *Canaquin*, with news for Mawson and Kragg, then them brig critters will keep an eye on all doings. Taking you in, only three of us to fight 'em off, and we can't do it, guns or no guns." The old man tapped his forehead. "Use brains—my brains, seeing as 'ow your mind is kinked

in the running rigging. We must stir up another gang, and when the two bunches have f'it theirselves to a standstill, me 'n' you and my mate will have to be awful slow thinkers and sloppy performers if we can't git the rum for ourselves to add onto the fun we've had."

"It's too complicated!"

"That's a fine big word, and I don't know where you got it. I've heard it used about machinery. I've showed you how a machine can be started, and it'll run all by itself." He snapped up from where he had been sitting beside the other. "Spratt, I've used up a lot o' langwidge on you. Mebbe it's all wysted, if you ain't got any mind teeth, so to speak, to chaw on what I've fed you."

He started for the door of the store, shooting over his shoulder: "You never see'd *me* before in your life! Understand? And keep on being a blarsted fool if it hurts you to be anything else."

TUZZER was standing at one side of the door when Louis March made his exit, sour-faced, muttering profanity. He walked slowly away toward the big house.

Spratt swapped looks with Tuzzer. The old man's twist of a sneer was a challenge, and Spratt accepted the dare. He jerked himself to his feet and hustled in pursuit of March.

In a little while Scott came out with the mate.

"I'll say Mr. March is letting you two down easy," averred the custodian, for the benefit of the one excluded from the interview in the sanctum. "To get away yourselves, all you've got to do is to hurroosh the rest of those Injuns along with you."

"To-morrow—at evening—when the wind goes down. I think we all go then," hinted Scott, though he was woefully uncertain as to Chief Neptune's views on the subject.

"That'll be a good time, man, after the wind goes down with the sun. Hoof it along with me now. Mr. March says I may have the launch for the trip to the cove."

"We walk," stated Scott, "over the land."

"Suit yourselves. It'll save wasting gas on you. But I'll be up in that launch late to-morrow afternoon, and you'll come back with me and be wearing wristers, if you haven't put over your stunt."

He stumped away toward the wharf, and Scott and Tuzzer climbed the high slope behind the village.

"Mister Nabob swallered some of what you fed him, eh?" queried the old man.

"He put out his tongue for it, as you might know he'd do. Did you have luck of your own, matey?"

Mr. Tuzzer importantly related the details of his diplomacy.

Scott exhibited no very hearty approval.

"Not that I'm hunting fights for the sake of the fighting! But this will be shoving all the give and take off onto the others."

"Howsomever, you mean to be decent in the thing, and you will be there to refereе it, won't you?"

Scott grinned.

"Oh, I suppose I'll have no way out o' that service. It comes of popularity, both sides insisting."

After they had trudged for some distance, Tuzzer remarked:

"There's more sense in this notion o' hoofing it, Scotty, than the mere stretching of our legs, as I s'pose was your first thought. Unless my idees are all slanted the wrong way, that rat, as Timmy says, will come nibbling his way acrost by the land side, knowing as how the brig gang will surely tackle the job by water."

"Aye! March will be playing just that trick to put the others off their guard. So, on our way, we'll be making good use of our eyes to get all the lay o' the land."

It was broken country, uphill and down, with ledges, small ponds, tree clumps, and undergrowth. A zigzag road, that was little more than a lane, indicated the route between the village and Osborn Cove. They came eventually to the high land overlooking the camp and descended by a narrow path.

THEIR return stirred a demonstration and revealed a friendly attitude that distinctly cheered Scott. He had made some plans, in the carrying out of which

he needed much help from friends. He frankly laid on the table those plans and hopes in a conference with Chief Neptune that evening.

"Do I understand," asked Neptune, when a full statement had been made, "that your object is to secure the whisky for yourselves?"

Scott was firm in his denial.

"My only thought, sir, is to keep it out of the hands of the rogues of either side. I care not a whit what becomes of the stuff."

Under his breath Mr. Tuzzer groaned and rolled up his eyes in despair.

"Good words!" indorsed Neptune. "My tribesmen are of a mind with me in hating whisky. I have brought them to understand well how white men have used it for the ruination of Indians. Tarramuk"—he spoke the name without his usual amused smile—"I promise you much help in what seems to be ahead. I'll take the matter with me to my bed of boughs. Even now, I have an idea. I'll tell you more in the morning when I have thought longer."

"I'm not asking you to put yourself and your men into any rough-and-tumble fight, understand that, sir!" insisted Scott.

"It would not suit us well. It would be bad. But I can see a way to make the business rather comic. In school we learned about the libations to Bacchus. If that whisky is properly sacrificed, we may be able to make quite a festival, letting the white men make an offering to the Devil."

"I get a glimmer of a notion of what is meant, sir," admitted Scott and went away, Tuzzer at his heels.

"You do get a glimmer, do you?" mumbled the old man. "Well, flick the glimmer so I can get some light, meself. Does he mean all that whisky will be throwed away?"

"Poured out for a sacrifice. It's his way of putting it."

"And it will be comic, said he! Say, where did a Injun ever git his sense o' what's comic? Look 'ere, Scotty, do I lose all me hopes for a snug harbor in me old age?"

"Ben Tuzzer, you know well what whisky is, and what it does in the hands of rogues. The stuff, as it lies hid, is full of danger. If it's out and about, it may bring worse. Can you rest easy in your snug harbor, with your bilge so full of awful memories that you'll have no peace, even in your snug harbor? Go take your sleep and wake up with your thoughts washed clean!"

CHAPTER XV.

HAIL AND FAREWELL.

AT noon Mr. Spratt came to the high land above the Indian camp; he had been retained as a scout, was venturing on a quest, and was timid in the business. For some time he lurked among the crowning spruces, making sorties to the edge of the declivity as often as he dared, peering down at the moving figures on the sand. He was hoping to catch sight of Tuzzer.

Mr. Tuzzer, however, was not doing much moving about at that time. For most of the forenoon he had been sitting in with Scott and Chief Neptune, listening to plans for a certain campaign. When the two other plotters chuckled over suggestions made by Scott or Neptune, Mr. Tuzzer hopped away to be by himself for a few moments, while he indulged his woe and strove to summon up the spirit of resignation. The doom of that precious hoard of whisky had been definitely settled upon, and none of the old sailor's vague and hopeful suggestions of a compromise received any favor.

On the brow of the slope Mr. Spratt took a chance at last. Two Indians came up to gather dry fagots. They were unarmed, peaceable-appearing young chaps, and they chattered sociably with each other in the English tongue.

Spratt stepped forth and hailed cautiously. When they gave him attention, he said, meekly appealing: "Won't you kindly tell a p'tickler friend o' mine I'm up here and want to see him? His name is Ben, and he's got whiskers under his chin." Spratt patted under his own jaw, having an idea that any sort of sign language helped greatly in converse with redskins. "Tell him it's his special pal, Spratt."

The Indians promised amiably to deliver the message.

In the course of a few minutes Tuzzer came puffing up the slope.

"The dude fell for all I told him," reported Spratt. "Handed me a couple o' ten speckers on account, and says I can have a cut in profits. So it's up to you and me and your friend to see to it that Mawson gits dished."

"So it is!" agreed Tuzzer, managing with great effort to keep out of his countenance any revelation that everybody in the world was in a way to be dished in the matter of profits from that whisky.

"The way I've figgered," proceeded Spratt judicially, "there ain't much chance o' them two sides licking theirselves to any such a standstill that we three can pick up the plunder. Fights is either one way or the other. And my best bet seems to be to make it young March's way. When he was a boy he was up to see that wreck, o' course. Says that while Mawson's gang is pawing all over the beach——"

Spratt's calm assumption of personal rights in the buried treasure inflamed Tuzzer to sudden fury. But he disguised the true nature of his ire by an attack on Spratt's stupidity.

"You cussed fool, did you tell him Mawson is heading that crew?"

Spratt put up a protesting palm and winked.

"Do you think for a minnit I'm throwing a scare into the crowd I'm siding with to win? Oh, no! Told the dude as how Mawson has been made sick long ago by hijackers and is back into the pickled-fish bus'ness on Prince Edward. March takes it from me that there's only a pack o' dubs on the *Canaquin,* and I guess he feels pretty easy, thinking I'm a fair sample."

TUZZER was in a mood of gravity, because of his dashed hopes as to a snug and easy future. Now he became portentously grave. The matter of possible bloodshed had been canvassed that forenoon by Scott and Neptune, and the possibility was causing foreboding. The two were frankly confessing to each other that it might be necessary to ambuscade the March followers and disarm them, even if this precaution risked spoiling all the other plans.

"You don't look noways gay, considering the prospects of a good make," suggested Spratt anxiously.

"The prospects I'm considering is whuther anybody's li'ble to ketch their never-git-over out o' the fracas."

Spratt contemptuously sliced the air with the edge of his palm.

"Not a chance! March is on his own island, and the first thing he said was he couldn't afford to take any resks o' killing anybody. He was going to throw me down on the whole projick, even though I got all hoarse swearing to him they didn't have even enough powder on the brig to bounce a flea into a handspring. How he come to take stock in my word, at last, was because them two tough sailors came whanging back in the yawl and bought shovels and then tried to buy ammunition—and was wanting to grab me, too, I reckon. I scooted down the rollway, and I hid where I could hear 'em in the store overhead. Young March tipped off the clerks not to sell any shooting stuff. When the sailors put up an awful roar, down from his perch swooped old March, and them lads got a hot send-off to the wharf and a kick, besides. Old March sure has got some peppy posse when he hollers for it! And that's why there won't be no guns in the scrimmage."

"Then let 'er scrunch," growled Mr. Tuzzer, showing no enthusiasm, playing no favorites. "And speaking o' posses—do you know what young March figgers on for his backers?"

"Says he can pull along a-plenty. These Tremont fellers ain't needing a lot of coaxing to step in and stop outsiders from lugging off the stuff that's gained residence, as you might say, on this island. Almost voting age, that stuff is! March is going to bring his crowd overland, slick and sly. The others have got to hunt, and they will be scattered all over the beach, pawing sand, won't they? Nothing to it."

"Does seem like there wouldn't be," agreed Tuzzer, with bland complacence.

"And you'll get your whack," declared Spratt, lying heartily and not fooling the

old man for an instant. "It'll be fixed all right for you."

"I'm trusting you, and it'll sure be dirty bus'ness if I ain't fixed, considering the stuff is jest the same as mine." This was an artful prod to jump the other away from suspicion that Tuzzer might be playing some game for his protection.

Spratt began to show nervous anxiety.

"This gab has been all right and gives us a good understanding. Glad to have the talk. But what he handed me twenty bucks for, is to have me do scout work. I'm here to find out when these Indians is going to pull up stakes. There can't be no doings on this beach till they're out of the way."

"You can bet I'm making it my own bus'ness to know when they're going. That's why I'm hanging round here, Spratt, acting out as if I like playing Injun. The word is now passed along by the chief as 'ow they're putting off for good and all late to-day, after the wind calms down, as it al'ays does this time o' year. If they do go, March and Mawson will know it. Plan is to paddle down past the village and then circle the island round to the norrards—then off to the main."

"What's the big idee in going to all that bother—out of their way like that?" There was another hint of suspicion in Spratt's manner.

"Seems something like this," lied Mr. Tuzzer blandly, but vaguely: "It's summat to do with Injun religion, paddling round the island and s'luting the 'ead lands in a good-by, or something like that."

"Queer critters! Don't you find them that way?"

"Mighty queer! I don't see into 'em a mite."

"You and your friend going with 'em?"

"S'pose we'll have to trail along for a spell. We sort o' plan to slip away, though, as soon as it's good and dark out of the water. 'Ope all the fun won't be over when we git back to the cove."

In spite of his best efforts, Spratt failed to look wholly pleased by the prospect of this promised return.

"Ain't hinting as how you suspect we may snitch on you?"

"Why, no!" Mr. Tuzzer was wide-eyed in apparent candor. "But I want to git away from 'em. I've got about tired of this living with Injuns, to tell the truth!"

"Take a tip from me, all friendly, as I mean it. I ain't trying to scare you away, understand. But young March sure has it in for you two. He's plumb certain to git the upper hands o' that Mawson gang, and if you two show up you'll git yours along with what's handed to the others. Now, you leave it all to me, and I'll hold out your whack for you."

"This life is plumb cussed, and it grows more that way ev'ry day," complained the old man dolorously. "No fair show for us if we come round to git what belongs to us."

"Leave it to me, I tell you!" adjured Mr. Spratt, clapping palm on breast.

"That's prob'ly what I'll 'ave to do," admitted Tuzzer, starting back down the hill. And he added virulently to himself, in strictest privacy, scuffing along the zigzag path: "The more I know o' the 'ellishness 'itched up with rum, in the way o' lying and fighting and cheating and gen'ral cussedness, the more I'm willing to allow as how Scotty and the big Injun is both talking good sense. Prob'ly the stuff wouldn't do *me* no good, either. Let 'er go! As the feller said, when he lost his store teeth overboard: 'They can't be no more use to me, but, thank the Lord, no shark can bite with 'em.' "

He was cheerful when he reported the latest developments to Scott and Neptune.

"Much worry is now off our minds," stated the chief. "The comic way will be easy for us."

Again Mr. Tuzzer was unable to hide the tribulation that was roiled in him by the word "comic" in connection with the ruination of his hopes.

He rolled up his eyes and gritted his teeth. Then he brought down his gaze to the smile on Scott's face, when the young man smacked his palm on the bowed shoulder.

"I asked you to cruise with me, matey! And if I have my way with you, the

cruise will keep on till you've made a big fortune, all shipshape and seamanlike, and no slop of dirty bilge to be bailed at the end."

The old man's eyes gleamed gratefully. Once more he voiced his wonted apology.

"But not to be underfoot!"

"Never will you be that! Only of help in paddling our own canoe!"

UNTIL midafternoon Neptune's men were busily occupied doing something special to their plentiful store of arrows. The chief went from group to group, inspecting, counseling.

Then the small bough shelters were carefully leveled; the litter was carried to the beach and heaped. It formed a resinous, tindery hillock, and Neptune surveyed it with satisfaction. He selected from his men an agent for special service.

"When it is dark you will hide yourself in the middle of the pile. The war cry will be your signal."

An hour before sunset the squadron of canoes left the cove. In single file they moved down the easterly side of the island, on the smooth sea, close under the cliffs, the looming bulk of which provided a lee against the southwester, the force of which was ebbing, as the slowly wagging boughs of the spruces on the high land indicated. Scott and Tuzzer had resumed their full regalia. They followed behind the chief's large canoe.

The March speed boat, captained by the mate, came frothing up the coast, on the scouting trip that had been promised. The mate made a comprehensive survey of the flotilla, swept about, and his skirmish craft roared back to the village.

Neptune was stressing the fact of his departure. He led the way into the harbor of the village and marshaled his fleet on a circuit of the haven, passing close to the wharves.

All the populace flocked to vantage points to gaze on the silent procession. Fletcher March, so Scott perceived, was on the platform of the store, flanked by his clerks.

When Tarramuk held high over his head a saluting paddle, mutely calling the magistrate's attention to a promise carried out and a freedom fairly won, according to agreement, March condescended to flourish a gesture of understanding.

Louis March was on the end of the wharf, in the midst of a considerable gathering of fishermen. The canoes passed close to that wharf, and Scott had full opportunity to observe the complete satisfaction on young March's visage. There was not even a scowl for the foe. This was victory, and March was enjoying it.

Last of all, Scott beheld Tamlyn Osborn. Sauntering slowly along the shore below the cluster of wharves, she turned suddenly and walked out along the crest of a reef, set at a right angle to the beach.

Immediately Neptune swung the canoe in order to pass close to the tip of the reef. He saluted with the Abnaki gesture of hail and farewell, and passed on, not speaking.

Scott, nearing the reef in his turn, copied Neptune's gesture and the chief's taciturnity as well. There was pride a-plenty in the young man's mien, but in his heart he felt only a queer sense of shame. It must appear to her that he had bought freedom by humbling himself to the tyrant against whom she was in revolt. She bestowed on the young man a quizzical smile, and his shame deepened. He was mute because he did not know what to say to her.

He had not forgotten anything she had said to him, however, and his memory on that point was for the most part bitter. Her last words to him, when the motor of her launch shut him off from all attempt to reply, had been frankly in the way of ridicule.

He could have made a general fool of himself, he reflected, mixing into the affairs of her family, and all to no adequate purpose, considering how rankly he was an outsider. Perhaps such action might have appealed to her as highly chivalrous. But this maiden had made fun of his unselfish attitude, when he had stubbornly refused to draw her into the affair with Fletcher March.

Tuzzer rasped in a low growl over his

shoulder: "You're a quitter! You're a clam! Does she have to heave a rock to wake you up?"

Tamlyn spoke out in a tone which matched her smile. "This retreat from trouble is very interesting, Mr. Tarramuk. I'm sorry you're carrying such unpleasant memories away from our island."

Scott found his tongue after that thrust.

"One memory I'm carrying, Miss Osborn and, it's the happiest of my life. It's the memory of you."

She turned quickly and walked back along the reef.

"Good work!" indorsed Mr. Tuzzer. "Something for *her* to remember, too!"

The canoes went on, skirting the harbor shore closely, keeping well away from the smacks and from the *Canaquin*. The brig was anchored far down in the jaws of the broad haven.

The paddlers swept their blades in unison, timing themselves by Neptune's strokes. They went around the lower headland, on the slow surge of a quieting sea, and pointed prows toward the sunset.

On the brig, Mawson said to Kragg, grunting satisfaction:

"They're out from underfoot. Clear field for us!"

On the wharf, young March told his men to scatter to their homes.

"After supper, as soon as it's dark, sneak over, one by one, to Scupper Pond. We can go on from there in a bunch!"

CHAPTER XVI.

ACOLYTES OF BACCHUS.

TAKING all the indentations of the shore as they did, Neptune and his convoy paddled nearly ten miles before the chief led the way into the mouth of a narrow cove which curved between cliffs on the western side of Tremont. Darkness had been settled for an hour or so, when they reached the small beach at the head of the cove.

The men pulled their canoes far up, smuggling them together in the limited space. The chief appointed Scott to follow closely behind, and the party set away, climbing along a gorge to the high land. They crossed, moving cautiously in single file, and gained the woods adjacent to the slope at the foot of which was Osborn Cove. Neptune's men obeyed the orders which had been given previously. Like shadows, they dispersed and secreted themselves. Two of the shadows flitted away into the black night. They were the scouts appointed to make reconnaissance of young March's movements with his men.

Scott had observed that Neptune and his followers were armed with bows and carried capacious quivers stuffed full with arrows. The chief, as soon as his party had settled themselves to wait, placed an arrow in Scott's hand, inviting examination.

The young man, by his sense of touch, found that the head of the arrow had been sheathed in a wood cap, and in the cap was inserted a short steel brad. He now understood the nature of the work to which the Indians had been applying themselves that day under the eye of Neptune.

Scott made no comment when he gave the arrow back. The chief had given strict orders, after the party had deposited the canoes, that no word should be spoken while they were in ambush. Scott expressed his understanding and his sentiments by means of a complimentary pat on Neptune's shoulder.

Once more shadows flitted. The scouts had returned. Kneeling in front of the chief, they made known their findings in sign language. This silence was prudent, of course, but it was also a part of the drill in old customs, Scott understood.

Neptune put his mouth close to Scott's ear.

"The party coming by land is not far away. The scouts also heard the oars of the boats."

Shortly, in that tense silence when the spruce boughs were stilled and the sea was hushed, the dull *thunking* of rowlocks was audible on the high land. Manifestly, the crew from the brig had decided to employ muscle instead of risking the noise of the motor yawl's engine.

In a little while men came running along the path from the direction of the

village. A word from somebody in command halted the party on the edge of the slope.

Louis March spoke out, heard easily by Neptune and his force, and as easily identified by characteristic tone.

"They'll be strewn all over the beach in a little while. We needn't hurry. Give 'em time to spread out in their hunt. Spratt, you sneak down and report back to me when they get scattered enough to make 'em easy picking."

"Hold on, Mr. March!" objected a lieutenant. "This critter has already split on his own gang. He's just as likely to hitch back on with 'em and tip 'em off about *us!*"

"I'll be cussed if I ain't a good mind to do it," raged the offended Spratt. "If that's the way I stand with you fellers at the start-off, a fine show I'll stand at the end-up!"

This was all helpful, Scott reflected. Suspicion and taunts at the outset!

"Shut up, both of you!" snarled March. "Spratt is better able to figure on the style of that crowd, to know who is in charge, and all that."

"I won't move a step, not after what's been said."

After a silence, the lieutenant made a suggestion:

"Seems to me, Mr. March, you ought to do the scouting yourself. You're the boss and supposed to know the right time to jump."

"What do you think I brought this gang for? To have 'em sit on the side lines, while I do it all?"

Scott reflected again, this time on what the man Timmy had disclosed. Plainly enough Louis March was running true to form!

"I s'pose, then, it's up to me!" declared the aide grouchily. "What'll I do—holler?"

"Good Lord, no!" snapped March. "Sneak back here and give the word."

A scuffing along the grit of the path indicated that the man had gone on his errand. After a few moments March voiced some of his anxiety, disguising it as much as he was able by a tone of contempt:

"Look here, Spratt. You seem to be afraid of that crowd, all of a sudden. How much lying have you been doing to me about them having no fighting streak?"

"Most any crowd o' men will fight *some,* won't they? Don't expect, do you, to have 'em dig it up and hand it over to you?"

Then Scott and Neptune heard something to clinch their previous satisfaction over the report that Spratt had brought to Tuzzer.

March growled the dissatisfaction roused by second thoughts. "We ought to have brought guns—blank-fire cartridges, anyway."

Spratt offered something in the way of insolence. "Things seem diff'runt in the night than they do in the daytime, don't they?"

"*You* seem to be doing your best to start something different, Spratt."

Spratt shrugged.

"All I've done to date is to start you and your crowd toward a darn good make. If you think I'm showing any kind of a mean disposition, Mr. March, mebbe you can take the hint."

"What hint?"

"That I can show a cussed sight meaner one if any dirt is done to me. The minute that stuff is brought up on top o' the sand, it can be made mighty dangerous by any feller that feels a call to use his tongue to git a square deal. You know what I mean and enough has been said."

"Yes, that'll be about enough," acknowledged March with venom. "And no more talk from anybody!"

The precaution was necessary; the shudding of oars was more plainly audible; appearing around the lower jaw of the cove two boats made dark blots against the phosphorescence stirred by the oars.

THEN there was the grating of keels on sand. Soon the scout returned up the path. Scott and Neptune could not hear his whispered report, but the movement of March's party revealed that the conditions were favorable for an attack.

Crouching men filed away over the

brow of the slope. They eased themselves along cautiously, using stout cudgels and their shovels as props in their descent. Tuzzer, crouching beside Scott, took advantage of the departure to say something in the way of warning, whispering: "There's only one man to be afeared of in the March bunch—the sneak himself!"

Scott's grunt was eloquent of incredulity.

"I mean it! Because 'e's such a coward!" insisted the old man. "'E's sure to be carrying a gun on his hip to save 'is skin in a pinch. If you mean to tackle him, Scotty, watch sharp out for yourself."

Neptune gave a series of soft calls like the *cheepings* of a sleepy, roosting bird.

Moving without sound, he went ahead to the edge of the slope, and his men followed as silent as so many shadows of their leader. They did not keep to the path, but spread out among the spruce clumps and juniper clusters in a far-flung line of approach, forming a human seine, whose meshes could be narrowed to net the parties on the beach. It was perfection in method of stalking; it was sublimation of the ancient Indian tactics, as Neptune had trained his men in past times. Here and there, to right and left, cricket chirps signaled the extension of the flanks.

Neptune and Scott held the center, moving forward in close proximity to the path. Tuzzer attended on his friend. After a few minutes the stalking force heard that for which they were alertly listening. The excitement on the beach broke out. Yells, raucous profanity, thwacks, groans and threats—it was a veritable riot.

Rising over all the tumult, from a position on the hillside, a call was voiced shrilly. It was partly the scream of a gull in flight, a sustained sound broken by wavering notes. It was the Abnaki war cry, rendered in all its piercing volume, its portentous eeriness, by Chief Neptune.

Though Scott was waiting for the cry and was prepared for it, nevertheless, his scalp prickled. Instantly fire flared in the resinous mass of the heaped tinder on the beach.

Now a man came scrambling up the path in desperate haste. His feet slipped on the loose gravel and he fell down; then, quickly rising, he plunged on. It was perfectly plain that he had not been in the gray below. He was appearing too promptly; evidently he must have been halfway up the slope when the war cry sounded and the flame flashed.

Tuzzer's mariner eyes were keen.

"It's March, Scotty! Might 'a' knowed he'd be sneaking behind."

Scott leaped from covert and flung himself on the fugitive, grasping throat and wrist with simultaneous thrust of hands. He throttled March's yell, he twisted the wrist till the captive's hand dropped a gun he was trying to bring to bear on Scott's body.

Again Neptune screeched the war cry, this time signaling for attack.

Scott shook March with the viciousness a terrier puts into punishment of a rat.

"For once in your life you're going to face a thing you've started!"

The captor ran down the path in the trail of Neptune and dragged March at heel, in a smother of loose gravel. The fire in the tinder was roaring, sending up broad sheets of illumination; all parts of the beach were brilliantly lighted.

The two gangs had been fighting in scattered groups. This astounding new development snapped all their attention off their own affair. They blinked at the fire, then separated, each from his antagonist, as they formed into two parties, brig's crew and island men. Then the *Canaquin* contingent started on the run for their boats.

LEAPING down from the slope, a file of Indians barred the way to the crew's goal. When the fugitives kept on, in spite of a sharp command, the Indians whipped up their bows and flashed arrows, each picking at short range his target. They chose thigh or calf, and the arrows bit sharply and stuck in place with the short brads, till the recipients yanked them away or dislodged them by leaps in the air, yelling in pain.

The March adherents had started for the slope. Instantly they joined their cries of agony to the howls of the other victims, yelling stridently, like pigs threatened by the knife. They plucked out arrows and stamped on the shafts.

Then all the harried dodgers desperately made sorties, in groups or singly, trying to gain the boats or hillside, as their respective interests lay. But stinging arrows continually admonished them. Indians emerged here and there from coverts, checking every dash, adroitly planting a brad in a cushion of flesh.

The bow-and-arrow warriors worked in absolute silence and with unerring aim. There was something of the inexorable in their performance. When they moved in slowly, making the mesh a close-woven barrier against escape, the men who had been battering each other a few minutes before went herding into one group, close to the leaping fire.

"We quit!" bellowed Mawson, subdued finally, after he had grabbed two especially torturing arrows off his person and had snapped them over his knee. This surrender was indorsed by hoarse shouts from the men who flocked around him.

Scott decided that this was the right time to attend to certain social amenities in the way of a presentation.

He had not loosed his clutch on March. The captive was no longer resisting after a manhandling that had put him thoroughly into a funk. When he heard Mawson's voice, March groveled in really abject fear.

"Let me go! Let me slide out!" he implored. "Come along to the village with me, and I'll hand you a thousand dollars, so help me Heaven!"

Scott remained as grimly mute and saturnine as the others of Chief Neptune's men.

Tuzzer was unable to restrain himself from speech.

"Ow! It would sure be a shyme to break up the party!" The broad glare of the flames lighted all faces, and Tuzzer winked at Scott. "I've been swearing about a Injun's idees on the comic side o' things. Now I'm tyking back all the cuss words! It's too bad this can't be acted out on the styge of the music hall."

AT this point Scott proceeded to stage that which was not comedy. He advanced toward Mawson, thrusting along March, who made desperate attempts to resist, digging his heels into the sand, writhing, imploring.

Mawson leaped forward, yelling oaths, whirling his fists, making ready to wreak vengeance on this recognized hijacker. Scott threw March behind him with such force that the latter fell on the beach.

"Straddle him, Ben Tuzzer!"

Mawson tried to dodge past Scott, but lunged against barring arms.

"This mucker is no friend of mine, Mawson, but I'm not handing him over to you to be punched."

"I'm going to kill him!" exclaimed Mawson.

In his tempest of rage Mawson struck at Scott, but the latter parried the blows. "Mind your ways, man! I've had itching knuckles of my own ever since you said your say to me on the brig!"

"You're a sneak on your own account! Take that for meddling!" He swung and landed savagely on the side of Scott's head.

"Now," shouted Tuzzer from his perch astride March, "you've asked for it, Mawson, and that syme you're going to git."

On the part of Scott it was cool punishment of the attacker's blind fury. He struck deliberately over Mawson's windmill arms and felled the assailant. Then the victor picked up the half senseless man and flung him against Kragg, who came diving forward to take part. Kragg was bowled over and lay prone under Mawson, who squirmed torpidly.

The crew of the *Canaquin* remained huddled near the fire. This display of muscle put a damper on all ambition to interfere.

Scott strode to Mawson and yanked him to his feet, speaking, his face close to Mawson's face:

"You'll be given your chance to settle your score with the man. But there's another course to hold for this trick at the wheel." When Mawson was released, he sagged back onto the sand. The shovels brought by the rival gangs had been thrown here and there on the beach.

Neptune's men were collecting the tools and piling them in a heap.

The chief walked to Scott's side.

"You shall give all the orders, Tarramuk." Neptune added dryly: "I think the big boss has shown them it's best to obey."

"They're a mean bunch of white rabs, chief! I know how to talk to such."

Scott made sure that the cordon of Indians was without a gap. Then he clicked into speech and action.

"Look you, men, all of you! And you, March!" Tuzzer obeyed a gesture and allowed the captive to struggle up. "Each take a shovel from that pile. If one of you lags or tries to dodge away, he'll be made a pin cushion! On with you, single file, behind your leader!"

Another gesture appointed Tuzzer as that leader.

March picked up a shovel, then he cursed rebelliously and flung the tool on the sand. Although Mawson was at some distance, sitting on the beach, recovering from Scott's blow, March dared to exhibit this flash of mutiny.

"Ah, I forget," apologized Scott. "You have not yet had your taste of the pep that makes the others so willing to prance to the job. You shall have two doses, so you may catch up!"

An Indian gravely obeyed the signal of Scott's upflung hand and delivered two arrows with calculated accuracy. Instantly March leaped for his shovel and joined the line of parade. Scott held his place and reviewed the procession.

"Keep your distance from your hijacker," commanded Scott, when Mawson staggered along. "I promise you that you shall get at him to his hurt, with your tongue, in a way your fists can never do. At the right time and place, however, Mawson."

When Mr. Tuzzer stamped his heel on a section of the sand, he had manifestly put away all his gnawing grief connected with the sacrifice of the hoard. Beyond question he was hugely enjoying the situation; he was gay, triumphant, and he beamed on Neptune. Then he turned on the herded captives and scowled balefully, when he commanded:

"Dig, you tarriers—dig!"

Encompassed by the bow-and-arrow guards, the lined-up toilers drove their shovels into the sand. It was packed hard, and the work required muscle.

Scott patrolled the line and admonished the slackers. Several times he found it necessary to call for a stimulating arrow. He was obliged to curb Mr. Tuzzer's urgent appeals for more of the same, accompanied by the sotto-voce lament: "For all I'm giving up, I ought to be paid in fun, at any rate!"

PLAINLY enough, all the diggers were puzzled by this twist in affairs. But Spratt was most utterly bewildered. At first he strove to make use of his supposed understanding with Tuzzer, begging in asides to be let off the job. However, the old man kept an especially sharp watch on Spratt, with constant threats to call for brad persuasion.

"I've already had three of 'em, Ben. I don't need no more," muttered Spratt. "But this is a cussed way to use your old friend and pardner."

"You're doing what you come for, ain't you? You're digging it up, ain't you? What's all the growl about?"

"But what's going to be done with it?"

Mr. Tuzzer ventured no retort. He was wholly in the dark, himself, on that point. Scott had refused enlightenment. The old man had not dared put questions to Neptune. Lamentably unversed in the classics, Mr. Tuzzer had been rolling over in his mind the chief's obscure allusion to a sacrifice—a something to Bacchus! Tuzzer was having particular trouble with that phrase.

"At any rate," he meditated, looking down on Spratt, straining at his toil in the trench, "whatever is meant about tobaccy, there's going to be something here for the critters to put in their pipe and smoke—so wot the 'ell!"

In course of time stained wooden cases were uncovered.

"Drool, damn you!" mumbled Tuzzer. "This is sure the red-hot center of a bootlegger's hell—and not a drop to drink!"

As soon as a case was dislodged from the sand, the salvage was carried to the

smooth beach and deposited. The pile of cases kept growing.

Tuzzer got out his big wallet, secured the paper on which he had made his figures in the past, licked the end of a bit of lead pencil, and wrote, as the cases were piled.

"Two hundred and ninety," he summed up. "Me 'n' the matey sure done a better job than I'd figgered on."

While the work of excavating had been in progress, several Indians were fashioning torches at the fire, wadding bark into the split ends of sticks. When Neptune gave the command they lighted the torches. A score of tribesmen were provided with flares that spread wide radiance. Scott ordered each of his white laborers to shoulder a case of whisky. Then the line was marshaled to the path leading up the slope. The armed Indians flanked the procession.

It was a difficult struggle for men loaded in this fashion, their hands occupied. March fell several times, and at each fall there was a revelatory crash and clatter of glass. When he picked up his burden, whisky poured down over him from the cracks in the case. Then he flung down the load violently, declaring:

"I won't be made a jackass. I quit!"

Such rebellion needed no commands. A bowstring's twang broke an impressive silence, and March's shriek of pain followed. He picked up the case and toiled on, choking with the fumes of the liquor from his soaked garments.

Mr. Tuzzer confided to Scott:

"He never expected he'd be turning up his nose at twenty-year-old stuff!"

"Aren't you doing the same thing, yourself, this night, Ben Tuzzer? And being a good bit gay about it?"

"Ow, yes!" admitted the old man, with more of placid resignation than he had shown at any previous time. "And being as how that's the case, I'd be much obleeged if you'll tell me where the stuff is being took, and what's to be the end of it. Only a few minits ago I was put into a hole when I couldn't answer Mister Spratt's polite question."

"I won't tell you, Ben Tuzzer. It would be taking the edge off the further fun you'll soon be having."

This additional reference to a comic aside of the affair was almost enough to upset Tuzzer's hard-won equanimity. But he held a firm check on himself and trailed with Scott beside the panting burden carriers.

THEY reached the high land and went across a plateau to the edge of a cliff which broke sharply, to make a sheer descent to jagged ledges massed between the cliff and sea. Chief Neptune marched ahead to this spot of his selection for the final rites in the libation to Bacchus. Scott hurried along the line and took his place beside the chief.

When the first of the file arrived at the edge of the cliff, Scott commanded sharply: "Halt! Heave!"

A case of whisky was launched out into the night. There was a hush, while it hurtled in its descent of fifty feet. A crash from the depths of the abyss followed. Between the ranks of the Indians, who prodded lagging carriers with the sharp points of bows, the whisky toters advanced, one by one, and cast their burdens over the cliff. There were twenty-five men in the line of bearers.

Mr. Tuzzer counted crashes to the bitter end and sighed. Then he perked up.

"As the feller said when he had split the ice cake with his nob: 'Well, at any rate, the ice is now broke!' I'm thinking the wust of it is over for me!"

"About face! March!" commanded Scott. "Down to the beach for another load!"

The Indian guards were wary, but he took no chances with his white mob. He went back with them. It was a long and wearying business for those sullen, unwilling performers. Each trip covered considerably more than half a mile, and the ascent to the high land became more and more of a struggle. Louis March, falling often, was a saturated, dripping sponge.

"But all on the outside! Too bad!" was Tuzzer's questionable consolation, when he grinned into March's contorted features.

Mr. Tuzzer, chief sacrificer, was making the most of the affair. He remained at the edge of the cliff to greet the re-

turning acolytes of Bacchus. His everlasting, statistic-laden speech was vinegar on wounds.

"Smush! There bangs another! Twenty years old, twelve bottles, ev'ry bottle could be split four slices, two or three hundred round dollars heaved out of your hands, every time you fire a case to the sharks! Ow! Ain't you reckless with prime Golden El'funt!"

At the end, the tuggers and luggers were stumbling slowly on sagging legs. When he flung his last case, March fell, fainting in his weariness. The dawn was glimmering in the east.

Scott pulled March to his feet.

"Come to yourself, man. You yet have some business to do with Mr. Mawson. That business best be attended to before a magistrate."

"My Lord! Are you going to drag me in front of my uncle?"

"He's the only magistrate on the island, so he has told me."

"But this is no case for him—or for the law! He'll kick me out—off the island!"

"Even that will be better than being *killed* on the island—by Mawson," was Scott's rejoinder, his face grim. "This is no longer a matter for Chief Neptune or me. We have done our part. Now we march to headquarters."

Flanked by the Indians, the prisoners were herded on their way.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FAIR PLEDGE.

THE march to the village was not hurried. Chief Neptune and Scott were timing the arrival, so there would not be too long a wait before the arising of Fletcher March. And, too, the captives were in no condition for a hurried march. They were hollow-eyed after toil and vigil; they shuffled along, cowed and exhausted. They mumbled ugly protests at the prospect of appearing in this plight under the gaze of the villagers. But the beleaguering guard, making a few examples of offenders, effectually put a stop to all nonsense in the way of attempted flight.

"It's queer how times change," observed Neptune to Scott, raising an eyebrow to point satiric comment. "In the old days the Indians marched captives away into the wilderness, and the captives were sad. To-day we march the white men back to where they belong, and they are much more sad."

Louis March came out of his dolor after a time, whipping himself into frantic rage. He swung from the line and trudged beside Scott, who flung up a hand to check a guard who was aiming an arrow.

"You don't understand what a frightful mess you're putting me into. Mawson is sure to bawl me out in front of my uncle. I don't stand any too well in the family, anyway. I'll take the gaff on the rum business, if it's kept away from Uncle Fletcher. But my family affairs don't belong in the thing. Give me a chance."

"It's none of my business how you stand with your family, Mr. March. But as to the rest, for once in your life you're going to face the trouble you have stirred up for yourself."

The other clacked his fists together in a frenzy. "Look here, you fool, it's all arranged for me to marry Tamlyn Osborn. Now she will have her excuse to check me out, and my uncle will back her."

Scott blistered the young man with a look. "Did she need any more excuse?" He grasped a handful of March's whisky-soaked coat and ran him back into the line. "I have been square with you, man to man, holding Mawson away from you. The other business, I say, is no concern of mine!"

Swinging back to join Neptune, Scott was not exactly sure of having spoken the whole truth, but he was in no mood to split hairs or to set himself up as a little god of unselfishness. He was permitting human nature full swing and was quite content to let matters run as they were headed.

Households that were not astir when the procession entered the village were roused by the clamor of those who were up and about. Women came running and strove to break through the Indian ranks that hedged in the captives.

Wives screamed questions at husbands, who had been away all night, and who were now stirring sharper anxiety by this manner of return. The husbands were doggedly silent, not knowing what to say. This attitude aggravated the situation. The captives were pocketed in a close cordon of guards in front of the March store.

Tuzzer begged and received permission to run and rout up the magistrate. The old man had private designs in this errand and satisfied those designs by the clamor he set up outside the mansion. Between his yells he assured himself:

"She's just the kind of a girl who'll tumble on deck. And if she ain't there to see and 'ear, the edge will be all took off for Scotty."

The head of Fletcher March was shoved out suddenly from an upper window. He blurted savage questions, which Mr. Tuzzer shut off promptly by the extra volume of his own voice.

"Jedge, this is the day and date when you've got the biggest jedging job o' your whole life up till now, and it calls for hopping to it bright and early. Look down there in front o' your store!"

The magistrate of Tremont shaded his eyes against the level sun and peered and blinked.

Mr. Tuzzer had an opportunity to cast glances at other windows in the mansion and drew certain conclusions from the movements of draperies.

Pitching his voice still higher, he informed Magistrate March and the world in general:

"There you see—bunched, hit or miss, till you come and sort 'em—rum piruts, hijackers, fighters, renegades, and sech-like. Your own nephy is the high-cock-alorum cap'n o' one gang, and if you can't smell, even from here, the licker he's sopped in, then your nose is sech that the sweet lily o' the valley will hang its head in sorrow, as you pass by. Look at——"

March banged down the window to shut out this torrent of speech; behind the glass his visage of horrified amazement was shown for a moment to Mr. Tuzzer, then was snapped away.

"I figger as how court will be opening mighty sudden," muttered the volunteer crier.

TUZZER backed away across the lawn, squinting at the window, where he had seen the betraying movement of draperies. The face of Tamlyn Osborn appeared, framed between the edge of the curtains closely drawn about her cheeks.

"What has happened?"

She spoke guardedly, but her tones carried.

Mr. Tuzzer whipped off his headdress and bowed low.

"Most ev'rything, miss, with Tarra-muk top hole! You never did need no beauty sleep, so I 'opes you'll 'urry to be on 'and."

She disappeared, and Mr. Tuzzer went on his way, feeling that he had done pretty well with the time she had given him, getting in a nice compliment both for Scott and herself. Magistrate March arrived at the store in a dressing gown.

"He looks more like a jedge that way," Tuzzer stated to Scott. "Ought to wear it for all his trials."

While March was getting poise and breath, after mounting the platform, Tamlyn Osborn arrived in her turn. Tuzzer admiringly commented on her appearance, and his impudent freedom was sharply reprimanded by Scott.

First of all, March bored his nephew with a stare inexorable, condemnatory.

"Uncle Fletcher, this is a devilish outrage on me! Order these infernal Indians to let me out of this mob."

The magistrate's attitude was significant. He did not reply to his nephew.

Chief Neptune slowly moved forward, standing close to the platform.

"How do you and your men happen to be on this island, after giving me to understand you had gone for good?"

"Magistrate March, we remained to do some good, as we view it. Will you listen to the facts?"

"Yes!"

Deliberately, laconically, the chief stated the facts.

On the silence, while March surveyed captives and captors, his big upper lip clamped down, the hard lines in his face

masking his emotions. Mawson bellowed his own accusation.

"That renegade is your nephew, eh? He's a dirty hijacker and a coward in the job, to boot! He robbed me on the high seas, like he has robbed others. I'm only a rum pirate, but I ain't a thief, and right now I'm telling the truth."

The grim arabesque of Fletcher March's countenance revealed nothing.

Mawson broke out again.

"Considering what I confess I am, sir, my word may cut little ice with you. But it's the God's truth, man to man, and I——"

March put up his hand. "That will do! I believe you!"

The nephew yelped stridently, trying to break through the guards:

"Damnation, Uncle Fletcher! Are you taking the words of Indians and rum pirates?"

"Yes, when those words are backing certain things I have found out for myself, including what I have discovered in taking an inventory of my stock," declared the uncle relentlessly. "I'll hear nothing more from you.

He looked over the heads of prisoners and Indians, surveying the faces of the massed throng of the villagers. He had been a tyrant, a usurer, a merciless employer, but his people were conscious of pity when he spoke out frankly. He said:

"I'm hiding nothing from you, neighbors! We're one big family on this island, after all. I know all your troubles; you may as well know mine. I have tried to disbelieve stories about Louis March. I have made allowances for a young man's follies. I have chosen to overlook his thefts from my goods, hoping he would awake and turn to the rightabout. But this public shame of the March family is the end between my nephew and myself."

With his gaze he singled Louis from the rest.

"You are to leave this island, sir, as soon as you can collect your possessions and carry them to your boat. My men will help, so you may have no excuse for delay. I allow you one hour."

Louis raised quavering laments and protests, but his uncle thundered: "If you dare speak to me again, Ill send you to the main this minute in one of my vessels and dump you, without a change of clothing."

Mawson yelled after the retreating outcast:

"You're going to settle with me, too! Don't forget that!"

"But not on this island," declared the magistrate, with emphasis. "As to whatever else you have been doing here, Mawson, I claim no jurisdiction over you. Your boats are still in Osborn Cove, I believe. March there now with your men, get those boats, and leave the harbor as soon as you can."

The master and crew of the *Canaquin* obeyed precipitately. In their haste they gave no attention to Spratt, who started with them, but swung about and hurried back to face Fletcher March.

"Sir, I was shanghaied onto that brig. I'm an honest fisherman. Won't you give me a job?"

"Go to the wharf and wait till the tender puts off from the harbor." March turned and walked along the platform, going toward his house.

"This time I say good-by in earnest," Chief Neptune called. "I leave to-day with my men."

"Suit yourselves! I've got something else to think about!" The autocrat did not halt his stride. He passed Tamlyn, eyes on the ground, looking neither to right nor left.

"Do you go with us?" asked the chief, turning to Scott.

"Yes, sir, if Tuzzer and I are welcome."

"You are very welcome to cruise with us and make a visit to our village on the Quoddy Bay." He passed to the van of his waiting tribesmen, and they trudged slowly away behind him in single file.

Tuzzer looked up anxiously into the immobile face of Scott who waited, showing a bit of hesitancy. The young man had been stealing timid glances at Tamlyn Osborn, but now fully aware that she was gazing in his direction, he avoided the presumption of seeming to seek an interview with her.

"Where's your manners, lad?" snapped Tuzzer impatiently. "I can see she has summat to say to you."

UNABLE to summon Scott's attention by the spell of her regard, she stepped down from the platform and said in low tones, when she was close beside him: "You're in a hurry, I know, to go with the others. If you'll allow, I'll walk a short distance with you."

Promptly the old man scurried on ahead.

"I'll not put you to the trouble of walking, Miss Osborn."

"I choose to do so. I have a few words to say to you away from the ears of these villagers."

After a few paces at his side, she spoke out impulsively:

"In the past I have not been at all careful in hiding from you—or, from anybody else, for that matter—my feelings in regard to Louis March. I've been persecuted, and the persecution would have continued if it were not for what Mr. Fletcher March has been shown to-day. I give you the credit for exposing the character of his nephew. I am thanking you for doing so. That is why I have asked to speak to you. And that is all, sir!" She halted suddenly. "I wish you a pleasant journey to wherever you are going, Mr. Tarramuk. Good-by!"

He faced her and took the hand she extended. He held it, shook it nervously and with rather uncalled-for violence, and instantly dropped it. He was dumb, agitated, helpless, blinking into her eyes that revealed a flicker of frank amusement. More of her ridicule, though her tones had been honest in the gratitude she expressed:

"You're making fun of me," he faltered.

She shook her head.

"No—not exactly that, sir! But I'm doing my best to take a share in the fun you seem to be having in this masquerade costume." Her demand was blunt and jumped him. "Who and what are you, anyway?"

"I'm a plain fool of a Scotchman, Miss Osborn."

"Why did you come to Grand Tremont?"

"To save old Ben Tuzzer from making himself a fool, too, by digging up whisky he buried twenty years ago. So I found myself playing Indian as part o' the game."

"A very harmless sport, sir, and it has had excellent results, especially for me. I thank you again. Now what else have you to tell me about yourself?"

He slowly dragged from off his tousled thatch the feather headdress.

"Nothing else just now, Miss Osborn. Mayhap you can understand what I mean. I'm tongue-tied, and I'm glad it's so, for this time and place. Otherwise, you'd be scorning a rover for making still more of a fool of himself by his wild talk. And noo I'm a-telling ye!" He let himself go in the broadest Scotch dialect he could manage and grinned, more at ease. "Tho I gang awa' the noo, certain may ye ken I'll be coming once more to claim the hospitality ye owe me by your fair pledge!"

"I own to the debt, sir, but you must tell me your name."

"Now the name could be only words—of no worth to your understanding. I'll keep to myself the name and polish it, along wi' my tongue, and I'll bring both back when I feel I have improved the twa."

"Then we are mutually in debt, with pledges, and we shall pay honestly, I'm sure!" Her smile was radiant with promise.

Now he reached for her hand at her side; he raised it to his lips. He retreated rapidly, facing her as he walked.

"It was only the seal of the pledge!" was the smiling apology.

Several times, hurrying up the slope, he halted and turned and saluted her with upflung arm. Each time she gave him a cordial gesture in return.

"Seems to be moving as slick as could be expected, considering short acquaintance and rush o' business in other lines," was Tuzzer's complacent comment, when Scott joined the old man.

"I'll have none o' your jabber on a very choice and touchy subject, Ben Tuzzer. I have owned to her I'm a fool. I

said to her you are a worse fool. And she pities the two of us!" He raised his palm in threat. "Shut up!"

But, standing at a safe distance over the brow of the slope, when Scott turned, after giving a farewell wave of his hand, Tuzzer inquired amiably:

"When do *we* come back to Grand Tremont?"

Scott caressed the reply with smiling lips.

"When I think my name is worth while to carry to her. When she may think it someways fit for the inside o' the ring on her pretty finger. Bold and reckless talk for such as me, eh?"

"You're a 'ero already, ain't you? A 'oot of a 'ero you'd be, to talk anyways else about gitting a girl, if you're in love with her."

"But it's looking high, Ben Tuzzer!"

The old man came back with acerbity.

"As a good sailorman, would you take bearings, lad, from a tin lantern, when you can look up and steer your true course by a star?"

The book-length novel in the next issue of THE POPULAR *is called "Painted in Gold." The author is Roy Hinds, whose many short stories in this magazine have earned him a solid reputation with readers who appreciate a crisp, well-articulated tale. "Painted In Gold" starts on top speed and holds the pace until the dramatic dénouement.*

A DESERT DWELLER

NOT all towns look alike, even in the United States, where the categorical imperative of standardization has done its best to house us in uniform cells and dress us in the same garments. From the tiny village to the city of millions, the diversity of aspect and natural setting are sufficiently varied to satisfy most legitimate tastes for a home and a habitation. But the desert of the Mojave claims the unique town, for it has but one permanent inhabitant and she is a woman. Mrs. Lydia Nixon is the only all-the-year-round resident of Llano del Rio, where for two years she has been mayor, boss, and day laborer—all in one.

Llano del Rio once boasted a population of two thousand, when Job Harriman founded his city which was to be the materialistic embodiment of his communistic dreams—or nightmare. When reality and the inevitable element of human nature shattered this dream, the people, almost in a body, moved away. But Mrs. Nixon did not move; she decided to "stick." The nearest dwelling was twenty miles away; the water supply had failed, and the crops were choked with dust. Nothing daunted, Mrs. Nixon left her town only long enough to secure a stock of groceries, necessary supplies, and gasoline and auto supplies. In the largest house she at once established a service station for motorists.

To-day every traveler in the desert knows Mrs. Nixon. Her project has prospered. She has made money, and she has plans to pipe water from the wells from which she now carts her supplies. Transient guests are accommodated in the old adobe houses, and her prices for food and gasoline and water are sufficiently low to attract travelers passing through the Mojave. We wouldn't elect to live in Llano del Rio, but this dweller in the desert must find it sufficiently attractive to elect to live in a town of one, for she obviously prefers it to the many hundreds of towns in the region. John the Baptist lived in the desert, but John was a saint and the forerunner of Christ. Perhaps the voices which spoke to John the Baptist in the desert, also speak to this woman—voices which speak a wisdom that cannot be heard in crowds.

Blood Atonement

By Patrick and Terence Casey

Authors of "The Flying Serpents," "The Man in the Barrel," Etc.

When little Esteban Ojara saw that dashing bandit, Jacinto Quesada, he felt the lure of so bright a Robin Hood career. But he had other reasons for wanting to join Jacinto in the eternal war with the Civil Guard.

THE inn where Esteban lived, with his widowed father, stood, shaded by three crooked cork-oak trees, on a shelf at the head of a box cañon, in the wild Sierra Nevadas. The place was called "The Tavern of the Devotion to the Cross." But it was more a wine shop than a proper hotel. The beds, to be had at a price, were merely piles of straw on hurdles of rough timber. There was no tarrying from day to day; yet, because there was no other inn within many leagues, and more because of the fine quality of the wine, travelers were continually climbing the hills and penetrating the cañon.

Esteban was an oddly precocious child. One look into his eyes, a sea-blue and big as saucers with wonder at the world, and you would know him for a deep little pitcher and a noticing youngster, such a noticing youngster that you could never surmise what stores of knowledge might be stored in that oldish head.

For one thing, he noticed that certain travelers made the tavern their frequent rendezvous. That was because of the unique quality of his father's wine, he knew; it was such a ruby red and of so glorious a bouquet and instant headiness! These men would hold their thirst for long miles of scorching sun and thick dust, so that ultimately they might wet their sandy throats at this place of most excellent vintage.

His father was a moody man, sullen and irascible, when the wine-selling business fell to a lull about his ears. But in the presence of wayside custom, he bloomed—he expanded. He was like a flower in the benignancy of the sun; he became actually rosy of skin; he seemed to ooze oily affability through his every pore; he was one overlapping smile. A

great whale of a man, with the strength of a bull, he had the voice of a herd of bulls in full bellow.

Whenever one of his faithful customers dropped in for a half hour of wine drinking and gossip of the highroad, it was like an earthquake and cannonade rolled into one. Such shouting of rounded, caballeroso oaths! Such explosions of mighty wonder and joy! Such hilarious laughter! The very tavern rocked, as in the inchoation of seismic tremors and rubbed brick on adobe brick. And Esteban, like a little frightened owl, fled to a remote dark corner of the taproom and remained there, quiet as death, his pinched, pale face eaten up by his great solemn eyes.

His father always escorted the old crony out to the hitching rail, where waited the tiny ass or oversized mule. Standing bareheaded in the stark sunlight, while the man mounted, he would call down the blessing of God on his head and mutter a hundred adios. His very fervency of farewell usually appeared to make the wayfarer vaguely uneasy. He would turn back his head and, waving a hand placatingly, shout:

"Don't take on so, Pepe, my friend. I'll be dropping in on you again this day week."

"Next week—so?"

"Aye, next week, if it be the will of God!"

Esteban's father seemed always waiting for that. Then, his mighty lungs expanded, he would bellow:

"Aye, this day week, if it be the will of the Civil Guard!"

And then would peal forth from him unbelievable, terrible laughter. He would rock from heel to toe, his head thrown back, and the arteries upon forehead and neck knuckling out, as if about to burst. If any idler stood near by, he would be sure to impart to him a share of his merriment—this, usually, by means of a clap on the back, fit to shatter his backbone or knock out his teeth, like a mouthful of seeds.

Esteban never laughed, however. He had seen his father so far gone with the stock joke that, having thrown himself prone in the dust of the roadway, that strange father lay rolling and kicking, convulsed with laughter. But Esteban saw no joke in the matter, only a grim terror. For, despite all the extravagance of horseplay upon the part of his father, Esteban sensed there was no true mirth at the deep spring of it all.

At fourteen he had learned that all was not as it outwardly seemed with Pepe Ojara, his father, with The Tavern of the Devotion to the Cross, with all those old dusty cronies of the road. These last, with their pack trains of tiny gray asses, wearing silver bells, were not the humdrum drab fellows they seemed. They were contrabandists, who smuggled Cuban cigars and Philippine silks and other dutiable goods up from Gibraltar into Spain.

But what surprised Esteban the most was the discovery that his own father, Pepe Ojara, the loud-voiced Olympian, was not simply the innkeeper he appeared, but also the agent and fence of these smugglers. The men, who were forever dropping in, always left with him packets of goods, and these he sent down the mountainside by means of other travelers who regularly called. The Tavern of the Devotion to the Cross was but a relay station on that underground railway of the contrabandists.

UP to the tavern in a swirl of dust, one blowy afternoon, rode a handsome young fellow on horseback. He wore corduroy leggings, a sheepskin coat, and a Cordovan sombrero, that once had been white. His dress was that of the typical Manchegan herdsman, and he looked like one of the cowboys who live the wild, lonely life of the cattle country to the north, save that he guided his steaming, mouse-colored pony with his knees and heels, and in both hands, half raised, he held a Mauser carbine, and kept looking back the way he had come. He was no vaquero. He was that youthful bandit, Jacinto Quesada.

He was being pursued for his crimes of brigandage by two members of the Civil Guard. For a week they had been on his trail, chasing him relentlessly up the long, climbing miles of winding goat paths. He desired food and a place to

sleep, he told Esteban's father. He had eaten not at all that day, while for three nights he had feared to close an eye in sleep.

Esteban's father grumbled in his throat. It was strange, the change in him. He did not appear to relish this advent of the bandit. Quesada was too forthright an outlaw for him. He was bringing the dogs of the police direct to the tavern on a fresh scent. All would be discovered, Pepe feared—the fact that the inn was a smugglers' relay station—that he had dutiable goods unstamped in his wine cellar. But he made ado to build a fire and cook food, the while Quesada strove to appease his gnawing hunger, with choice mulled wine.

Esteban sat on his little stool in a far corner of the taproom and watched the bandit eat. What a handsome, round, arrogant young head, he had; and what even white teeth! Here was no sneaking smuggler who drank and talked too much. Quesada was a type to fire his boyish heart. He stuck up troops of caballeros and their ladies out for a bull-baiting on the tawny plains. He had hands of gold for robbing diligences in the corridors of the mountains. He had courage and recklessness, and yet he couldn't be so old—no more than twenty!

Esteban's father seemed quite perturbed about those two pursuing Civil Guards. Every little while, he left the bandit to stride to the doorway and gaze down the cañon. Quesada gave these evidences of nervousness and fear little heed at first; he was calmly nonchalant. But, as the innkeeper persisted, his restlessness got on the bandit's nerves.

"What's all this to-do about a poor brace of policemen?" he asked, eying Pepe with a certain resentment. "The hounds of Spain do not inflict punishment on you inkneepers for housing a bandit. They know you can do no less!" There was grim threat in this last.

Pepe Ojara was evasive. It was nothing, he said, only he had never before sheltered a bandit under his humble roof. And such a bandit, the talk of the countryside, the Robin Hood of the two Spains! It was too much honor, indeed, the Señor Quesada had done him!

"Oh! Is that it? Well, my friend," said the youthful brigand maliciously, "maybe you shelter here something better than any poor starved bandit and his sweating, winded pony! This would be a likely place for smugglers, it strikes me. Now wouldn't it, señor? Did it never suggest itself so?"

THAT proved the last straw to Ojara. Without answering, he leaped toward where Esteban sat on his little stool, his eyes big and shining like silver dollars. He got the boy by the nape of the neck, yanked him to his feet, and sent him tumbling out the doorway, with a kick and bellowed instructions that he run to the brink of the shelf and made certain for the señor that the police were nowhere in sight.

The boy was only too glad to be of service, to act as the eyes of his hero. But his father shouldn't have been so brutal, particularly there before his idol. He fairly hated that strange father. With tears struggling in his great solemn eyes, he raced to the edge of the shelf and peered down the dark gorge and along the narrow trail, which curved and twisted up one side of it, like a creeping snake. He could catch no glint of the polished-leather, tricorn hats of the police nor see any sign of their telltale olive, red-trimmed uniforms.

He reported so to Quesada. But whether on account of this intelligence or because of the fear and inhospitality shown by his father, the bandit had changed his mind about remaining overnight as an unwelcome guest. It was too much bother and risk to his good host, he said. He got astride his pony again, outside the taproom door.

For once, Esteban did not hide behind one of the crooked trees to watch the leave-taking. He was nowhere about. But, had he been on hand, he could not help but have marked how different was this farewell from the usual one of his father. There was no fervent request to come again, should it be the will of God and the Civil Guard; no Olympian mirth; only a simple good-by and, when a safe distance intervened, a mumbled good riddance.

Quesada rode back the path which wound down from The Tavern of the Devotion to the Cross. He walked his pony, for there was a sheer drop to one side, of over a thousand feet. His mind buzzed with suspicions of the innkeeper, and he kept a vigilant eye ahead. It was almost as if he feared an ambush on that thin winding edge of trail.

He rounded a great rock, which threatened to tear from its moorings down into the gorge. As the head of his pony came even with the end of the boulder, he jerked the reins and, the animal abruptly halting, swung up his carbine. A long tense hush. Then he exploded:

"Who are you that stands behind that rock?"

"Esteban Ojara!" came in a child's thin voice, and the boy stepped forward.

The tavern was some distance above. With surprise, therefore, the brigand recognized the lad. His suspicions of the father redoubled.

"Are you alone?" The carbine still threatened.

"See for yourself, master! I am altogether alone."

The bandit, with his knees, guided the pony a few steps on. Little Esteban was compelled, as the horse shouldered up, to retreat in beside the boulder, so narrow was the path.

"But what do you do here, tiny one?"

"I'm here to help you, Jacinto! I could not tell you above, with my father listening. But go back to the inn and sleep. Do not fear! I myself will go below—down all these hills. I will turn back those two hounds of the police who so pester you! And then, perhaps, you will take me with you. I would be your companion, Jacinto—your *dorado,* your golden, trustworthy one! No sneaking, hiding-out smuggler like my father—I would be a grand señor bandit."

THE bandit, Jacinto Quesada, did not whistle in surprise. It mattered little to him that some of his suspicions of the innkeeper had thus been verified by the son's words. What mattered to him was the ambition, the desire to be his *dorado,* expressed in those words. He could hardly credit his ears. From his seat on the mouse-colored pony, he looked down at this tad in cotton breeches, mountaineer's shawl, and rope sandals; and strangely, it was as if he looked down at himself when he was no older than this innkeeper's brat!

He remembered that wintry gloaming, when he was but thirteen, when a red-haired, blue-eyed, burly man on horseback had ridden into Minas de la Sierra, his home village, high up in these very hills. The fellow was clad in weather-worn corduroys, and a week's golden stubble was on his broad, ruddy face. Even as Quesada himself had ridden up to The Tavern of the Devotion to the Cross that afternoon, even so had this fellow come into Minas de la Sierra—guiding his steaming rawboned black horse with his knees and heels, a Mauser carbine half raised in his hands and his head turned back the way he had come. He had been Quesada's first victim, that blond beast of prey, Pernales.

His mother had fed Pernales in her cabin, as was her right, because her husband, Jacinto's father, had been the last man of the village to be murdered by the Civil Guard. He remembered watching Pernales eat, even as this boy had watched him in the taproom, as he remembered his mother telling of the death of his father. His father had been on a smuggling expedition to Gibraltar, assisted by two trained dogs. On the sandy waste between the British Rock and Spain, the men of the Civil Guard had discovered his father unbuckling a packet of Cuban cigars from the throat of one of the retrievers. It was night. They had walked him out behind a sand dune and made him dig a grave. They had shot down Lenchito, the retriever; then they had shot down Juan Quesada, his father; and then dog and man were kicked together into the one grave and sand piled on them both. It was in the telling of this story that Jacinto Quesada had got his first impetus and desire to be a brigand and avenge the death of his father on the men of the Civil Guard.

He had waited for Pernales behind a boulder on the goat path below the village, precisely as this lad had awaited him. There was a fat and brilliant moon,

that night; it was as if a snow had fallen, the heads and shoulders of the mountains were so white. Pernales had perceived him, hiding behind the rock, and had called him out, uneasy with fear. Then had he voiced to Pernales, even what this boy had said to him: He wanted to be Pernales' *dorado,* his golden trustworthy one!

There the similarity ended. Pernales had laughed. How he had laughed! He had thrown back his great red head and guffawed, so that the cañon roared, and his horse staggered and almost fell from the path. Jacinto Quesada would not laugh at this boy and his ambition. *Provida,* no! For should he refuse his proffer of services, the lad would be bound to follow in the footsteps of his sullen father and be a smuggler, anyway. Perhaps, after the matter of a few years, when he attained to manhood, he would steal a horse and carbine, even as Quesada himself had done, and take to the road by himself, errant and free. Why not now?

Something was bothering Jacinto Quesada which he hated to admit, but yet which struck deep into his superstitious Spanish soul. He knew that, three months after he had accosted Pernales on the goat path, that bandit had been murdered, for the reward, by a peasant on a lonely hill road in the Asturias. He feared now that a refusal of this lad's services might bring on the heels of it the same dire fate which had befallen Pernales!

"Esteban of the open mouth and the big eyes," he said not unkindly, looking down at the tad, "you would recruit with Jacinto Quesada, eh? You would be a *bandolero,* no? You would even turn back these *podencos* of police—what? Yet how, little man"—and he was utterly serious—"how would you do this last?"

"To tell you my plan, Quesada," said the boy judiciously, "would mean to arm you with my weapons and leave you no need of me. But, in truth, I have no set plan. I would merely pit against the stupid heads of these two policemen, my head of gold for thinking quick thoughts. I would come over them by strategy, and, if that fails, by treachery. Treachery is the strength of the weak of body who yet are strong of brain. I know I will win through my natural superiority of mind."

There was a gleam of admiration in the brown eyes of Quesada. His mind was made up.

"Esteban Ojara," he said, "you are no child. You are a man. In the back of that little head of yours, you have a plan. And as one man to another, I say: It is a bargain. You shall precede me down these hills and attempt to muzzle this brace of hounds. We will yet ride together, you and I, through the two Spains, holding up travelers on the *caminos* and outwitting right and left the men of the Civil Guard!"

"A word is enough between men," said the youthful Ojara seriously. "I accept the promise given, with the obligation it implies. Besides, know you, Jacinto, I myself have a certain debt to pay these police. Adios, *maestro!*"

"Go thou with God, Estebanito!"

The bandit sat his pony and watched the boy start down the path, with long mountaineer's strides. He seemed wavering in two minds, whether to return to the tavern above, or follow slowly after the lad. Suspicions of Esteban's father were buzzing in his head, like a swarm of hornets. How could he tell that the sullen fellow had not sent his son down here to beguile him into waiting behind, while the lad went on to lead the police directly to him? There were the boy's last words about a certain debt to pay these police. Perhaps the Civil Guard were protecting Pepe Ojara in his smuggling operations, and for him to turn up Quesada would be to ingratiate himself more deeply in their favor. The bandit tightened the reins, and his pony, in answer, broke into a cautious walk down the trail.

THE gusty afternoon was drawing into twilight when Esteban came in sight of that wayside shrine, called The Christ of the Pass, and heard, from beyond it, the clatter of horses' hoofs. Set in a pocket of a rock wall, under a thatched, pointed roof, and hanging from a cross was the figure of the Savior, rudely

carved of some white pine, with a tangled mop of black horsehair and dabs of red paint, depicting bleeding wounds in hands and crossed feet and side. The boy threw himself on his knees before the shrine.

The clatter of hoofbeats drew near. He caught voices.

"This is familiar ground to me," said one. "Some years back, I used to ride regularly through here to visit an inn far up in these forsaken hills—a lonely old place called The Tavern of the Devotion to the Cross."

"Ah," said the other in chesty tones, "I'll bet there was a pretty face at the journey's end! You were ever a Don Juan; it's your one great fault, Diego Vallejo!"

"Fault?" questioned the first voice with a laugh. "Better—it's a virtue, Pascual Montara, of which you are only jealous. It's too bad the good Dios did not favor you. But, *halo!* What's that ahead there—before that shrine?"

The hoofbeats stopped; but Esteban did not look up. He felt certain these men composed that patrol of the Civil Guard pursuing Quesada.

"Oh! Mi pobre padre!" he began to wail. "Oh, the poor father of me!"

One of the policemen dismounted and touched him upon the shoulder.

"What's the matter with you, little scrawny one?" he asked in a voice that he attempted to make less gruff.

The boy sat back on his hams, gulping nervously. The appearance of this policeman seemed to frighten him. The fellow's olive, red-faced uniform but poorly fitted his squat frame and uncouthly broad shoulders; it showed palpable signs of having been slept in the night before. His face was black bearded, heavy jawed; and his arms were long, with large, hairy hands. Esteban began to cry again.

"There! there! tiny one!" said the apelike policeman, Montara. "Don't be afraid. Come—tell us your trouble."

Thus encouraged, Esteban told his story, but not too glibly. His father was a *manzanillero*—a gatherer of the white-flowered manzanilla, which he sold in baskets down in the white cities of the plains. He was camped that night up in the hills. He, Esteban, had been on his way to him with the evening meal—a few poor cold sausages, a chunk of goat's cheese, some cornbread, and a bottle of wine. The young caballero riding the mouse-colored pony had stopped him and——

"Alto!" exclaimed the policeman. "A young fellow, you say, on a brownish pony? Did he look somewhat like my *compadre*—Vallejo, here?"

Esteban seemed to fear to give the other policeman, still on horseback, more than a glance, but he nodded. Yes; the man who had stolen from him his basket of food had indeed looked like this guardsman on horseback, only he was much, much younger. He was hardly more than a boy, and he had not eaten in days, he had said. But now what would his own poor father do, supperless there in the hills? He feared to return to his little mother, empty-handed, because he knew there was no more food in the cabin.

The apelike Montara looked up at his fellow guardsman on horseback.

"It's *he,* all right," he said significantly.

"Hush, you!" snapped the other. He was a man of about thirty years, with a comely tanned face and oblong Moorish eyes. He turned in his saddle to the kneeling boy.

"Which way did this caballero go with your father's supper?"

Esteban did not look up at him. But he answered: "He drove his pony across the creek to an old mud hut. He's there in that *choza,* now."

"There, now? *Dios, hombre,* where is it?" asked the two in unison.

Montara put a huge, hairy hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Get afoot, my little man, and lead the way to this hut, and, if the fellow is the man we think he is, you'll be almost glad he stole your food. Here's a peseta now, and there'll be more when we meet your friend."

"He's no friend of mine!" cried the boy. But he accepted the bright silver coin. "I'm afraid of him," he went on. "He showed his teeth when he took my

poor food, sharp white teeth, and he said he'd eat me, if I told!"

The policemen laughed quietly.

"Oh, that's all right, son," said the one on horseback. "You have nothing to fear with us along."

THE two walked their horses in the wake of the boy, as he started up the road. They slung their carbines off their shoulders and into their hands, preparatory to sudden use. Warily they glanced this way and that.

In a forested dell of the cañon, Esteban turned off to one side and broke through the brush of entangled buckthorn and genista. He was not so far from home, so he knew every foot of the way. He splashed through the frothing, boisterous, through tiny, mountain stream, the police horses nosing immediately behind him. He led the guards out into a clearing, where stood, in verity, a mud hut.

The place must have been formerly the habitat of a *manzanillero,* or else of some wood chopper. But no smoke rose now from its chimney; it appeared deserted. The single door facing them was made of rough logs, the chinks plastered with adobe. This stood tightly shut.

"He's in there!" Esteban pointed. "But I'm afraid to go farther."

The policemen hushed him, with warning fingers to their lips. They whispered together a moment, then quietly dismounted and gave over the reins of their horses into his keeping. Cautiously they crept forward in the gloaming, carbines in hand.

Esteban watched them with thumping heart. He feared they might look back. But they had eyes only for that dismal hut, with its ominously closed door.

He dropped hold of one of the reins, then, and mounted the horse belonging to Montara. With nervous, but quick, fingers, he unbuckled the flap on the saddle holster and drew forth the revolver nestling therein. He lifted the weapon and took careful aim at the bent back of the younger policeman, Vallejo.

Vallejo was a couple of steps in advance of his fellow guardsman. Just as he reached the closed door of the *choza* and made to put out his carbine to spring it open, Esteban fired. The policeman pitched forward, his head thudding against the door, dislodging some of the dry adobe in the chinks, and banging the door inward. He collapsed across his carbine on the sill—to all appearance, dead.

Montara, his squat companion, seeing him fall, with the opening of the door, thought that the shot had come from the hut. He believed the bandit, Jacinto Quesada, was hiding within. He leaped to one side, out of range of the doorway. Bringing up his carbine, he shouted the warning:

"Alto a la Guardia Civil! Halt for the Civil Guard!" It was the customary cry of warning and command of the corps.

But no answer came from the hut. Only, behind him, there rose a clatter of hoofs and a great rending and tearing of growths. Esteban, seeing Montara engrossed in covering the doorway, had taken advantage of the opportunity. The riderless horse beside him had started in fright at sound of the revolver discharged so close to his ears. With a kick on the rump, the boy had sped him on into the clearing. Then he had wheeled his own mount about and rode through the undergrowth at a gallop.

He was splashing through the tiny stream when, in his rear, sounded the crang of a carbine and again the dread call of the Civil Guard. He raced for the road, sure he was pursued. But he did not swing up that road toward the tavern at the head of the box cañon. With that policeman pressing so close behind, he did not want to enter any such blind alley. He shot at furious pace down the road toward The Christ of the Pass and the broad avenues of the plains below.

A slice of moon, like a bull's horn, sailed up in the sky, whitening the heads and shoulders of the mountains and darting long, pale slithers of light down the rock walls. Certain by then he had outdistanced pursuit, Esteban checked the gait of his lathered animal. He entered The Pass of the Blessed Trinity at a canter. Only a few hundred feet beyond,

he knew, the deep, narrow trail branched out into three roads.

HE caught again the beat of hoofs. It might have been only the rocks taking up the sound and echoing it into the resemblance of many hoofbeats, but the noise certainly was like that made by a large cavalcade riding at rapid pace. In all probability, though, it was not the pursuing Montara. The sound seemed to come from below—to be approaching. The chances were it was only a troop of smugglers' mules on their way to the rendezvous at The Tavern of the Devotion to the Cross.

Esteban decided not to risk a meeting. But he was between two dangers, the pursuing policeman behind and this cavalcade approaching. He determined to try to win through the pass and out into one of the diverging roads. With sundry kicks, he spurred his sorely winded animal into a gallop.

He rounded a bend in the rock wall. Before he could stop, he rode, full tilt, into a body of Civil Guards!

The men of the Civil Guard ride, as a matter of rule, in pairs. But this was an extraordinary troop of police. In the dim moonlight Esteban made out seven uniformed horsemen. The one in the lead reached out his red-chevroned arm and got his nag by the bridle.

"What's this!" he ejaculated. "How come you, lad, to be riding a police horse?" He pointed at the telltale blue saddle blanket, with the red initials in one corner: "G. C." "Why—*Dios de mi alma!*" he exclaimed. "It's Pascual Montara's horse!"

"It's that bandit, Quesada!" cried the boy, hardly knowing what he said. "He stuck up two of your policemen on the road above The Christ of the Pass. He killed one with the first shot, and when the poor fellow toppled——"

"Killed? Killed one of the police!" repeated the sergeant. He swore: *"Por los Clavos de Cristo!* This is bad, very bad—the first time Quesada has murdered a guardsman. But go on. How come you by this horse, lad?"

"Well, when the policeman toppled from his saddle, the animal leaped away toward where I was hiding in the brush. I got up somehow and rode here——"

"Pronto, mis camaradas!" called the sergeant to his men, standing erect in his stirrups. "Pascual Montara is dead. This is his horse. Diego Vallejo, his companion, is in danger. But, if we are quick about it, we may yet capture the murderer, Quesada, avenge the uniform of the Civil Guard, and save Vallejo! You lead the way, boy!"

Esteban didn't know what to do. To lead the way meant he should ride straight back into the arms of the pursuing Montara, and all would be discovered. But he couldn't afford to disobey this sergeant, backed as he was by six guardsmen. As he rode along in the van of the troop, the tiny lad racked his brain for some scheme of escape. He could think of nothing to do, however, but to guide the troop on, in the faint hope that something unexpected might turn up to save him.

They passed that grim effigy called The Christ of the Pass.

"It was some way above here," said Esteban, fighting for time. "How far, I don't remember. I was too excited!"

They dropped down into that dark arbored dell, where he had turned the two policemen off toward the mud hut. His hopes were soaring when, in the moonlight filtering through the foliage, he made out ahead the glint of a carbine and the sheen of a polished-leather hat! It was Pascual Montara, he knew, awaiting them on his dead companion's horse!

But imagine his astonishment when, with a shout, the waiting policeman drove up to them, and he saw it was not the squat, broad-shouldered Montara! He cried out as if he had seen a ghost. For the fellow was that guardsman he had never expected to see alive—Diego Vallejo, whom he himself had shot through the back and last had seen sprawled across the sill of the mud *choza,* to every appearance dead!

It was dark under the trees; perhaps that was why Esteban could note no sign of wound or feebleness upon the part of the policeman. He began to disbelieve his eyes, his recording brains. It was as if he had never plugged this fellow in

the back—as if all that remembrance were but a tragic illusion of his mind.

To add to the mystery, Vallejo paid him no heed, despite his outcry. Smartly he saluted the sergeant.

"I have killed the bandit, Jacinto Quesada, *mi sargento!*" he reported. "My comrade was murdered, but I got the bandit, myself—alone! He's back in the brush beside the stream where I dragged him. He was hiding out in an old deserted mud hut!"

Esteban's senses failed him. Had poor Quesada been hiding in that *choza,* after all? Perhaps, when the door banged open, Vallejo had spied the bandit crouching within and, at sound of the revolver report, had simulated being shot, in order to mislead Quesada and get the drop on him. But how did it happen that Montara, who had been behind, had been killed?

Without waiting to answer the many questions hurled at his head by his fellow guardsmen, Vallejo turned his horse into the entangled buckthorn and genista hedging the road and called to the others to follow. Esteban did not know what to think or do; but, surrounded as he was by the policemen, there was nothing for it but go with them through the brush.

Stretched out beside the tiny, boisterous mountain runlet were two forms. The one, squat of stature and uncouthly broad of shoulder in the olive, red-faced uniform of the Civil Guard, was palpably that of Pascual Montara. There was a wound on the back of his head. The other, in corduroys and sheepskin coat, with a dirty Cordovan sombrero lying alongside, was the body of the bandit, Jacinto Quesada!

THE policemen dismounted and clustered about the dead bandit. Esteban saw his chance, then, to flee the accursed spot. He swung his horse about and went quietly, swishing and snapping through the underwood toward the road.

There rose a shout behind him.

"That boy! He's riding off with poor Montara's mount!"

Esteban dug vicious heels into his nag.

"I'll overtake him, sergeant, and bring back the horse," came to his ears in the voice of the policeman, Vallejo. There was the sound of breaking brush.

Esteban rode thereat as if pursued by a wraith in truth. But, before ever he could reach the road, the policeman drove up beside him.

"To the left, down the road, my *dorado!*" he breathed.

"You, Jacinto!" The boy was thunderstruck; but he obeyed. Out on the road, he looked at the man riding beside him in the olive, red-faced uniform of the Civil Guard. It was indeed Quesada!

"But that man in the sheepskin *zamarra!*" he asked. "Who is that dead fellow who is supposed to be you—back there beside the stream?"

"One of the police hounds. I don't know his name. But he was round faced and slim of build like myself, so I changed clothes with him."

"He's Diego Vallejo, the one I killed," said little Esteban with evident pride.

"Yes. You see, I was riding behind you. I came up just as you led those two policemen off to the hut. I saw you shoot this fellow, Vallejo, with the revolver. I was in the growths to one side of the *choza.* When the broad-shouldered guardsman——"

"Montara."

"When he ran out to catch his frightened horse and holler and shoot after you, I got behind him and banged him over the head with the butt of my carbine. I have always made it a policy never to kill a policeman," he added with sudden gravity. "But let us hurry now, you and me—Quesada and his *dorado.* That policeman, Montara, will return to consciousness presently, and the Civil Guard will then discover how they've been tricked."

"But do you really want me to ride with you as your *dorado,* Jacinto? I have broken your rule. I have killed this policeman, Vallejo."

"Bad business," commented the bandit, shaking his head. "But it's done now, and all our regrets won't bring the fellow back to life."

"Regrets!" exclaimed the boy with

unusual vehemence. "And who would regret snuffing the life of Diego Vallejo!"

Quesada looked at him. The lad's eyes were glowing like candles in his pinched, pale face.

"Don't you realize, Jacinto," he asked, "why my poor father was so sullen and inhospitable to you this afternoon? You yourself remarked how much this policeman, Vallejo, looked like you; that's why you changed clothes with him. And it was because of that same startling resemblance that my little father treated you so shabbily. He feared you were this Diego Vallejo, come to hound and spy upon him in the disguise of the famous bandit, Jacinto Quesada!"

Quesada shook his tricorn-hatted head.

"I don't understand, my little one—it's all mixed up. But this Vallejo must have done your father some wrong. Is that it?"

Esteban nodded.

"Five years ago, when I was but nine," he said, "this policeman, Vallejo, used to call regularly at my father's tavern. My father was not a smuggler then; he had no thought to run foul of the police. All he knew was that he was very happy up there in the cañon, with me and the little mother of me. But one night my mother disappeared with this Vallejo. He treated her shamefully, I have heard; she died a year later in the Hospital of the Sisters of Charity down in Granada. And my father became a smuggler because he so hated the police, and because he lacked the courage to go out and kill this man who wore their uniform!"

"And you have fulfilled his debt of vengeance? Bravo!—my Esteban! We will yet ride together through the two Spains, as I said, holding up travelers on the *caminos* and outwitting right and left the men of the Civil Guard. But no more police murders!"

"There is no further need," said the boy judiciously. "I have paid my blood debt to this one police hound who turned wolf!"

HE MADE HIS OWN

HERE is an authentic instance of how much man's ingenuity and determination can accomplish under the heavy handicaps of the primitive wilderness. Mr. E. A. Robertson, of Flume Creek, Seventy Mile River, Alaska, where the open spaces are not only big but really open, is a hunter and miner, whose success in the chase has earned him the familiar name of "Nimrod." Before he went in search of gold as a miner, Mr. Robertson had been a jeweler. He decided that looking for gold dust was more exciting than tinkering with gold on a workman's bench.

Nature, however, to say nothing of age, takes its toll impartially in the city or in the wilderness. Some time ago, Mr. Robertson lost his teeth. Nothing daunted, he decided to be his own dentist. During the long winter nights in his cabin he made for himself, in spite of the fact that he had only the most primitive tools at his command, an upper and lower set of teeth which he found both practical and satisfactory.

His materials consisted of beeswax, which he got from the hives of wild bees, after he had extracted the honey for sweetening his food; and teeth from the mountain sheep, the black bear, and the fox. With sand from the Seventy Mile River he made a mold, and an old aluminum teakettle furnished the requisite metal. Then, with a pocketknife, a fire shovel, and a piece of baling wire he set up his dental laboratory.

His patient ingenuity rewarded Mr. Robertson with a set of teeth which he wore with no discomfiture for a number of years.

The Wooden-legged Mule

By Ernest Douglas

Author of "Wooden Luck," "Truly Brave," etc.

Joe Bonner and his wonderful wooden leg are back again. Joe's leg, you remember, is a sort of luck charm. And now, down on the Mexican border, he finds a mule with a peg leg—but it isn't lucky for Joe.

KNOWING Joe Bonner as I did, I could understand, if not sympathize with, his ambition to own General Santa Ana, the performing wooden-legged mule of Diego Valdon's circus. What neither of us could fathom was Valdon's frantic determination to have the mule back.

Joe paid two hundred dollars for the General, which was exactly two hundred dollars more than the beast's real value; but if my partner wanted to throw his money away on a mere whim, that was his affair. It was not until Valdon went as high as two thousand in an attempt to repurchase his pet, that I took more than casual interest in the transaction. Then I scented a mystery. So did Joe, and that was the only reason he did not go out of the mule trade at once, with a nice profit.

We were surprised to find Valdon in the circus business; more surprised to meet him at Nogales, within a stone's throw of the Mexican line. When we first met him he had been the leader of an incipient revolution down in the Yaqui River Valley. He had recklessly led his force into a *federalista* trap and fled the country with a price on his head.

Now here he was, in a bespangled suit of black velvet, posing before a grimy little show tent and megaphoning in florid Spanish of the wonders to be viewed inside, for the insignificant sum of twenty-five cents, American money.

Valdon seemed a little excited and uneasy when we separated ourselves from the throng and stepped forward to renew our acquaintance. After a moment's hesitation, he extended his hand and swept off his high-peaked sombrero, on which silver coins jingled merrily; but his smile was a trifle distrustful.

"Don't you worry about us, Don Diego," Joe reassured him heartily. "We're not going to drag you across the border and claim the reward, even if it is—— How much is it, anyway?"

"Five thousand pesos." There was conscious pride in Valdon's tone, and he gave the ends of his mustachio a jaunty twirl.

"But aren't you running a lot of chances, showing yourself in public right down here next door to Mexico?" Joe went on. "We know that you're classed as a political refugee and not subject to extradition, but there are plenty of hombres around here that would be tickled pink to knock you in the head and smuggle you over into Sonora, for five thousand pesos."

"You forget, señor. There is not one of these peons who would dare to touch me for ten times five thousand pesos. For I am General Valdon, the so brave and so fierce warrior from Jalisco."

"Oh, yes, you're brave and fierce enough; and maybe you're quite a scrapper when you get started. But of all the crazy mistakes that I ever knew a supposed military man to make, that of yours at El Paso de Montar——"

"Ah, that!" Valdon shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps you do not know what really happened, señores, that I am to-day an exile from my native land instead of its ruler. I was deceived by a witch in El Canoa. I paid her much money for a very famous charm, well known in that region. But after the battle I learned that she had given me a false amulet and sold the real one to the *federalista* colonel. So you see——"

"Yes, we see that when you go to fighting wars with horseshoes instead of guns, you get licked."

"Ah, you gringos! You will never believe. But will you not step inside as my guests, señores, and be entertained by my truly remarkable circus? I shall have the pleasure of joining you shortly."

"Oh, is it your show? From revolutionist to circus man—from Madero to Barnum! We accept with profound gratitude, Don Diego."

Valdon summoned the ticket taker, a pock-marked cholo, with one blind eyeball, that was a hideous, stony blue. We were ushered through the entrance, and seats were found for us in the front row, right next to the little ring.

"Superstitious devil, that Diego," Joe commented above the blare of the band.

"Sure is," I agreed. "If he had a wooden leg he probably would think it was his luck piece."

"Oh, keep still about my leg. After all the scrapes it has got you out of——"

"Yeah, and into."

THE performance of Valdon's circus was not extraordinary. A few hungry dogs went through some indifferent tricks. Half a dozen monkeys made faces and did little else. Some goats cavorted aimlessly. A parrot squawked inelegant phrases that threw the audience into spasms of mirth.

Valdon then appeared with his megaphone. The supreme feature of the world's most unique circus was about to be presented. We were to behold the marvelously intelligent performing mule, General Santa Ana, named for that peerless Mexican hero, who also had a wooden leg.

General Santa Ana was led in. He was a sorry-looking, flea-bitten, gray mule, not much bigger than a fair-sized burro. There was nothing unusual about his appearance, except that his right front leg had been cut off just below the knee and replaced with a wooden peg that was held in place by an arrangement of straps over the withers. He actually supported some of his weight on the artificial limb, as he hobbled along.

"What do you think of that?" Joe cried, slapping me heavily on the back. "A mule with a wooden leg! Just like me, Pete. I wonder who trained him."

General Santa Ana hopped disconsolately about the ring, lurched through an enormous hoop, climbed on top of a wooden tub, and brayed a mournful solo, as the band leader played a guitar.

Joe applauded enthusiastically, but the crowd was not impressed. It howled for the parrot and the monkeys. General Santa Ana limped off the stage.

"Pete, I'm going to have that mule," Joe said earnestly.

"What in the world do you want with a mule?" I gasped.

"That's the only mule in the world that ever learned to walk on a wooden leg. It's a shame to have him kicked around by a bunch of Mexicans who can't appreciate him. I can have a lot of fun with him, as long as we stay in Nogales, and when we leave I'll see that he has a good home for the rest of his life."

It was just like Joe to take a crazy notion like that. His own right leg had been shot away in France. After our discharge from the army he had bought one of wood and rubber that served him almost as well as the original, and whenever any piece of good fortune befell us he more or less seriously attributed it to the magic powers of his manufactured leg.

When Valdon came over and sat beside us, Joe immediately opened negotiations.

"How much will you take for your actor mule?" he asked.

"Sell General Santa Ana!" The ex-revolutionist seemed horrified. "He is the biggest attraction of my circus."

"It looked like it to-night, didn't it? Come on, now. What's your price?"

"He is not for sale."

"I'll give you fifty dollars for him."

"No! No!"

"A hundred."

Valdon's negative was not so emphatic this time. He finally invited us to remain after the show and talk the matter over, but still protested that he would never part with his mule.

A few minutes later, Valdon escorted us to a small tent back of the "main top." Just inside the doorway, set upon a velvet-covered stand, was an ugly stone idol, about three feet high. In that gloomy place, lighted only by a smoky lantern, it almost gave me the creeps to look upon those cruel, distorted features.

"There, my friends, is another reason why I fear no man," said our host.

"Eh? What's that?" asked Joe.

"A sacred image of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec war god. I received it only to-day from Jalisco. As there is now a law forbidding the exportation of our relics from Mexico, it was very troublesome and expensive to have this one smuggled past the customhouse. But Huitzilopochtli is worth it all, for I now have his protection."

"Ugh! I wouldn't depend too much on him, if I were you. He might be another fake."

A woman emerged from behind a screen, and Valdon introduced her as his wife. She was richly, if not exactly tastefully, gowned in green silk, and handsome in her dark, plump, full-lipped way. Valdon was obviously very proud of her beauty. My guess that she was an Indian was confirmed by her bad Spanish.

"And now about that mule," Joe said when we were seated. "You know very well that he isn't worth any hundred dollars."

I took no part in the furious bargaining that ensued. When Valdon refused two hundred dollars, Joe threw up his hands and remarked to me that we might as well be going.

It was then that Señora Valdon put in her oar. She spoke rapidly to her husband in some dialect that was all clucks and gutturals. Again and again, she pointed to the god, Huitzilopochtli, although we failed to surmise what he had to do with the matter. Valdon argued volubly with her in the same tongue.

"I judge that your wife is a woman of sense," Joe interposed.

"All right," Valdon surrendered. "But I am afraid——"

HE kept his word. The next morning he and that one-eyed mozo of his delivered Santa Ana at the house in the northeast corner of Nogales, almost out in the brush, where we were keeping bachelor quarters with a Chinese cook and resting up from our latest excursion into Mexico. Joe paid over his two hundred to Valdon, who went away with many uneasy and sorrowful backward glances.

"Now, General, you're among friends," said Joe as he playfully gouged the mule in the ribs. "You've got a wooden-legged master who can sympathize with you. That hay and grain I telephoned for

ought to be along pretty soon, and then you can have a square feed."

"Better let Lum Wing take care of him, and you come along," I urged. "Remember, we promised Frank Quiros that we'd ride over to-day and see his cowboys break bronchos this afternoon."

"You'll have to give Frank my regrets, Pete. I've got to stick around with Santa Ana until he gets used to the place."

I snorted scornfully and went off alone. At a livery barn I hired a saddle horse, and from there I rode across the hills to the cow ranch of an Americanized Mexican friend at the foot of Mount Benedict. When I returned, late that night, the wooden-legged mule was stabled in our unused garage.

After breakfast on the following morning, we went out into the back yard. I sat in the sun, reading and dozing and watching Joe patiently try to teach Santa Ana new tricks. He was like a kid with a new toy, but I was sure that the novelty would soon wear off.

Suddenly Diego Valdon came dashing past the house from the street, his face set and pale under the rich-chocolate brown of his complexion. With a cry of joy he flung a protective arm about General Santa Ana's neck and thrust a sheaf of bills toward Joe.

"I made a mistake, Señor Bonner," he said breathlessly. "I do not wish to sell my mule, after all. Here is your money."

"Eh? You've already sold him. He's my mule now."

"Please take back your money, señor, and let me have my mule of the wooden leg. I beg of you to do me this small favor."

"But I bought the mule because I wanted him, myself. Paid a whopping price, too. I'm going to keep him."

"But I need him. I must have him."

"Look here, Diego. If your circus business has fallen off, it's because you've played this stand long enough. Move on to the next town."

"Not without General Santa Ana. I must have my mule of the wooden leg."

"Well, you're not going to have him." Joe stuck out his jaw stubbornly.

"I will give you four hundred dollars —five hundred."

"Nothing doing."

"Let him have the old jackass," I interrupted persuasively. "Three hundred is enough of a profit, isn't it? I've seen the time when you'd commit grand larceny for one per cent of that. Give him the brute."

"I've taken a fancy to the General, and I'm not going to give him up," snapped Joe.

Valdon was close to tears when at last, convinced that my partner was unshakable, he left us in peace.

HARDLY was the Mexican gone before Joe had the general's peg off and lying on the ground. Carefully he went over every inch of it, now and then tapping the wood with the handle of his knife.

"It's not that," he said finally, somewhat disappointed. "I thought maybe there was a secret compartment in the mule's leg, like there is in mine. Now I wonder what it was that threw Diego into such a sweat."

"Haven't an idea," I replied indifferently. "Some notion that he'll soon forget, most likely."

I was wrong. Right after dinner that evening a rent car drew up in front of the house and Valdon staggered in. One of his arms was in a sling; the other hand was a bandaged club; his head was so heavily swathed in gauze and cotton that only one eye was visible; the scent of iodoform and arnica hung heavy about him.

"Hello!" exclaimed Joe. "Have you been in another war?"

Valdon ignored the question.

"Señor Bonner, I must have my mule," he pleaded. "As a special and personal favor to General Diego Valdon, patriot of Mexico, I pray you to set a price upon my mule of the wooden leg and allow me to buy him back."

"Well, of all the nerve!" Joe started up angrily. "How many times have I got to tell you that he's my mule, and he's going to keep on being mine? I don't know what your little game is, but it won't work with me for a minute. When

I buy a mule, especially one with a wooden leg, he stays bought."

"Señor, I am in no mood to haggle. I have sold my circus and will give you two thousand dollars, all the money I have in the world, for the return of General Santa Ana."

"Two million wouldn't be enough. My mule is not for sale at any figure."

"You mean that?" wailed Valdon. "You mean that?"

"Of course I mean it. Now please don't bother me any more."

Valdon calmed himself with an effort. He drew his heels together, waved his free hand, and declaimed:

"Señor Bonner, I have done everything that an honorable man can do."

"That's right, you have."

"I bid you good night, gentlemen."

We stared at each other perplexedly, after he had gone, uncertain whether we ought to laugh.

"I've got it!" I shouted. "The mule wasn't his. The owner beat him up and told him to get the General back or go to jail."

"But he could square himself for a lot less than two thousand dollars," reasoned Joe. "No; there's something more back of this than a mere case of mule rustling."

We debated until late that night without arriving at any theory that sounded plausible. The next day we did a bit of quiet investigating, but did not learn much. The circus had trekked down the west coast of Mexico. This, in itself, was proof that Valdon had not gone with it; nevertheless, he had dropped entirely out of sight.

General Santa Ana was growing fat and as frisky as anybody could expect a wooden-legged mule to be. Joe kept a watchful eye on him and occasionally would prowl out to the garage in the middle of the night, to make sure that his pet was safe. As time went by, and nothing happened, Valdon slipped from our minds, and we began to lay plans for a trip to Mazatlan.

Then, about two o'clock one morning, both of us were awakened by a raucous and continued bray. Joe buckled on his factory leg, dived into a bathrobe, grabbed a revolver, and tore out through the back door.

Before I could get my shoes laced, a shot rang out. I charged into the moonless, pitch-black night and groped my way toward the gate that led into the alley.

All at once there was a crash, as though the corrugated iron roof of the garage had caved in. General Santa Ana essayed another bray, but achieved only a weak little screech.

"I've got 'em!" It was Joe's voice, down the alley. "Bring a light, Pete."

AS I warily approached with a lighted match, Joe threw a couple of ancient six-shooters in my direction. He was standing over the prostrate forms of Diego Valdon and the one-eyed cholo, both evidently unconscious.

"Got 'em both with one shot!" my buddy exulted. "In the dark, too! Some shooting, eh?"

"Some shooting!" I echoed, as I hurriedly surveyed the scene. "Bet you thirty cents to the hole in a doughnut that you never touched either one. Here's what knocked 'em cold."

What had actually happened was plain enough. Three or four boards had been ripped out of the back end of the garage, which had its only opening on the front side. This had caused a section of the roof to slide out into the alley. Undoubtedly the sheet iron had struck both the Mexicans, probably right on their heads.

"The dirty, low-down, cowardly sneak thieves!" spluttered Joe. "A fine country this is getting to be, when even a man's personal mule isn't safe. For this, I'll send these birds to jail for life."

Valdon sat up, moaning. He was minus his bandages now, but his crimson-stained face looked as if he was again a candidate for surgical attention. The mozo also sat up, but he did not make a sound. In fact, I can't recall that I ever heard him utter a word, and I'm not sure that he wasn't dumb.

"Say, Diego, what do you mean by this?" Joe shook Valdon roughly by the shoulder.

"Oh, my luck! My terrible, devilish

luck! Santa Ana brayed with delight when he smelled me, and then——"

"Yes, we know all about that; but what did you mean by trying to steal him?"

"You would not sell him, señor," replied Valdon, as though that explained everything.

My last match went out. We ordered our prisoners to stand up, intending to escort them to the house and telephone for the police.

They obeyed; but when they were fully erect they just naturally left us. Before we could get our revolver hands up, they were completely lost to sight in the velvety blackness. We could hear their pattering feet far up the alley. As we raced in pursuit, we blazed away blindly, without result.

"Now's the time," I panted, "to do some more of that fancy shooting. Get 'em both at once."

Joe gave up the hopeless chase; he couldn't run very fast, anyway, with that wooden leg of his. He was too angry to talk, and could only sputter incoherent maledictions against the whole race of Mexicans, as we turned back to look after General Santa Ana. My only sensation was a reawakened curiosity to know why Valdon was in such a ferment to retrieve his mule.

The way to freedom was open for the General, but he had not taken it. He was still thumping about uneasily in the garage, and he seemed to grunt with relief when he saw us coming with a lantern.

Joe led Santa Ana up to the house and tied him just outside the window of the sitting room. I hauled Lum Wing out from under the bed, where he had taken refuge, and told him to make coffee. We spent the remainder of the night discussing the latest phase of the "Great Mule Mystery," but the longer we talked the deeper became our puzzlement.

Joe's resentment did not cool, and early the next day, after I had promised to stand guard over his precious hybrid, he went down to the sheriff's office to make formal complaint against Valdon for attempted theft. When he returned he was in no better humor.

"They seem to think that because the mule has a wooden leg, the whole thing is a joke," he growled. "If he was just an ordinary mule with four ordinary legs they might make some effort to run those thieves to earth, but, as it is, I don't believe they'll stir off the courthouse plaza.

"If Valdon comes back again, though, he won't get off as easy as he did last night. I've hired a couple of colored soldiers that were discharged at the military post this morning, and hereafter there'll be at least one armed sentry on duty with General Santa Ana at every hour of the night and day."

"You don't care how much money you spend on that blamed mule, do you?"

"It's my money and my mule!" Joe declared, his hair about four shades redder than usual.

"But aren't you afraid that Valdon will bribe your watchmen?"

"Just let him try it. I've told them about the five thousand pesos offered for his delivery, dead or alive, in Mexico, and I promised that it's all theirs if they catch him."

THE negroes came that afternoon, and were quartered in a spare room. Then we settled down to a humdrum round of existence that soon became monotonous to me. Joe refused to talk further about our projected Mazatlan tour.

"Valdon will be here again," he contended, "and I want to be on hand to welcome him."

Yet he finally admitted that we had probably seen the last of General Santa Ana's former owner. His vigilance slackened, and on two or three evenings he dragged me over to the gay cafés on the Sonora side of Nogales. I felt sure that we would soon be on our adventuresome way into Mexico.

This was the way matters stood the morning Joe missed a pair of screws out of his wooden leg. On the back of the calf was a bronze plate that covered a hollow space, where we had more than once hidden our valuables while among enemies below the border. The plate was held in place by a brass screw at each

corner; now the two lower ones had worked out and were gone.

When notified that he was to be shot at sunrise, which had happened several times, Joe Bonner never worried; but if the least little thing went wrong with his leg, it upset him terribly. He went stamping and storming about the house, poking under rugs and furniture and trying to locate those screws.

The telephone bell rang, and, as I was shaving at the time, I let him answer it. He stuck his head into the bathroom a minute later, deeply concerned.

"It was Frank Quiros," he reported. "The old boy's in some sort of trouble. Wants us both to ride over right away."

"What sort of trouble?" I asked skeptically. "I'll bet he just wants to ring us in on another of his wild parties."

"No, I think he really is in some kind of a fix. He was so excited he could hardly talk. Woman, likely. Let's go."

"Might as well," I agreed. "Trot on over to the barn and tell them to get a couple of horses ready for us."

"All right, as soon as I can caution my black boys to be sure and stay right with Santa Ana till we get back."

It was better than a three-hour ride to the Quiros ranch, and through some of the roughest country in southern Arizona. The trail meandered over hills so rocky that not even a cactus would grow on their slopes, and dipped down into cañons where it became a mere tunnel through dense thickets of chaparral.

The morning was unusually fine, and the wine of that mountain air got into my blood. I started to whistle, and Joe looked over his shoulder with a disgusted: "Cut it!"

"What's eating you?" I demanded.

"Pete, it looks bad. First, I lose part of my lucky leg, and right on top of that comes this distress signal from Frank. It all means something, and nothing good."

I was still grinning at him when two snaky rawhide reatas swished out of the brush and dropped over our shoulders. The next thing I knew, I was lying flat on the ground, with a horribly aching head and my hands bound tight behind me, with a piece of scratchy hair rope. Joe, a few feet away, was just struggling back to consciousness. He was trussed hand and foot, and some one was tying my legs together.

It was Diego Valdon. He smiled apologetically.

"I am sorry, Señor Wayland. Yes. I have your revolver quite safe. I regret that it was necessary to take you gentlemen prisoners, but you can readily regain your freedom. I ask only for my mule."

"What's that?" howled Joe, now fully conscious.

"I have it all planned out, my friends. You shall give me a written order to your guards, instructing them to turn General Santa Ana over to me—or, perhaps, I had better send Goyo. After we have taken the mule to a safe place, we shall return and release you."

"Well, you'd better make other plans —and make 'em quick. Say, did you telephone to me this morning and pretend that you were Frank Quiros?"

"A little ruse, Señor Bonner. Was it not clever?"

"Darn clever! But you'll be a blame sight cleverer than that before you get any mule order out of me."

"I did not expect you to consent at once, but I am sure that you will yield to persuasion. Ah, Goyo has brought your horses at last. We shall now go to my cave."

"Pete, what did I tell you?" groaned Joe. "When I missed those screws I knew that something was sure to go wrong. I ought to have known that phone message was a fake."

"Oh, buck up! If the worst comes to the worst, we lose nothing but a mule— and a wooden-legged one at that."

"No; we won't lose any mule. This show's not over yet. Whenever any scab *revoltoso* thinks he can come up here into my own country and put something over on me, he'd better go back to Jalisco and think again."

The one-eyed mozo called Goyo, looking more wicked than ever, arrived with our horses. Valdon untied our feet and courteously assisted us to mount. In inglorious, but not exactly mute, captivity, we were led off down a narrow,

twisty cañon and then up a steep bank, to where a big cave yawned in a reddish, limestone cliff.

"This is our destination," announced Valdon. "Rather rude quarters, perhaps, but the best that I can provide just now. Will you be so kind as to alight?"

We dismounted and preceded our captor into the murk of the cave. He followed us closely, revolver in one hand and an electric torch in the other.

THE size of the cavern surprised us. We passed through two chambers, with roofs thirty to fifty feet above our heads, before Valdon bade us halt.

Still keeping us carefully covered, he advanced and threw some chunks upon the ashes in a sort of natural fireplace in the wall. Soon there was a cheerful blaze, the smoke from which passed off through a crack in the formation. Valdon motioned to us to approach nearer the fire and take seats upon a heavy ironwood log. We found the warmth agreeable in that damp, spooky grotto. Our spirits went down several degrees, though, when he and Goyo, who had now overtaken our merry party, again lashed our ankles with that beastly hair rope and tied our feet to opposite ends of the log.

"Not taking any chances with us, are you?" Joe taunted.

"None at all," Valdon admitted calmly. "Now, Señor Bonner, I have pencil and paper handy. Are you ready to write me an order for General Santa Ana?"

"No!"

"I am sorry. If you compel me to use severe measures—well, so be it. The irons, Goyo."

My blood ran cold, as the cholo brought several branding irons, that had probably been stolen from some cattleman's corral. These he placed carefully in the fire.

"You will soon be persuaded, my friends," said Valdon, with a leer. "Yes, very soon; for I have no time to waste. This matter has already dragged along much longer than I intended. I hope that it will not be necessary to burn you very much. Remember, for one little mule you may have your liberty."

"Joe, what are you going to do about this?" I quaveringly asked.

What do you suppose that red-headed idiot did then? Why, he began to sing. About ten yards off key, he boomed forth, of all things:

"Misto Policeman, I wants to be alone by myse'f!"

It had been ten years since I had heard that old coon song, which I don't think ever became popular. I stared at my partner, agape, wondering if his mind had given way. Then a vague understanding began to pound upon my brain.

"He is going mad," I said sadly to the frowning Valdon. "The excitement has been too much for him."

"Well, a hot iron will bring him to his senses."

"No!" I protested. "Surely you will not torture a man who is out of his head."

"He is pretending."

"Ye-e-e-e-ow!" shrieked Joe, burying his face against the log. "The devil! The devil! Take him away."

"You see, he is afraid of you!" I said. "He thinks you are the devil. Leave me alone with him for a few minutes. I am sure that I can talk to him and get him quiet."

"He is pretending," Valdon repeated, but doubtfully.

"It is your only chance," I insisted. "I know that I can persuade him to give you the order you want. Me—I care nothing for that mangy mule. Remember, I urged him to sell General Santa Ana back to you."

"That is true. Well, I will give you five minutes. If in that time you do not make him see reason, it is the iron for both of you. Come, Goyo."

The Mexicans left us in total darkness, save for the flickering firelight. Joe ceased his writhing and hissed:

"Now, you son of a gun, persuade me. Talk fast and loud."

And I talked. I pleaded with him to yield to Valdon. General Santa Ana I denounced as an imp from the nether regions that had brought us nothing but worry and trouble. I talked.

While I gabbled, with no object but

to kill time, Joe was heaving and twisting and straining. At the time I did not comprehend what he was doing. When Valdon returned I was uncertain whether Joe had accomplished his purpose, whatever it might be.

"I do not hear him raving any more. Is he ready to sign the order?"

"No, you ignorant idol worshiper. Come on and brand me—if you dare!"

"Very well. Where shall it be? It would be too bad to mar that handsome face. The breast will do."

Valdon leaned over and unbuttoned Joe's shirt, exposing the chest.

"*Un hierro,* Goyo. The hottest one. Hand it to me. Now hold his head, for the mad dog may try to bite."

Goyo knelt on the left of their victim. Valdon stood on the right, poising a cherry-red iron. It was a big "O. W." Those letters were burned indelibly upon my memory. I shuddered and held my breath, expecting to hear my buddy cry out in agony.

JOE'S arms flashed out from under his body. The right fist swung over and caught Goyo flush on the point of the jaw. His left hand snatched the mozo's revolver from its holster.

"Hands up! Drop that iron."

The iron clattered to the floor. Valdon's trembling fingers reached for the roof, as Joe aimed Goyo's gun straight at Valdon's heart.

"*Madre de Dios!* My luck! There is no luck for me, since——"

Valdon's lamentation trailed off into a dry sob.

Goyo scrambled dazedly to his hands and knees. "Unfasten my feet, coyote, and be good and quick about it," rasped Joe.

"Yes, untie both the señores," Valdon directed wearily. "There is no use to fight longer against fate. It is plain now that it was a false Huitzilopochtli."

A minute later I stood up and stretched my cramped limbs, a free man. The next thing I did was to take charge of Valdon's revolver. Then I searched both the Mexicans for other weapons, but found nothing except a couple of pocketknives.

"Well, Pete, my wooden leg has got us out of another scrape," said Joe, with a grin as wide as the door of hope.

"Your wooden leg!" Valdon echoed incredulously. "Have you a leg of wood?"

"You bet your life! Didn't you know that, Diego?"

"I never suspected. If I had known that——"

"But how did your wooden leg get you loose?" I asked.

"Why, when I was rolling about I managed to work my hands down past my hips. Some contortionist act it was, too. Then I ripped my pants leg at the seam, with my fingers. You haven't forgotten, Pete, that this morning there were two screws gone. Well, that left the lower corners of the bronze plate unfastened. I worked the rope that bound my wrists, a strand at a time, under those sharp edges and sawed away until the rope parted. Perfectly simple. Who says now that it isn't a lucky leg?"

"I understand, Señor Bonner," said Valdon abjectly. "Now, what are you going to do with me?"

"Well, after all you tried to do to us we ought to hog tie you and brand you in seventeen places; but we won't. We're going to take you over to Nogales, Sonora, and collect that five thousand pesos reward. Then you won't bother me and my mule any more. You know what will happen as well as I do. They'll stand you against an adobe wall and shoot your worthless carcass fuller of holes than a Yaqui's blanket.

"Yes, Goyo, we'll take you along. I don't like your looks nor your style, and I've got a hunch that the *federalistas* would like to get their hands on you, too."

The four horses were tied out in the cañon. As we left the cave, Valdon and his mozo were the shackled prisoners who rode ahead.

We did not take the trail that led back to Nogales, Arizona, but struck southward toward the international border. Finding a passable route was not easy, and it was nearly night when we came in sight of the trail that is patrolled by Uncle Sam's line guards every few hours,

on the theory that they thus discourage rum running and other forms of smuggling. We waited in a thicket until a pair of riders had passed, and then we galloped across into Mexico. Extradition treaties meant nothing to us.

From there we swung west on an old wagon road. Finally, the lights of Nogales, Sonora, twinkled in the distance.

"Well, Diego, I wonder whether they'll shoot you to-morrow morning or wait until the next day," Joe speculated, with grim jocularity.

There was no reply.

"But, before we turn you over to the commandant, just relieve our minds on one point. What in the world was it that threw you into such a stew to get your mule back?"

"What, Señor Bonner? Surely you, with your leg of good fortune, must know that?"

"Haven't an idea what it was all about."

"Why, General Santa Ana was my mule of good fortune. I bought him from a hermit near Magdalena, who assured me that a wooden-legged mule would bring me much luck; and everything he said came true. I had a beautiful wife and was growing rich in the circus business. Ah, I was happy!

"But I have had nothing but adversity since my wife turned traitress and persuaded me to sell General Santa Ana. She said that I no longer had need of him, since I had the holy image of Huitzilopochtli, and that two hundred dollars was too much money to refuse. Bah! What is gold if one has no luck?

"The very next night she ran away with the man who brought me the god from Jalisco. They went to Mexico, where I could not follow."

"Oh! And when you found that she had deserted you, you came tearing to me to get me to call the deal off."

"Yes, and you refused. On my way back to the circus tent I was struck by an automobile. It is a marvel that I was not killed."

"I remember the night when you came in, looking like a casualty. What else happened?"

"Everything that was evil. The money that I received when I sold my circus was stolen from my pocket, so that I could not buy Santa Ana, even if you changed your mind. When I tried to take him secretly, he warned you with his bray, and then the building fell down on me. After I captured you and had you in a position where you would have to give up the mule, your own wooden leg turned the tables against me. Now I am on my way to a dishonored grave.

"To struggle against fate is futile. I am ready to die."

"Well, I'll be blamed!" Joe exploded. "Hear him, Pete? What do you think of that? His hard luck was all a string of coincidences, of course, but—remember, what happens to us whenever I lose my leg?

"Come on back to the United States, Diego, and take your blamed old mule."

"A WISE OLD BIRD"

APTLY, if not elegantly, we speak of a man who has reached years of discretion, as "a wise old bird." Literally the phrase may be applied to Pete, London's oldest parrot, who has just come into the limelight of publicity because he has recently resorted to a jacket to cover his breast and his back which are not quite devoid of feathers. Hale and hearty at the age of one hundred and twenty-six years, Pete still retains his tail feathers and his love of "talk."

Popular belief credits parrots with living to a ripe old age, but Colonel Ferris, who has owned the bird for fifty-five years, has records to show that Pete was alive in 1801. He is a real Methuselah among the birds, for Pete, who is an Indian bird, saw the beginning of that long struggle of the British in India which added an empire to the British Isles. While Pete was in his teens, Napoleon was lord of the western world, and John Paul Jones was sailing the high seas.

"Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers," said a Victorian poet. Perhaps Pete will eventually retire to digest his long memory and "cultivate his own soul."

Anything to Oblige

By Laurie York Erskine

Author of "The Man with the Brown Eyes," "White Coal," Etc.

It must, indeed, be a curious circumstance, when two Northwest mounted policemen turn their backs upon a fugitive. Especially so, when they had him cornered and practically caught. But the case was curious, too.

IN the rooms of Gundersson, the Arctic explorer, Mr. Douglas Renfrew, contractor and real-estate agent of Walney Heights, New Jersey, told this story. Gundersson had a little apartment on Barrow Street that year, and while Renfrew spoke, the shrill voices of the tenement children furnished a constant chorus from the street outside. In the occasional pauses, which he found necessary for the constant lighting of his pipe, he would listen to these sounds and smile at the contrast they provided for the scene of those memories which made his story. Such contrasts are the essence of adventure.

"It was the queerest chase that ever a man was called upon to see through to a conclusion," he said. "Thoroughbred hunters up in that howling wilderness, mind you, and this lunatic straddling his saddle like a monkey and screaming like a parrot. We got some queer jobs in those days, for the mounted police were not subdued by civilization, then, you will remember, and we took whatever came our way.

"They had sent me up to Tawny River, on a murder case, in which I was to give Sheehan, the constable of that post, a helping hand. You will remember Sheehan, Gundersson, for it was he who spent the winter with you at Banks Island, in 1910. But I am speaking of murders, for there were two of them. They were common and sordid enough in their way; just such murders, as you read of in the papers to-day. A man named Laycroft had come to Canada from England, bringing with him the loot of some sort of swindle, for which he had gone to jail in the old country. He had set up in Tawny River as a lawyer, and he would have probably spent the rest of

his life there, quarreling with the factor of the company's store, who was a queer, cantankerous little man named Mayflower, if he had been left to his own devices.

"But a man came out from the old country who had been a jail guard, while Laycroft was in prison over there, and he set out to blackmail our backwoods lawyer until Laycroft got tired of it. It ended with Laycroft putting Stryker—that's our blackmailer—out of the way and chucking his body in the river. But it seemed that one of Mayflower's trappers, by the name of Tansey, knew a good deal about how Stryker was killed, and he told Mayflower about it. In this way, when Laycroft killed Tansey, too—or, rather, when he had him killed, for that was his method—he did the job too late. We held an inquest out at Tansey's cabin, with what had once been Stryker on the table, and the corpse of Tansey on a cot, and then put Laycroft under arrest. But we still had to arrest the man whom Laycroft had got to do the killings for him."

At this point there fell a pause, while Renfrew relit his pipe, a gesture which, in view of the fact that he permitted it to go out, as he told his story, seemed as extravagant as it was vain. But Renfrew seemed to like the gesture. It gave him a chance to gaze into the fire and picture to himself in the flickering fabric of the flame those days when he had been nothing so prosaic as a dealer in houses and lots, but a scarlet-clad youth, riding forest trails and following strange rivers in such boats as a man might take pride in navigating through swift waters.

"His name was Parandeau," Renfrew continued reflectively—"Victor Parandeau, a half-breed. And, mind you, he was half-witted, too. The poor fellow had committed Laycroft's murders for him from no other incentive than a desire to please. Parandeau had a most obliging disposition."

Gundersson, deep in his armchair on the opposite side of the fire, nodded with his characteristic smile.

"That's how it was with Alikomiac," he said. "You know, the Eskimo boy who shot Doak and Binder. He, too, had an obliging disposition. But go on with your story."

Renfrew, his pipe going once more, continued, weaving his tale from memories which were green with the tangled foliage of the high Northwest and golden with the retrospective glow of past adventure.

"Of course, I was a visiting constable," he said—"a stranger in that place, among those people. Sheehan knew them, though."

IT appeared, indeed, that the two men must have made admirable teammates. Sheehan, it seemed, provided the practical knowledge of a strange people and a wild country, while Renfrew, it appeared, as his story pursued its unhurried, often-interrupted course, must have provided some bright, imaginative quality which lifted the affair into the realms of veritable romance, out of what was merely the chase of Victor Parandeau.

"You will not have difficulty finding this Parandeau," Sheehan had said. "For he is the only tow-headed half-breed in the entire Western Hemisphere, so far as I know."

"Tow-headed?" exclaimed Renfrew, for he was surprised.

"His hair," said Sheehan, "is as white as the hair of me grandmother before she died—God rest her soul! And, moreover, the man is as mad as a March hare."

At this time they were still in the cabin of Buck Tansey, with the dead man stretched out on the cot and the bones of Anthony Stryker on the table. Mr. Steven Laycroft coolly sneered at them from the chair where he sat between them, and Mr. Mayflower, the company's factor, sat in a corner and regarded all and sundry, with a sour smile.

"But it is meself will do the identification," said Sheehan. "For it is out of the question for you to chase this lunatic alone."

"It would be well if we could both go," mused Renfrew. "For there will be a good deal of hide and seek about it. But who is to look after this gentleman?" He indicated Laycroft.

"You can leave him with me," piped

Mr. Mayflower. Since his face looked like a dried apple, which had conceived an aversion for something, and since that something was obviously Mr. Laycroft, both policemen laughed at the sound of his voice.

"But the responsibility——" began Renfrew.

"Make me your deputy," snapped Mayflower. "You will have the bond of the Hudson's Bay Company for your prisoner's safety."

Renfrew looked at Sheehan, whose eyes were aglitter with suppressed amusement.

"Do it," said Sheehan. "Mayflower loves him too well to let him get away. And isn't it two pairs of manacles he's wearing?"

So it was done, and the two policemen left the queer, dry little factor to guard the fuming prisoner, while they rode away to Mr. Laycroft's home in the forest to seek the trail of Victor Parandeau.

Mr. Laycroft had given vent to a sense of humor when he set up in Tawny River as a lawyer. In reality, his life in that out-of-the-way spot had been the life of a country gentleman. He had taken over an abandoned clearing on the river bank, some miles from the settlement, and had there occupied himself with overseeing gangs of Indians and half-breeds, whom he employed to clear vast spaces of land, build log houses, and tend his string of horses. Renfrew, convinced that Laycroft had concealed Parandeau somewhere about this extensive estate, since the date of Stryker's disappearance, planned to ride with Sheehan directly to the swindler's home.

"It is a mysterious thing," said Sheehan, as they jogged along the wagon road, "how a little light will clear up a large quantity of darkness."

"You mean," said Renfrew, "that you have seen brighter mornings than this?" For, although the sun had been some time in the sky, the morning was scarcely lighter than dawn.

"I do not!" said Sheehan. "I mean that when you explained the real nature of this gentleman, Laycroft, you also explained a thing I have never understood. You have explained why he does not tire of clearing vast areas of his land, and why he keeps a string of hunters in his stable that cost more than they're worth, for any purpose save running away."

Renfrew grinned. "He's a genius," he said. "Of course, a high-grade hunter would give a man who knew how to ride him a head start against the best mount in the Province. Although," he added, "Little Golden Locks here, can hold her own over as hard a course as she's ever likely to run." He patted affectionately the silken neck of his mare, whose flaxen mane flashed in a light cascade over her chestnut coat. "But why the clearing?" asked Renfrew suddenly.

"'The better to see you with, my dear,'" sang out Sheehan. "He's got enough of the woods about his place cleared away by now to have seen a mounted uniform coming at a distance of half a mile. From the top of his house, he could probably have seen us when we passed out of the settlement."

"I wonder if Parandeau will know that?"

"Ah, but that's a fact, too. There will be no sight or sound of the rascal, if he has a view of us before we come to the house."

Renfrew thought quickly.

"How many ways out are there?" he asked. "I mean how many trails are there, which can be followed on horseback?"

"Two, beside this one. One down river and the trail that tails off into the woods. He wouldn't get far on that one, for it's not made for fast travel by a mounted man, but the trail down river is a rare fine trail for this part of the world."

"How can you get to it so that you can ride up to the house from that side?"

Sheehan grinned appreciatively.

"Sure," he said, "there is a ford a mile back. I'll be after crossing to the other side and running down to the lower ford, which will bring me onto the trail, a mile below the house. If you'll wait for me but half an hour or so, we can cover both trails, as we ride into Mr. Laycroft's preserves; and, if the lunatic takes neither of 'em, we'll run him to earth in the woods."

"Get on with you, then," cried Renfrew. "I shall wait here for thirty-five minutes by my watch. Then I shall ride down the river to Laycroft's house, while you ride up to it from below. I shall meet you there. Right?"

"Right as a trivet!" cried Sheehan; and, swinging his horse about, he went galloping back toward the ford.

Renfrew waited. He dismounted from his chestnut mare and stroked her fluffy mane. He led her into the shade beside the roadway, as the sun rose higher with the morning, and he himself sat beneath her restless head, fingering the loose reins in his hands. He waited forty-minutes and then, leading Golden Locks out to the roadway again, he mounted and began trotting forward toward his goal. He had proceeded only a few rods, when a turn in the trail brought to his view a lonely man, who walked with a woodsman's springy tread along the trail toward him.

AT the sudden appearance of the redcoat the walker stopped, gazed up at Renfrew for a moment, and then drew off to the side of the trail, waiting for Renfrew to pass. Renfrew, however, drew his mare to a halt, as he came up beside the man.

"Good morning," he hailed.

"And to you, Meestair Polissman," said the stranger.

Renfrew examined him closely, as becomes a policeman who is out hunting. There is something about tall, dark-haired, black-bearded woodsmen, which makes one expect them to speak with voices deep and gruff. Because this stranger was of a good size, clad in black shirt and rough corduroys, bearded with thick, black hair and capped with a tangled ebony mat, Renfrew was surprised at the mildness of his gentle tenor voice. He sought the man's eyes, and again he was surprised. The swarthy woodsman had the clear-blue eyes of a little child, and with them he stared up at Renfrew, with unblinking friendliness.

"Going up to town?" asked Renfrew cheerfully.

The man smiled and shook his head.

"You go for de veesit?" he responded.

"I'm calling on Mr. Laycroft." Renfrew grinned.

The translucent blue eyes traveled to the fair mane of the horse.

"Dat ees a mos' pretty horse," said the mild, soft voice.

Renfrew found the man's unaffected manner and his childlike friendliness very attractive.

"Yes," he said. "Her name's Golden Locks. You say you are not going to town?"

The man shook his head.

"Lak de storee. Golden Locks an' de Tree Bear. Dat ees a mos' varee pretty storee, Meestair Polissman," he said gravely.

Again Renfrew nodded.

"I wonder if you could find time to guide me to Mr. Laycroft's place?" he asked. "I'm a stranger here."

But the man became suddenly shy. Like a child embarrassed by the overtures of a stranger, he drew off to the side of the trail, with a smile, which at once apologized and confided.

"I mus' get to my traps," he murmured. "Dere ees wan beeg woolf dat I am after. To-day I get dat beeg woolf, sure." He shook his head vigorously to indicate his perfect confidence, and then, with a shy smile over his shoulder, he trotted up the trail. Renfrew bade him farewell and sat watching until the strange man disappeared at the bend of the trail, around which Renfrew had just ridden. Then he turned Golden Locks and trotted to the bend. To his surprise, the man had disappeared.

"H'm!" muttered Renfrew. "Cut into the woods. That's queer."

He turned and resumed his journey down the river. The blue eyes of the black-bearded trapper remained in his mind, while he rode; and, as will happen to a man whose mind is occupied, he found himself emerging from the forest into the clearing of Steven Laycroft before he suspected that he had reached it.

"He certainly did clear enough of it," he reflected, as he gazed upon the rolling, stump-strewn fields of the great expanse of land which Laycroft had cleared. It all stretched away to woods which seemed dwarfed, because of the distance

to which their boundary had been removed; many patches of the cleared space had been cultivated, and here and there the marks of some trail, worn by the passage of Laycroft's lumber wagons, could be discerned. Fences were pine stumps, neatly arranged in lines, and, in the distance, the odd corners and roof lines of log houses were visible, though half concealed by the uneven contours of the naked land.

"That," reasoned Renfrew, with his eye upon a roof point, which aspired above all other buildings which he saw—"that will be Laycroft's house. Wonder if Parandeau knows the jig is up. Wonder if he's within fifty miles of here." Then he rode up to the two-story log dwelling which had been Mr. Laycroft's retreat, and found Sheehan waiting for him outside the door.

SHEEHAN'S ride had been as profitless as Renfrew's, so that the policemen now knew no more regarding the whereabouts of Victor Parandeau than they had known when they left the settlement, except for the single fact that the man they sought had not escaped in either direction by the river trail. They entered the house, were greeted by a squat Indian woman who, without further opposition than a troubled frown, permitted them to make free of the erstwhile home of Steven Laycroft. A search of the lower floor revealed nothing of value, and a tour of the floor above gave them nothing more interesting than a series of neatly groomed bedrooms, until, at the extreme northwestern corner of the second floor, a door opened which gave them entrance to what had obviously been Laycroft's private study. With a grin of satisfaction, the two men set about their examination.

They had not carried their examination very far—Sheehan was ransacking a chest which stood across a window, and Renfrew, at the desk, was thoughtfully fingering a bottle which looked as if it contained ink, but didn't—when Sheehan, glancing through the window, gave voice to the wonder which the scene aroused in him.

"Now what can that breed be doing with the horse? Exercising it, would he be?"

Renfrew looked up very quickly and, gazing over Sheehan's shoulder, was in time to see his black-bearded friend, the "woolf" hunter, scramble astride of an immensely tall, raw-boned hunter, which danced on its long legs, like a black demon, against the dull green of the clearing about him. Renfrew grabbed Sheehan by the shoulder, as they saw the rider crouch low over the horse's neck and urge it to a gallop.

"Not exercising it!"—he cried—"not with a rifle under his arm! Quick, Sheehan—what color are Parandeau's eyes?"

"Blue they are!" cried Sheehan. "Like a little child's!"

"I knew it!" snapped Renfrew. "What a fool I am! That's Parandeau himself on the hunter. He's using Laycroft's own get-away to escape us. Come on!"

They crashed down the stairs of Laycroft's house in three mighty bounds, and in an astonishingly few more they were at their horse. Renfrew mounted in a vault, and Golden Locks, feeling the spur and the reins held high, feeling as well the spirit of her rider, was off, as her sires had been off, times without number, in many an old-world steeplechase. From the start she left Sheehan's sturdy bay far behind.

From the start, too, Victor Parandeau had little to fear from the hunter, if he had used his horse properly; for, while Golden Locks was as fine a mount as could be picked up for the work Renfrew desired of her, Laycroft's black hunter was a thoroughbred, trained to leave far behind his clean black heels the finest racing blood of an empire. He ran with a long and easy stride, always appearing to have in reserve such an effort as Golden Locks made from the start. But Golden Locks and her rider were as one, and the half-breed was pulling at the big black's mouth. Parandeau was hanging on by the reins, not happy in his high place, with the sight of the earth speeding dizzily beneath him, and the black horse, fighting that hold, ran with his head in check, not freely. Renfrew, noticing this, gave Golden Locks freer rein, and the chestnut mare surged for-

ward, as dammed water will surge when the barrier breaks away. Renfrew unbuttoned the holster of his revolver.

Now, when Parandeau had, all unawares, run into Renfrew on the river trail, he had taken alarm, and the fear of foul fiends was not greater in his simple heart than his fear of the redcoated mounted police. The excuse of the "beeg woolf" hunt had given him the chance to beat back through the woods to that place where he knew his only safety lay—to the stables where was kept the fastest means of travel in all the Province. He had not known that the police were in the house at the very time when he was saddling the biggest of Laycroft's horses, but now, with those hunters of the law hard upon his trail, Parandeau was game. He knew that this black demon beneath him needed no clean-cut trail. He knew that fence and hedgerow were playthings to the animal's great heart, and, although his spirit quaked at the danger of his high, precarious seat, it quaked more horribly at the thought of the redcoat close behind him. So, as the black hunter entered a field which was hedged with pine stumps, roots aloft, Parandeau turned his mount abruptly from the trail and headed him across the field, directly at the high, rude fence.

RENFREW saw his quarry's aim at once and unhesitatingly followed him. Parandeau, who had confidently expected his pursuer to ride around the field perforce, saw him follow, and breathed a frantic prayer. As the great horse bore down like the wind upon the barrier of pine stumps, Parandeau closed his eyes and screamed with fear. When he opened them he was again on the earth, with the barrier behind him, and he turned his head just in time to see the scarlet figure of Renfrew, balanced superbly upon that "mos' pretty 'orse," soar over the pine stumps, with the grace of a startled deer. Parandeau shrieked curses and beat the black hunter's flank with the barrel of his rifle. The black hunter threw up his head and plunged forward with the fury of a Northern gale.

Renfrew had not known that Golden Locks could clear a barrier as high as those pine stumps had been, and he had not been blind to the very fair chances of himself and his horse being impaled on the sharp lances, which the roots thrust into the air. But a man cannot give up before such a chance as that, and, since Golden Locks had had the heart to make that jump, it was not in Renfrew to refuse it. And now he rode forward with a new confidence, seeing his quarry already within his grasp, for it was not in reason that Parandeau would try any obstacle greater than that last one.

Sheehan was lost in the shuffle, and Golden Locks was puffing heavily from her exertions, but the clearing had its limitations, and the black demon could not pass them.

Parandeau swung away at a right angle, and Renfrew, grinning, put Golden Locks across a little brook, which she took in her stride, and cut across to the new line Parandeau had set. Again Parandeau turned, this time away from the galloping redcoat, and the green clearing whirled about the riders like a carrousel, as Renfrew turned to follow. Parandeau made for a wooden-fence line and cleared the rails, with room to spare. Golden Locks, hard behind him, took off to a slippery footing and took the top bar down. Renfrew thanked his stars that the rail had been loose.

"If it had stood fast, I had been under you, milady," he murmured, and pulled up sharply, to cut Parandeau off on a new turn he was making. Then he grinned. This looked like the end, for Parandeau, seeing the blank wall of the forest close before him, had turned to skirt the clearing. On his left now was the river, fringed with a rocky ledge; beyond that the forest; no thoroughfare in that direction. Behind him was Renfrew, and ahead of him and a little to the right was the mounted figure of Sheehan, riding toward them at full gallop, his scarlet coat shining in the distance.

For a moment it appeared as though the frantic half-breed was going to turn dead right and race it out with Renfrew across the broken clearing—a race which must have ended with two exhausted

horses in the proximity of the house—but, even as he pulled at the black's great head, he appeared to change his mind, and with an extraordinary cry he put all his strength into a jerk of the reins, which brought the hunter about so sharply to the left that Parandeau was nearly hurled from his seat. Thus Renfrew saw his quarry head his speeding horse directly at a wall of rock, fully six feet high—and he knew that beyond it lay the river.

GAMELY Renfrew followed, but with no question in his mind as to whether the jump might bring disaster, for he knew that Golden Locks could never make it. Indeed, he regarded the hunt as ended, for he felt sure the black would refuse that rocky wall; and he loosened his revolver where it hung. But straight at the piled flint went the gallant black. For an instant Renfrew's heart almost stood still, in doubt and admiration, as he saw the great horse plunge at the barrier. His heart soared, at the beauty of what followed, as the black himself soared from the earth and neatly, deftly cleared the rock. There followed a flat, resounding splash, and Renfrew turned his mare from her course, even while she gathered herself to spurn the impossible jump, and she went thundering along the ledge until they reached a breach which permitted them to pass. Without pausing, Renfrew dashed Golden Locks into the waters of the river and, with the water about his ankles, looked upstream in time to see Parandeau scrambling to the opposite shore. The black hunter stood against the near bank and shivered with cold.

"Up and over!" cried Sheehan from above. "Sure an' it's the Grand National itself he ought to be running. Where is he?"

He came to Renfrew's side, with a great splashing, and laughed at the sight of Parandeau, even as he raised his revolver.

"Sure he's a pretty sight! What's the black on his face for? Stick up your hands and surrender!" All this he cried out in one breath.

"It's hair dye," said Renfrew. "I've got the bottle in my pocket. Come on across!"

For Parandeau had stood for a moment, with the black dye running in streaks down his face, and his tow-colored hair gleaming through the black. He had waited for a moment, laughing at them and, then, clutching his rifle to his bosom, he ran up the bank like a black streak.

The two redcoats ran their horses to the opposite shore and then hurried up to the spot where Parandeau had landed, but, by the time they arrived there, Parandeau had vanished. Renfrew saw at once where the man had taken refuge, and, without waiting, he followed him.

On the side of the river opposite that stone ledge, which Parandeau had cleared so desperately on his black hunter, the woods had been burned away on an upward slope, so that an ugly black semicircle of cleared ground swept back to a rise, which was overgrown with thick underbrush. This thickly clad hilltop appeared impenetrable, but into it Parandeau had disappeared, and Renfrew very rightly considered that into it he and Sheehan might as easily disappear in their pursuit.

Renfrew had noticed, from the point of vantage which his own approach to the river had given him, that the other side of this wooded hill joined the river in a precipitous fall of rock, and he advised Sheehan according to that evidence.

"I shall hunt him into those woods," he said, and his voice vibrated with the certain knowledge that they had their quarry cornered. "Why don't you ride down the other side of the river until you command the cliff at the back of this hill? I'll probably chase him out on that side, and if you take pot shots at him he will run back into my arms; or, if you like, take him yourself. He's nobody's property until we get the cuffs on his wrists."

Sheehan hesitated doubtfully, as Renfrew started up the hill; then, aware that team play was in this game of the first importance, he turned back to his horse and did as Renfrew had suggested.

The fact that Parandeau, whom Renfrew was to arrest for the murder of two

men, had with him a rifle which was in all probability loaded for a use as desperate as that to which the half-breed had put the black horse, did not deter Renfrew in his passage across the incline of cleared land, which approached the hilltop; but it did give him an unpleasant feeling that at any moment the impact of a bullet in his body might cause him never to hear the sound of the shot that sent it. Caution, however, was of no use to him, and to dash without dignity up that incline would have rather excited the half-witted fugitive, who probably watched his advance from the concealment of the thicket, than it would have given the redcoat protection. So Renfrew walked up the slope, with brisk resolution, and did battle with an impulse to place his hand on the butt of his revolver. That would have been a mistake which might have instantly drawn the half-breed's fire; but to a man walking into the face of death, it was a great temptation.

RENFREW gained the thicket without drawing fire and sank down, with a feeling of vast relief, as soon as he found himself immersed in the thick foliage. For a moment he lay there and listened. No sound reached him, save the noises of the forest and the creatures familiar to it. He looked about him keenly, seeking some clew to which way the fugitive had taken. While he looked, he heard a faint and very brief click, as though a metal object had touched rock. Moving as quietly as a human body could, Renfrew edged in the direction of that sound. With infinite pains, slowly, chosing carefully each place he laid his hand, each spot into which he pulled his body, Renfrew wriggled forward.

Suddenly he heard a faint hissing sound. It was very close to him, and it sounded as though one who had held his breath was letting it out carefully, with lips wide open. Stealthily Renfrew reached for his revolver and prepared to spring. Even as he did so, something hard touched his throat, just where it met the shoulder, and the dense foliage in front of his face parted. The hard object at his throat was the muzzle of a high-powered rifle, and, framed by the parted foliage was the smiling face of Parandeau, with his childlike eyes screwed up in such a fiendish grimace as one can only see in the eyes of a vehement man who possesses the controlling mind of a child.

For a moment Renfrew lay there, rigid, staring into the murderer's eyes, feeling the touch of the rifle against his jugular vein; then, with a sudden movement, Parandeau was gone. He leaped away with the abrupt movement of a startled hare, and the thick foliage engulfed him as completely as though he plunged into murky water. Immediately Renfrew leaped to his feet and dashed backward toward the cleared slope. It was in his mind that Parandeau must not be allowed to double back. While they had him in that thicket, they had him at bay. Renfrew crashed through the underbrush with this in mind, and, as he moved, a rifle was fired in the thicket, and a bullet whined close to his ear. He dropped immediately to the earth, and immediately the rifle was fired again.

This time the bullet struck the ground at Renfrew's side, nicking the cloth of his tunic, and he knew that Parandeau could see the scarlet of his uniform. He moved with a pounce, as becomes a man who is target for a dead shot at close range, and the next bullet missed him by a foot.

It was now Renfrew's turn to call retreat, and he did so, while he bore in mind the important fact that he must keep the cleared slope in view. He moved quickly, in short dashes, taking cover where he could. Frequent shots from various directions told him when he was exposed to the half-breed's view, and informed him, too, that Parandeau was striving to get to the cleared ground before Renfrew's eyes and revolver could command it.

Then Renfrew found himself in a hollow, with decayed branches making a rampart about him, and a mossy log to his right, over which he could view the open sweep of the burned-over slope down to the bank of the river. The rifle had been silent for a space, and Renfrew grinned with the knowledge that, to Parandeau, he had completely disap-

peared. He watched the clearing and fingered his revolver as he did so.

In a moment his expectations were realized. At the edge of the thicket, some distance from Renfrew's place of concealment, a dark form slipped forth and, cunningly keeping close to the cover of the woods, began to skirt the clearing, working around it toward the river. Renfrew watched for a little while, and then, as the half-breed approached his objective, the officer changed his position. He endeavored to do it silently and invisibly, but Parandeau must have had uncanny sight or hearing, for he dove into the woods, even while Renfrew glided, crouching, down the fringes of the forest, and Renfrew had barely time to fling himself to earth before the inevitable bullet came whining through the space where his breast had been. Now Renfrew fired, more with the thought of assuring Sheehan that he was still in the land of the living than with any thought of injuring his quarry. But the shots had the effect of silencing Parandeau's gun and giving Renfrew a period of watching once again.

THE performance was repeated. Again the breed tried for the river's edge. Again Renfrew changed his position. But this time he managed to get nearer the river bank on his side of the semicircular clearing before Parandeau brought his gun to bear. Then they repeated the maneuver once more, with the result that Renfrew gained a rockbound vantage point, directly on the river bank at one edge of the clearing, and poor Parandeau was marooned high up the slope on his side, confronted with the choice of trying to make the river bank by stealth or retreating again to the wood-covered hilltop. Then Sheehan took the first choice from him.

Sheehan, hearing the firing and interpreting Renfrew's shots as a call for help, had ridden around the bend in the river and passed the open clearing behind the wall of rock which bound that bank of the river which was opposite the burned-out clearing. Parandeau had seen him ride by and tried to wing him, as he galloped past, but he missed, and now Sheehan was across the river, covering the clearing in such a manner as to make Parandeau's position a point in an uncomfortable triangle.

And in this manner Renfrew and Sheehan found themselves in precisely the same predicament as they had shared when first Renfrew essayed to climb the slope. Parandeau was at bay, but the scarlet coats of his pursuers made it problematical if they could get to him before his bullets reached them. Renfrew decided that a parley with Sheehan was in order, and he conducted it across the open space which lay between them.

"This seems to call for a sacrifice hit!" he cried. "The question is, which of us is going to be hit?"

"Explain yourself, my dear Holmes," responded Sheehan.

"We can rush him," explained Renfrew. "And it's not likely he'd wing more than one of us. How do you feel about being winged this morning?"

"Reluctant!" answered Sheehan, without the slightest hesitation.

"Our two minds have but a single thought," yelled Renfrew.

"When does the advance begin?" cried Sheehan.

"Use your head and keep an eye on me," advised Renfrew; for he had no desire to warn Parandeau of their coming.

"I'm wishin' you luck, old boy!" cried Sheehan.

"Again we click!" cried Renfrew. "Let's hope his ammunition's low."

"Don't be foolish," cried a sharp tenor voice from the other side of the river. "If you young men will come here I'll show you a pretty toy."

It was the voice of Mr. Mayflower, the factor of the Hudson's Bay Company at Tawny River, and it spoke from behind the stone ledge which walled the bank opposite Renfrew's concealment.

"Not now!" yelled Renfrew.

"Yes, now!" cried Mr. Mayflower. "It will save your sacrifice hit."

That sounded interesting, and Renfrew decided to investigate it. With infinite care he beat back from the clearing along the river bank and crossed the stream, without apparently betraying his

retreat. Crawling along the opposite bank, he soon came to the ledge and crawled along, with the rock ledge between him and the opposite bank, whereon the half-breed was concealed, until he came to the angle where Mr. Mayflower now sat with Sheehan beside him and played with a large and brilliantly colored jumping jack. Renfrew squatted there in the dust and stared with surprise at the gravity with which the two men regarded this toy.

"What have you done with Laycroft?" he whispered. For Mayflower indicated with a sign that he had no wish to share their words with Parandeau.

"Left him with the four men of the settlement who like him least," he said dryly. "They will not let him go."

"And why this unmanly relaxation?" asked Renfrew, pointing to the jumping jack.

"I laid in five of them a year ago last Christmas for the children," explained Mayflower. "But I could not sell this one and another, because they were too big and cost too much. However, later on the other big one was sold, and it was sold because Victor Parandeau fell in love with it. It has a great fascination for him. Do you see?"

"I think so," said Renfrew. "But tell us some more. It is an amusing story."

"We will stick this toy up on the wall," explained Mayflower, "where Parandeau will see it. Then you two gentlemen will gather up your courage and ride back to the house in such a manner that he will see your scarlet backs and perhaps put a bullet in them. Those are the fortunes of war. However, I do not think he will, for the toy will hold his attention."

"And what then?" demanded Sheehan.

"The rest you leave to me, although I suggest that you do not go so far but that you can see what happens in your absence."

Thus it was that two members of his majesty's Royal Canadian Mounted Police were seen to turn their backs upon a fugitive, whom they were sworn to run down. Renfrew and Sheehan got their horses and rode away until they had turned about a rise of ground which concealed them from the hill, where Parandeau in his screening foliage sat.

A fence of pine stumps was laid along the top of the rise, behind which the policemen had disappeared, and it was to their own private side of this fence that they crawled, after they had made fast their horses in the hollow below. Thus, seeing without being seen, they watched Mr. Mayflower, as he crouched behind the ledge of rock and worked the strings that made the absurd toy dance to the sight of Parandeau, as though it were grotesquely hailing him from the top of the ledge.

IT was some time before Parandeau emerged from his hiding, but when he did so he came very directly down the slope, although he moved slowly, as a naughty boy might move who seeks to take a toy that is not his own. Down the slope, however, he came, and then disappeared from sight, as he took to the river. The two watchers next saw him when he arose above the ledge of rock. They saw him arise like a boy climbing over a wall. They saw him throw his rifle over the ledge before him, and they saw Mr. Mayflower pull the rifle over and sit on it. They saw Parandeau clamber down to Mr. Mayflower's side, and then they saw him, as he pleaded with Mr. Mayflower for the toy. Mr. Mayflower, however, continued industriously to make it dance.

Afterward, Mr. Mayflower told them how he had refused to let Parandeau have the jumping jack, but had finally granted his plea that he might be allowed to work it. Then, after Parandeau had worked the toy for some time, Mayflower had pointed out that he must be getting home for dinner. Parandeau had pleaded to be allowed to carry the toy, whereupon Mayflower had promised to let him carry it halfway toward Tawny River.

Thus the two policemen finally saw the factor and the malefactor coming toward them, side by side, each jealously watching the toy. And when they strolled down the hill at Mayflower's beckoning, and Parandeau had tried to

run away—the rifle having been left, forgotten at the ledge—they soon won him over completely by insisting, with threats and harsh language, that Mayflower give up the toy to him.

"So Parandeau, with that confounded toy hugged to his bosom, accompanied us happily enough to Tawny River," said Renfrew solemnly. "And he never let the thing out of his hands all the way down the river; and so on to Edmonton. He played with the damnable contrivance during all his examination and was positively happy when they sent him away to such places as are run for the benefit of the likes of him, because he was allowed to take his colored rubbish with him. I suppose that, in a way, he was a very lucky man."

Gundersson lifted the left side of his face in his quizzical smile.

"And most obliging," he reminded the story-teller.

"Yes," said Renfrew, "most obliging."

THE ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO COLOMA

IN the Sacramento Valley of California, fifty-two miles east of the city of Sacramento, is a little town called Coloma, which holds an imperishable memory in the annals of the Golden State. During the latter part of January, something in the nature of a motor pilgrimage is made each year to the place. This annual journey to Coloma has a double significance. Coloma is the scene of the discovery of gold in California and it claims the first church built in this region and one of the oldest churches built in the northern section of the State.

Gold was discovered on January 24, 1848, at Coloma, by a New Jersey man, James Wilson Marshall, who was born in Hope, Warren County. Marshall first settled at Leavenworth, Kansas, as a farmer, and in 1844 he emigrated to California, where he joined the service of General John Sutter, who had established a fort near the present site of Coloma. Sutter had converted a wild tract of land into a profitable stock ranch, and Marshall was engaged in building for him a millrace, when he came on a nugget of what he decided was gold. Gathering up a number of similar nuggets he took them to the fort for examination. When Marshall made known his discovery, the rush of '48 to California was on.

In a short time gold seekers overran the properties of both Sutter and Marshall and staked out claims. Neither of the two men benefited by the finding of gold. Eventually Sutter was granted a small pension by California and returned to the East, where he died in 1880. Marshall's title to his land holdings was disputed, and adventurers seized his property. He was reduced to extreme poverty and died in '85 in a cabin he himself had built.

Little is left to-day of the Coloma of the gold days, except the mills and storehouses. A stone building on the edge of the town, its iron windows and bars slowly rusting away, is the sad relic of what was once the miners' bank. Tradition says that in its vaults were stored, in the heyday of the gold craze, millions in nuggets. Marshall's cabin has been preserved, but his memory is kept alive by a monument, a granite shaft, surmounted by a statue of the discoverer of the first California gold, which stands on the spot where he picked up the first nuggets. When the gold camp of Coloma passed, Emmanuel Episcopal Church suffered a decline. Some thirty years ago the church was restored, and to-day it is one of the most beautiful small churches in the Eldorado Hills.

By

DON McGREW

Author of

"Men Command Men," Etc.

The Broadening

CHAPTER I.

WAGONS ON THE HORIZON.

IN the summer of 1857, an old Sioux chieftain stood on a Wyoming ridge, in the foot slopes of the Wind River Mountains. His right hand was lifted to shade his eyes, and he stood like a granite statue, looking steadily to eastward.

Behind Rain-in-the-face, in a grassy vale, was a Hunkpapa encampment. White, cone-shaped wigwams of softest deerskin, gaudily painted and artistically fringed, were pitched there on a carpet of emerald green. Curling smoke ascended above the lodge poles and faded upward through motionless air into the robin's-egg blue of the limitless sky. Soft shadows of gauzy clouds trailed over the tepees and left them with a last lingering caress. High in the dome overhead, an eagle noiselessly soared, while beneath him, in the vale, there gurgled on its musical way a silvery brook. Against the background, in silent splendor, stood the mountains, majestic and austere.

The sinking sun tipped the peaks with rose and saffron. Late afternoon shadows glided outward over the quiet prairies, furnishing the imaginative squaws with themes to intrigue the eager children. These shadows, they said, were the Great Spirit's downy blankets, spreading out to protect the flowers in sleep. Herds of buffalo could also be seen as dark splotches in the distance; and on top of a near-by mesa there knelt, on a decorated deerskin prayer rug, a solitary Indian warrior. With hands uplifted, he chanted pathetically, making of this virgin wilderness a tabernacle. He was calling on Wakanda, the Great Spirit, for the good medicine of health and strength and life.

It was a scene of transcendent beauty and primeval simplicity. Peace and tranquillity hovered over the landscape. Yet there was that in the features of Rain-in-the-face which made of ordinary grief a childish wail. The infinite pathos of a man who sees the writing on the walls of time was stamped indelibly upon that countenance of hammered bronze.

"See?" he grunted suddenly, extending a mighty arm and pointing eastward. *"Toka ahe do!* The enemy! They still come."

Fierce exultation and savage hatred blazed in the black eyes of the warriors

One day, back in the pioneering days, a boy named "Buck" Hilton rode Westward across the prairie, on a determined quest. That quest was to lead him right bang into a staccato series of adventures in which Buck would prove again and again that he merited the respect of white and red men.

Trail

In Five Parts
—Part I : :

standing with him. Looking along a sinuous trail, which wound over a succession of ridges, they saw emerging above the sky line the white outlines of a prairie schooner.

"*Washechu!* White men!" grunted Ta-Akich-Itah, the chief's leading warrior. "More plunder!"

"Ugh!" The chief's grunt was disdainful, yet sad. "Your eyes are like Mato's, 'The Grizzly.' He sees honey and not the bees. You see one wagon. I see on beyond."

"Ho!" spoke up young Red Cloud, the visiting Ogallala warrior. "The chief's thought is like the hoot of the owl. For twenty-three snows the white fur trappers and traders have been at Fort Laramie. Eight snows ago the pale-face soldiers came there. Yet no other posts have been built. The trail is for those going into the sun."

"Then you see only this narrow trail?"

"The trail has been narrow through my life. It was widened a little by those who call themselves Mormons, ten snows ago. But they went beyond the mountains. Two snows later those who sought gold went on to the Sleeping Ocean. Those who came since have passed through."

Rain-in-the-face sighed. "*Hay, mechinkshe!*" said he. "Alas, my son, your eyes see but one wagon to-day upon a narrow trail. To you it means plunder. I see wagon trains in number like the tree's children in the Moon of Falling Leaves. I see them upon a trail spreading as clouds spread in the sunshine. I cry in my heart, for that means"—here the chief placed the tips of his fingers in the opposite palm and allowed them to slip off—"to the red man—*death!*"

CHAPTER II.

WATCHERS IN THE GRASS.

IT is one thing for a tall and handsome male descendant of Daniel Boone to scorn books and devote a naturally alert mind to the solving of the problems he must inevitably meet during an adventurous career upon the open trail. It is another for a feminine descendant of Anthony Wayne to live a sheltered life and learn from books to discuss the poetry of Shelley or the mind of Goethe. Between two such people there would appear to be an abyss, deep and fixed—or,

at least, Patience Wayne felt so. She was still of that mind when altered circumstances brought her from Philadelphia to teach singing in an Indiana town, and fortune threw in her way the visiting Western "Lochinvar," who answered proudly to the name of Hardy Hilton. Thereafter she secretly likened love to a "Dick Turpin," who had popped up before her, commanding: "Stand and deliver!"

If, therefore, Patience Hilton, née Wayne, could have lived, it is not likely that many of the events herein chronicled would have happened. At least, it is certain that her plans for her son began within a few hours after he entered the world. Never, never should he follow in his father's footsteps! If her patriotic spirit was stirred when Mad Anthony's exploits were cited in the turgid Fourth of July speeches of her day, she also shuddered a little when she gazed upon her reckless ancestor's portrait. The terrific roughness of the man rather appalled her. She was glad, of course that Mad Anthony had furnished for her the open sesame to many Revolutionary societies. She did not see them as organizations wherein mediocrity may smirk contentedly in the unearned and pallid reflection of another's glory. But she sometimes secretly wished that he might have accomplished his objects with a little less of crudity—with a bit more of gentlemanliness, as it were!

"Yes," she whispered wistfully to her baby—whom she had named Anthony after all—"by hook or crook, you shall be a noted architect or a minister."

But all this was not to be. When Rain-in-the-face stood watching the prairie schooner approach the Wind River Mountains, Patience Wayne Hilton had been dead for many years. And, although her son was still in his early teens, circumstances had so shaped themselves that on this same day he was riding on the prairies. He was nearly one hundred and fifty miles to the northwest of Leavenworth. Moreover, he was quite alone. Under an infinite dome, he rode as a tiny speck, looking vainly for signs of life through leagues upon leagues of vacuum.

Despite his mother's fond hopes, this boy had never seen the tall church spires of Philadelphia, nor the upholstered libraries of her relatives; nor, for that matter, any library whatever. For his father had married again. He had taken this time a kindly, buxom girl from his own Kentucky mountains. With son and stepmother he had then repaired to the wild Missouri border. A former companion of Kit Carson and Jim Bridger, Hardy Hilton had thereupon reared his boy in accordance with his "lights." Now Hardy, too, was dead. He and his wife had met death less than three weeks before at the hands of emigrants in a passing Mormon train.

What the boy's reactions to such a situation might have been in a different environment, or with a different training, we can only conjecture. What he did is relevant. He was no longer known as Anthony, but answered to the nickname of "Buck." His Missouri was the border State which, at the point of the bayonet, had ruthlessly ejected the Mormons some nineteen years before this. It was a Missouri where blood repeatedly flowed. In it many another boy, like himself, had been left parentless at an early age by the Kansas "Free State" border warfare. He was by no means the first American lad to be thrust thus prematurely into the borderland of manhood. Definite intention was alone responsible for his presence on the plains.

"I'll git me a Mo'mon fer this!" had been his thought; and he was here in the hopes of joining Dan Mulcahey's westwardbound wagon train.

NOW, as his gray-green eyes took in exploringly the huge surf swells of the prairie, basking in the eternal sun, a dilemma confronted him. He had miscalculated by at least a day. No prairie schooners were to be seen. The bags on his black leather Spanish saddle were empty of all save a few biscuits. Suppose the train was delayed a week? He ran his hand through red-bronze hair at thought of it, while over his tanned countenance, singularly handsome and definitely carved, there flitted a brief shadow of dismay.

"An' yuh cain't shoot nothin' lest yuh risk Injuns hearin'," he mused.

His black eyebrows, which moved quickly with each fleeting emotion, now twitched characteristically. In the vastness before him, bathed in an endless yellow light, it happened that no buffaloes were in sight, nor any pallid herds of elk, nor anything at all that moved upon the mighty bosom of the earth. Sounds there were none to break the aching silence of a boundless void. A turkey buzzard, sailing over the yellow world, only seemed to accentuate the changeless inertia and utter loneliness of this great circle, for which Buck formed an infinitesimal center. So, too, did the overland trail, with its rutted tracks, and their consequent reminder of the life that had moved upon it, intensify the present impression of lonesomeness. Winding over a hummock, and down out of sight in a vale, thence up into view again on a rise, it receded into the Western solitudes, growing ever narrower, becoming ever fainter, till eyesight lost it in the hazy indefinite blue.

Before this immensity, the boy's soul momentarily recoiled. Upon his thin and expressive lips there lay a touch of pathos. He was far from a sullen youth; neither was he cursed with the habit of continual sinister brooding; but his recent bereavement had almost broken his heart. So, for a moment, he thought longingly of the far-distant border settlements behind him, where rolled upon its lazy way the turgid, broad Missouri.

Then with a snap his head came up. The tears on his long, black lashes were rapidly winked away. His lips stopped quivering. Over his eloquent face broke a smile, a rare and illuminating smile; and into the teeth of this temptation to retreat he cast this verse:

"Little darky saw a ghost about midnight,
When the clouds was mighty black.
Must 'a' been a-runnin' some befo' daylight.
Took a week a-comin' back!"

Next morning there were still no signs of approaching wagons; but now he descried that which filled him with alternating joy and doubt. There, in the distance, he saw a coulee, and out of the coulee a buffalo trail winding, and on the trail a herd of bison, emerging in single file. Slowly they spread upon the plain, and placidly most of them began to crop the grass. But among them were battle-scarred bulls, with black tangled manes, through which they stared belligerently. These occasionally clashed, butting their heads together, with crashes resembling the reverberations of a bass brum.

HERE then was another dilemma. The American bison was stupid, but of uncertain disposition. Stalking hunters from prone positions sometimes killed a half dozen, one after another, without arousing more than a slight curiosity in the surrounding animals. Again, one might easily ride upon a herd, cut off a bull and shoot him down, while in their apathy his incurious mates paid no more than casual attention. But this was by no means the established rule. For no apparent reason, they might, on the next occasion, react hostilely to the same situation.

This Buck knew quite well. His father had taken him on one buffalo hunt a year prior to this. He had seen wounded bulls turn and charge; and he knew what might happen if, in eluding the brutes, his horse should accidentally fall. But he who contemplated in that era the taking of life on the prairies to sustain his own was ever forced to take a sporting chance.

Therefore Buck tightened his belt. Fear gripped at his vitals; and at once he clashed with it—deliberately, doggedly. Had he not already reached a height equal to that of many boys three years older? He achieved a smile; and then, after seeing that he could not stalk the herd, but must of necessity ride into them, he disappeared into the coulee. Arrived at an opportune point, he then dashed out of it at a gallop, full upon them.

Immediately the bison snorted and stampeded. Perhaps the fiery red spark in the veins of Mad Anthony had filtered down to Buck through blood diluted with water; or, mayhap, there rose before his mind's eye the spectral form of Daniel Boone to spur him on applaudingly. But,

whatever the cause, Buck smiled. Into the herd he rode with the suppleness of the natural horseman, while the drumming hoofs thundered on the turf, and the tall grass went down in swaths before the galloping beasts.

So he reached the side of a bull, and so he sought the bald spot behind the shoulder. At an instant when the bison's forefeet were thrown out, and the ribs extended, the boy pulled the trigger of his father's Kentucky Express. Down crashed the buffalo. But so also did Buck and his pony. Bess had stepped in a gopher hole and snapped her leg.

A roar, a sound of swishing grass, and a bull which hooked viciously at him in passing; then the herd had gone over him. Its diminishing rumble receded into the north.

THE shaken boy then came somewhat dazedly to his feet. One sob was wrenched from him when Bess whinnied plaintively. Yet he came to grips instantaneously with this new sorrow, and quickly reloaded to end her misery. That sorrowful task completed, and the gun once more reloaded, he surveyed the situation.

There were apparently few rays of light in it. To be alone and dismounted on the plains was the nightmare of the frontiersman. His spirit quailed before it, as a tree bends to a storm. But here again he exemplified vividly that golden trait which the unhappy know not of. He was determined to see in every cloud the silver lining.

"Why, my laig ain't busted!" he exclaimed. And nothing of his consternation showed, but on his face was the pallor which the fall had caused.

"Yellow watah in the coulee. Buffalo meat fo' a few days. My gun ain't hurt. Ain't got no sickness. Shucks!" And determinedly he forced a smile of whimsical irony, as he hummed:

"Jedge he says: 'Darky, did yuh keep his pullet?'
An' then Mistah Darky cried:
'Only till he shot, an' Ah passed the bullet.
Then Ah lets the chicken slide!'"

His eyes had not been idle in the meantime. Horse and buffalo lay near a hummock, which was not far from the overland trail. Near by was an old, discarded wagon bed. Up through the bottom of this the grass was growing, and in his calculations his subconscious mind irrelevantly checked off this item, accepting it as proof that it was unoccupied. Thus he failed to see within the interior the black eyes so closely watching him.

"I'll stay heah if it's a week!" he decided. From the buffalo he then cut meat, and from the pony removed his saddle, and with gun and trappings he repaired to the top of the hummock. There he lay down in the grass.

"I'll git me that Mo'mon, come hell or high watah!" he murmured.

That there was anything absurd in his intention did not occur to him. His Kentucky ancestors had held firmly to this tenet: "Vengeance is the sacred right of the wronged." Shooting from ambush *first* was strategically justifiable, and not cowardly. Leniency toward an enemy was a weakness. Any male was a man in feudal stature from the time he could hold up a rifle. He had inherited a streak of flint from Hardy Hilton; and, within an otherwise sunny character, the killing of his parents had formed a bit of submerged ice. This, he was sure, would never melt.

Before long there rose above a knoll, three miles or more to eastward, the elliptic shapes of two prairie schooner's covers. Another pair followed and another, till down the side of the yellow slope there trundled a double column of wagons, to the number of twenty-five. His heart bounded. This was the first train. But still his joy was slightly tinctured with disquietude, for turkey buzzards and black vultures now wheeled aloft.

He cautiously looked about, but did not see the grass stirring a little on top of a distant ridge. This flanked the arroyo. A Kiowa Indian visage appeared behind the grass—a chill, inscrutable visage, which was daubed with red and yellow ochre, and in which glistened opaque eyes of blackest jade.

Neither did Buck see as yet the little Indian girl hiding in the old discarded wagon bed. This black-haired maiden

was the daughter of Rain-in-the-face, and then ten years of age. Her name was Rose-tints-in-the-dawn. Having been captured by Pawnees and carried eastward, she had escaped only the night before. As she had hidden in the old wagon bed at Buck's appearance, she now watched him through a crack in the side, her soft eyes wide and fearful.

And neither the scouting Kiowa, nor the watchful boy, nor the fearful girl as yet suspected the presence of Bear-at-bay, the Pawnee Chieftain, and one of his braves. These two lay on still another knoll to westward. They had not seen the little girl, but had been attracted by Buck's shot. Thus they, from their concealment in the grass, had seen the Kiowa slip into place; and Bear-at-bay, the wily, had instantly vetoed one tentative suggestion of the younger warrior.

"What better decoy could we have?" he asked. He indicated the distant figure of Buck, with a quarter inch nod of his head, and then the coulee, where in hiding, was a large band of his "shave-head" Pawnees. "The Kiowa will wait till the first train passes. Then, if they attack the white hunter——"

There was no need for conclusion; and over the possibility the two exchanged glances in which eye kindled to eye, and the unholy sparkle within gathered the light of fierce, grim joy.

CHAPTER III.

A VETERAN OF THE TRAILS.

WHILE the boy waited, the massive, stolid bulls in grizzled Dan Mulcahey's freight train were heaving hard at the great wooden yokes, as they pulled their twenty-five broad-tired wagons westward, over the dips and swales of the new Territory of Nebraska. Step by step they were proceeding at a snail's pace, which netted them from twelve to eighteen miles a day. Yet these patient, heavily muscled beasts were expected to plod on and on, over the rolling prairies, till they passed Fort Kearney on the shallow Platte; thence onward and upward to old Fort Laramie in mountainous Wyoming; then still on and ever inward past black hills and naked buttes, through dry gullies and dark gorges, and across wind-blown upland expanses, where alkali lay thick upon the sage-grown flats; then still farther onward and upward till they reached the mountain passes between the cloud-kissed peaks; and thence, finally, into Utah, and down the western slopes of the majestic Wasatch Range to the desert, with the glassy lakes and the mystic, hazy cañons.

The route they were taking was known as the Oregon Trail. It was an unpaved, rutted path into the heart of the sunset, conceived by those who must answer the call of the beckoning horizon, and indicated by the bones of men who vainly sought the golden pot at the rainbow's end. Its spiritual reincarnation of Eric, the Red, were legion.

"Shure," old Dan reflected, puffing at his short clay pipe and smoothing back the long hair which tumbled about his shoulders, "it's the road to hell for some, an' thot to Hiven for others. An' not only for them thot's dead, either," he added, with a sage nod.

Like many a worn wall along the way, his face seemed to have been precisely chiseled out of granite by the wind-whipped sand; and, as he rubbed his calloused, hairy hand over his gray mustache, he muttered:

"Shure, an' there's niver a livin' mon iver sit foot upon ut an' remained quite the same."

In the beginning of the nineteenth century that trail had not existed. Asleep in a golden film lay two million square miles of that sunny terrain, with no human inhabitants, save nomadic Indians. The silence was profound.

But the quest for furs had drawn intrepid adventurers into that wilderness, after the Lewis and Clarke expedition, and Dan carried an arrow scar received in '24. In that year General William Ashley led Jim Bridger, Dan Mulcahey, Hardy Hilton, and three hundred other trappers into the Sweetwater Valley, later pushing on into the Green River and Utah regions. Dan had also accompanied Sublette in the first wagon trip to the Rockies, and Bonneville in his later ventures across them; and he was a veteran on the trail when the Mormons,

driven from Kirtland, Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo in turn, had turned their faces in '47 toward Mexican territory to escape the gentile yoke. And he had guided more than one party of Forty-niners in their rush to the gold fields.

Nevertheless, with all these movements to marvel at, Dan was now filled with pride. For United States judges in the new Territory of Utah had thrown up their hands. Mormon juries, controlled by an ecclesiastical star chamber, would not convict Mormon transgressors. Because of this and other charges, President Buchanan had ordered a fifteen-million-dollar expedition against them. The vanguard of the small army, over which Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston had been ordered to assume command, was now marching on, far in advance of Dan's wagons.

As a result, a freight train, of equal size with Dan's, was trundling on, some five miles in advance. A third followed, about four miles in the rear. And these were but a small part of the caravan which was to roll westward under the banner of the army-freighting contractors, Russell, Majors & Waddell. Thirty-five hundred wagons, over four thousand men, and more than forty thousand oxen were being pressed into service by the firm.

"Ah, by the gods!" Dan exclaimed, with shining eyes. "I wish I c'u'd git to them mountings quick to look back down upon ut. Shure, it w'u'd look loike the broken fragmints av a dhragon's tail, stretchin' away an' away, farther than me owld eye kin see."

He was, of course, too far away to see the watching Kiowa slide back from his perch and slip off down the coulee toward a mounted band of waiting companions.

CHAPTER IV.

"A SIOUX GAL."

STILL lying on his hummock, young Buck eagerly watched the leading train of the brigade approach. But, as soon as the train came closer, his joy was tinctured a little. The mounted train master was Lew Simpson, and Buck was looking for Mulcahey. He had never seen the long-haired Irishman, but was certain that he would know him.

"He'll be in this brigade, anyway," was the boy's cheering thought.

Never had his eyes taken in wagons of such proportions. Under their lurching, curved canvas tops were loads ranging from six to seven thousand pounds. Each brightly painted vehicle was hauled by at least six yoke of heavy oxen, while behind the train, in reserve for emergencies, plodded the reserve herd. Each team had its bullwhacker, so that, with the extra hands, every train carried a crew of thirty-one heavily armed men. Thus the whole formed a spectacle, under the shining sun, which sent tingling sensations running up and down Buck's spine.

The hummock hid from the bullwhackers the dead horse and buffalo. So the train went on past the boy's hiding place. Here a long-haired giant trudged by, roaring a verse of "The Outland Trail." There an ox bellowed resoundingly. With other drivers swearing, and long whips cracking like pistol reports, and yokes creaking, and heavily laden axles whining, not to speak of the continuous rumble of the broad wheels, the train disrupted the quiet of the prairies with a bedlam of sound.

Buck feasted his eyes on the crew. Many of them wore red-woolen shirts, open at the neck, and leather belts fully six inches in width. Silver buckles occasionally adorned these ornate waistbands, as well as designs in copper rivets. Jean or buckskin trousers were thrust into the legs of their black-leather boots. Others preferred beaded moccasins and suits of soft deerskin, fringed with buckskin strips. Black sombreros were popular; but here and there were men affecting the old skin cap, with an eagle feather attached. One was clad like the old "free trappers," with hawk's bells along the outer seams of his trousers.

It was the boast of these bullwhackers that, with their long whips, they could drive from the back of the leading bull a tiny fly and "never flick a hair." And when measured by the degree of imagination displayed, their profanity was superb. Young Buck grinned delightedly

and tucked several new phrases away for future reference.

However, when the train had passed through, across the coulee, and on beyond the next rise, and Buck stood up, straining his eyes to eastward for a glimpse of the next string, the boy's courage fell a little. It was a very big and lonesome prairie, even for a son of Hardy Hilton.

Then he started, as Rose-tints-in-the-dawn stood up in the wagon bed.

"Well, dog-gone, ef hit ain't an Injun gal!" he cried softly. "An' a purty little gal, too!"

Treading softly, the slender maiden came toward him. She was clad in creamy deerskin dress and leggings, soft and clinging, like chamois. Two thick blue-black braids hung over either shoulder, and her smooth brown features were colored a dusky red about the prominent cheek bones by her rich blood. Her lips were tender, like the petals of a rose, while her eyes were dark and shadowy, like the reflections in a moonlit lake.

"A Sioux gal!" Buck exclaimed in surprise, noting the tribal decorations on her moccasins. "And half scared o' me yet, too." For the little girl, though proud, as became the daughter of a noted chief, and outwardly brave, as became the future mother of Sioux warriors, could not quite hide her apprehensions. Her eyes were tragic. So Buck smiled reassuringly, crying:

"Why, shucks, honey, yo' didn't make no mistake in trustin' me!"

She did not understand the words, but did read correctly the import of that smile, those dimples, and the warmth in his snapping eyes. They were the credentials of the open plains.

"My heart told me to trust you when I saw your face," she said in Siouan, smiling shyly. Her hands unclasped. "One should always trust the heart."

Part of this Buck understood, for his father had taught him a smattering of the Sioux dialect. He also understood when she straddled her left wrist with two fingers of her right hand, and advanced it in a short, choppy motion, indicating a horse galloping; when she placed her forefingers at the side of her head, outcrooked, to picture the horns of a buffalo; and when she drew an imaginary thread through her mouth to indicate life. By these means she quickly told him how she had hidden, when he killed the buffalo, and also that she was fleeing from the Pawnees.

"An' now you want to go home, a-course!" Buck cried. "Yo' pore kid! Now, how am I goin' to do *that?* But heah—dog-gone it, you must be hungry!"

He had reached into his saddlebags for biscuits and was being rewarded with a beatific smile, when suddenly, as he looked to southward, his heart seemed to fall like a plummet.

He had sighted Indians.

CHAPTER V.

HARDY HILTON'S BOY.

ALTHOUGH Buck did not know it, the Indians constituted a joint war party of Kiowas and Comanches, under Satanta and Kicking Bird. The war party was skirmishing far to the north and east of their own territory.

But this mattered little to Daniel Boone's young descendant. He saw only a band of at least sixty strange Indians, all painted in reds, yellows and blacks, and riding toward him at a tearing gallop, with their war bonnets and eagle feathers whistling in the wind.

For a moment he was frozen with fear, and then he ran with Rose-tints-in-the-dawn down the slope and dropped between the two dead animals.

From afar off the savages sighted them and yelled excitedly. Some of the braves were sounding the broken war cry by using one hand as a partial megaphone, and the other to beat rapidly against it. The sound filled the youth with terror.

Despite himself, his hands *would* tremble. He knew how Indians treated white boys. They would stand him upon a bed of coals, perhaps, to see him dance. They would——

"Here!" he cried, then, as though addressing another person. "Is you Hardy Hilton's boy? *Shore* you are. Well, then!"

He flung the moisture from his eyes and looked carefully to the percussion cap on his rifle. Next he spread some

oiled paper cartridges before him, shoved the gun over the buffalo's solid rump, and waited.

The painted Kiowas and Comanches might have charged their small victims, but they did not. The bravest Indian warrior was never prone to take undue risks, if he could effect an object without them. The sport of the thing also entered into their calculations. It was to be prolonged and worked up to a fitting climax. For these reasons, they circled at once and began riding round and round the two in single column.

The Indians were riding, without saddles, pintos, calico ponies and mustangs. Here and there one rode a stolen mare, or a wild stallion with flaming nostrils. They leaned far forward to the right-hand side of their mounts, clinging with the left heel against the horses' ribs, and firing arrows and carbines from under the ponies' necks.

Their markmanship from such positions was not very accurate; but every one of the whistling, feathered arrows, and all the screeching bullets seemed to be whipping past within an inch of Buck's head. Occasionally an arrow thudded into the buffalo, while ricocheting bullets threw clouds of dust over him, and shot past him with horrible, vicious wails. One struck the dead horse.

Sick with fear, the boy now discovered an apparently amazing phenomena in his extremity. Panic passed. His mind grew clear and cool. His fear seemed to be in one body, his mind in another. His next reaction was that of chill rage, and he sighted carefully, intending to "get" every Indian possible before they finished the game.

The Kentucky Express roared, and an Indian pony went down. Another shot missed. A third was also wasted; and, emboldened by this, a heavily muscled brave dashed in closer.

The boy sensed a recurrence of panic. His father had taught him to hold his breath, to pull with the trigger finger, and not with a contraction of the hand, and to keep his rear and front sights aligned on the target. In this instance he remembered none of these instructions.

"Never took no durned bead, but jest blazed away!" was his accusatory thought afterward.

DESPITE this, the shot told. Lame Bull was struck. The slug tore through the right-hand side of his pony's neck, smashed into his corded breast, and tumbled him to the ground, dying.

With the warrior's choked death cry ringing in his ears, and the maddened pony whinnying in pain, the boy hastily thrust into his piece another cartridge. Surely the others would charge now! They were yelling like maniacs in their rage. Still, they only drew off a little farther, continuing to circle and fire. That is, all but a half dozen who were suddenly detached to mount the hummock. These would shortly work into position to fire down on him from above.

At this moment, when all hope seemed gone, Buck heard a war cry of another tenor. It was designed to shatter the ear. The growl of a bear, the roar of a lion, or the howl of a wolf would be musical in comparison.

But to the boy it was a symphony. He could not see the stiff, upstanding scalp locks through the war bonnets, but he knew that war cry. The newcomers were the Pawnees, who called themselves Skihiksihiks, or "men of men." They were deadly enemies of nearly all other Indian tribes and at this time friendly to the white men.

The Kiowas and Comanches took but one look at that charging band, and then decamped for a position where they could make a better stand. They were outnumbered three to one. Belaboring the flanks of their ponies with their heels, they crouched low and fled to southward, with the Pawnees in hot pursuit. They disappeared over the horizon eventually in a cloud of dust, firing back as they rode, and losing two warriors in the race.

When the yelling and firing died away, the boy rose stiffly from his position. Next he sat down weakly on the buffalo. The reaction had softened the steel. He gazed in fascinated horror at the dead Kiowa. The whole affair took on the aspect of a nightmare.

He was recalled to himself by the In-

dian maid. Throughout the ordeal she had remained quiet and watchful, pallid and tense, waiting for the final rush. Was not her "chief" with the tresses of the flaming sunset there beside her? She had prayed to Wakanda, to keep his eye as clear as her Wyoming mountain brooks; to the Four Winds, that they might blow upon his mind and keep it clear of panic; to the Great Bear, that he might have drafts of its mighty courage; and, at last, to the Wanagipi Tahupahupi, or Wings of the Spirits, that, if worse came to worse, they might be borne aloft together to the region where the mists of the rainbow float eternally through the happy hunting grounds.

Now she turned toward Buck, with admiration, gratitude, and unmistakable affection in every line of her eloquent face. The little maiden's heart had gone out to him as a flower opens to the sunshine. She was fiercely proud of this warrior boy. Yet she could not quite hide her consternation. He could not fight their deliverers, and they would recapture her.

"Why, dog-gone it, I nevah *thought!*" cried Buck, reading her fear, despite the effort to conceal it. Something warm flooded through his impulsive breast. "An' you only a *littul* gal, too!"

Reaching out with a sudden, protecting gesture, he drew her close in the crook of his arm. Swiftly he kissed her on the cheek. "Theah!" he ejaculated, as his cheeks flamed in shyness, "I guess that'll show you. I ain't goin' to let 'em get you ef I can help it." And he pointed, bidding her return to the wagon bed.

A flush, like that from which she derived her name, crept into Rose-dawn's cheeks. Her eyes were starry. She clutched him for one swift, birdlike salute on the cheek, and then ran to obey his order.

She had not been long concealed when back came the exultant Pawnees. Two of the yelling band were holding scalps aloft. At sight of them something within Buck threatened violent revolt. But at once he steeled himself. Perhaps these Pawnees wouldn't be so friendly, after all, especially if they discovered their recent captive. Reasoning thus, he instantly ran out and from the head of Lame Bull snatched the sumptuous war bonnet. With this trophy he hurried back to his point of vantage, watching the Pawnees warily.

WHEN Chief Bear-at-bay and his men rode closer, the boy thought that surely one could never encounter faces more terrifying than these. Bear-at-bay appeared particularly formidable—a muscular Goliath, with carved lips dropping at the corners. Craftiness, implacability, undying courage, ferocity, and a shrewd, cynical intelligence were stamped like print upon his face. And then Buck saw upon the bony features of many warriors the disfiguration of pockmarks. Nineteen years before, smallpox had invaded the winter sod houses, taking a toll of over two thousand among the Skihiksihiks. Even the spots of paint could not hide the gaping pits in Bear-at-bay's red skin; but this helped to reassure Buck. His father had told him of the gratitude shown by the Pawnees when he, Dan Mulcahey, and others had aided the stricken tribe.

At once Bear-at-bay held up his hand in the well-known peace sign. Buck stood up, and a gasp of amazement broke from the Indians. Large as he was, he still seemed small, standing there beside the tall rifle. A brave next to the chief threw back his head and roared with laughter.

Buck bit his lip to keep back tears of vexation. He was infinitely relieved when Bear-at-bay straightened his own features and clapped a hand over the offending warrior's mouth.

"Him heap big Injun, this boy," he grunted in English. He frowned on the warrior. "How many you kill this day, uh?"

Bear-at-bay followed this with an order to another brave. The man dismounted and ran to Lame Bull. A circling of the knife, a rip, and the scalp was removed. This almost unnerved Buck. He was forced to school himself rigidly, as Bear-at-bay dismounted, took the scalp, and came forward with a kindly smile in his eyes.

"Papoose-born-a-man," said he, standing straight and dignified and holding out the scalp, "take what is yours."

The boy suppressed a shudder. Gingerly he reached out and gingerly he took between his fingers the horrid trophy. Then suddenly upon his pallid features flashed an impish smile which deepened irresistibly the dimples in his cheeks.

"Let the papoose who laughed at me keep it," he said huskily, handing it back to the chief. "Shore, he ain't killed any to-day!"

Superficial observers have noted the impassive Indian in ceremonies and before most strangers, and they have labeled him stolid. They missed utterly the acute sensitiveness, the currents of feeling which surge like a river in flood, and the extraordinarily keen sense of humor behind the mask. Such people would have been amazed to see Bear-at-bay whoop and dance and strangle. When he was able to interpret, his warriors laughed uproariously, dismounted, and began dancing about the relieved boy, patting him on the back.

"Ugh!" they grunted. *"Waugh, waugh, kol-a!"*

Into his hands they now thrust the dead Kiowa's coup stick, a neck circlet of bear's claws, and a war shirt of soft doeskin. The last was decorated, front and back, with paintings. Deeds of valor were depicted there, the most valorous being shown on the back. Thus, when other braves in panoply passed by with the brief greetings of haughty warriors so arrayed, they could later turn their heads and satisfy without discourtesy or loss of dignity their natural curiosity!

The Pawnees pointed eagerly to these, and the bear claws, and the scalp tufts and eagle feathers on the coup stick. With that stick the Kiowa had touched his enemies. Each decoration marked a deed of daring. The war bonnet was also symbolic of bravery. Upon its circlet of white doeskin had been worked designs in beads, telling of Lame Bull's prowess as a hunter and a slayer. The upstanding eagle feathers were tipped with red, significant of the enemies' blood, and green to depict their envy. Far from being a mere ornamentation, no single feather had been added to that bonnet save for valor, and with the permission of the whole band, in full tribal ceremony. It was the Indian's Medal of Honor.

"Papoose-born-a-man has killed a mighty warrior," said Bear-at-bay.

The boy's heart swelled with pride; and he was filled with gratitude for his deliverance. But he was also suffering with apprehension for Rose-dawn; and so, to gain time and also to express his appreciation for the rescue, he waved generously at the buffalo.

THIS was a signal for a change in the boisterous manner of the Pawnees. When Bear-at-bay set warriors to work on the carcass, the others started a chant of thankfulness to the Great Spirit. Bear-at-bay lit his red-stone pipe, blew four puffs to the different winds, and handed the pipe to Buck, who solemnly reciprocated. Thereafter the two stood silently watching; for, though the chief was naturally curious to hear Buck's story, the butchering of a buffalo, and particularly of a gift buffalo, was a rite to be conducted with proper ceremony.

A cow would have been placed on its back, and the skin cut lengthways of the belly, for preservation as a rich, warm robe; but the bull was shoved up on its knees. The skin was then slit along the line of the spine, and the hide kept for use in making parfleche bags, war shields, saddle blankets, and lodge coverings. Even the tripe was preserved for use as water buckets, while the ribs and quarters were tied together with rawhide thongs, and thrown in pairs across the ponies' backs.

Not until all was ready did Bear-at-bay turn to Buck.

"Now," he said, "we are ready to go. What is the story of Papoose-born-a-man?"

Buck drew a deep breath and pulled a small glass daguerreotype from his shirt pocket.

"Huh!" cried Bear-at-bay, staring. "This is my friend 'Clean Heart'—Hardy Hilton!"

Flintlike in repose, the savage features were now softened with the light of a grateful memory.

"Clean Heart came with medicine for Bear-at-bay twenty—no, nineteen snows ago," the chief asserted. "He and 'Straight Tongue' Dan Mulcahey. And you——"

"I am Hardy Hilton's boy," Buck explained. He described his father's death, and said that he had come out this far with the hope of joining Dan Mulcahey's train.

"Papoose-born-a-man is a son of his father," the chief declared. He pointed upward. "There is Clean Heart in the happy hunting grounds, looking down upon us. I am sad in my heart to think he will sing no more upon the trail. I see him now when he came, among the first white men. He stepped like the antelope, with the little bells jingling on the seams of his leggings. He carried his head like the bull moose, high and proud. He and Straight Tongue feared neither blizzard nor sand storms nor smallpox. And that is why one side of my heart is sad and the other glad. Clean Heart saved my life. Now he looks down and knows I have given his son life in return."

"Would you give mo' than that ef I was to ask?" Buck asked eagerly of the chieftain.

"What I can give, that I will give. My debt has been unpaid for nineteen snows."

The dignity and sincerity of Bear-at-bay's manner decided Buck. He called, and Rose-dawn came running from the wagon bed to his side.

"I ask that she be freed to come with me, that's all," he requested.

Bear-at-bay, who had learned English at a mission school, but who was nevertheless a thorough Indian still, stiffened and frowned. To hold the daughter of his enemy, to see her married to a Pawnee in time, and to realize that the thought would rankle in the bosom of Rain-in-the-face throughout the years—this was vengeance more worth while than that inflicted with the arrow or the scalping knife. He relinquished the prospect only after a sharp struggle.

"Bear-at-bay has spoken," he said then. "She shall be yours."

CHAPTER VI.

A YOUNG BULLWHACKER.

BACK on the trail, Dan Mulcahey rode on beside his wagons, dwelling on the Mormons.

"Shure," he was thinking, "them Mormons say 'twas the Angil Moroni towld Joseph Smit' 'twas the angil's father, Mormon, wot inscribed thim gold plates. 'Twas so he got the story av the lost tribe av Isreal, which came to this counthry long cinturies ago, they says. But was the mon towld 'twould lade to a freightin' conthract, callin' for twinty-two cints a pound?"

With this whimsical twist, Dan grinned and shook his head over the queer ways of Fate. Weird motivations have occasionally launched movements which ultimately brought about sane and logical developments of national import. And he mused for a while on the troubles which had preceded the Mormons' migration. These had started long before Joseph Smith first secretly advocated polygamy in Nauvoo.

Their enemies declared that the Mormons arrogantly pronounced all other sects abominations; that the Saints, with defiance, boasted that their membership would grow till it controlled the continent; that they, in blind obedience to their prophet's order, voted in a block; and that they intended to substitute for a duly constituted form of government a hierarchy functioning after the manner of a secret order. And nothing in a turbulent era of illiteracy and bitter sectarian disputes could compare with the hate, fury and utter savagery aroused by this strange new sect. Their settlements in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois had been the scenes of house burnings, midnight whippings, brandings, tarring-and-feathering parties, and the wholesale confiscation of property.

"Shure," Dan reflected, "their history would rade like the course av a black cloud, all shot wid lightnin'!"

It was then his eye fell on a slender, dark-faced young bullwhacker named

Zeke Harding. Of him Dan knew little, save that any man of judgment would instinctively trust that thoughtful face. He was unusually quiet for a youth of twenty, which Dan attributed to Zeke's brief admission that he had been taken into the Mormon sect by his father while he himself was still a baby. When the Gladdenites rebelled against the open avowal of polygamy in '53, the youth had joined them. Then he had been forced to flee.

Beyond this he had said little. But his few words had revealed a deal to the shrewd, observant Irishman. Here was a youth who had in coolness applied the acid test of a studious, reasoning mind to the metal of his father's creed. But Dan also sensed that something more than apostasy was actuating the man in his desire to help subjugate the Mormons.

"Zeke," said he, by way of preface, as he reined beside the walking bullwhacker, "I saw owld Brigham wance, an' he shure do have an eye in his head. He struck me as no mon's fool."

"You're right!" Reluctant admiration showed in Zeke's voice.

And thus began a conversation in which the adroit Dan led the youth on to recount the consternation which the Mexican cession brought upon the Saints. To counteract this, the astute Brigham had formed the state of Deseret, and applied for admission into the Union. This had resulted in the admission of the new Territory of Utah, and his appointment as governor.

"Dommed crafty," Dan commented. "Saved thim from bein' engulfed in some new gentile territory." Then he asked the question he had been leading up to. "But tell me, how was it yiz come to shtay on whin yiz hated it all so?"

Zeke's face grew bleak. "I wanted to stay till I could run away with my young sister. But, during the outbreak of the Gladdenites, they—they took her."

"Ah!" said Dan, in instant sympathy. "I wish I could help yiz, me bhoy!" And he patted the young man lightly on the shoulder.

Zeke flashed him a quick look of gratitude. Blinking savagely, he said:

"They had me hauling big slabs of rock over four hundred miles for the new temple that year. When Young put down our outbreak, I had a chance to steal back to the house, but Nina was gone. My brother and father are still there, I hear."

"Was it Danites took her?"

To this, Zeke could but shrug uncertain shoulders. Ritualistic secrecy lay like a pall over the red cañons, wherein men hid midnight memories behind their noonday smiles. At the door of the Danites, formed to put down the dictum of leaders who openly preached the doctrine of blood atonement for sin, common repute had laid much blame.

"And wot do yiz think yiz can do, me bhoy?" asked Dan wonderingly.

"Why," said Zeke, "if the United States takes over the city, I hope to find her."

The wagon master nodded. But he did not voice his full thought. In the shrewd and sophisticated old plainsman's opinion, the president hoped that the Mormon "war" would divert attention from the pot of secession then brewing. Once Buchanan had the bulk of the regular army out in the West, Dan did not believe the president would scruple to let the "war" fizzle on any pretext.

But here their attention was diverted by the far-distant sight of the Kiowas charging upon the yellow plains. The three miles or more reduced them to dots. Whom they surrounded, Dan could not tell. But when the larger band attacked the first, and they in consequence fled, joy and disappointment staged a skirmish on Dan's Irish face. The black crow's feet at the corners of his steel-gray eyes were sharply accentuated.

"Of all the dommed ingratitude!" quoth he, with a whimsical grimace. "Now, why the divil didn't they time it so's *we* c'u'd get in a lick or two?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE SMILER.

WHEN Mulcahey's train topped the rise above the ford, he came upon the Pawnees. They were making merry around a dozen fires of buffalo chips and

greasewood. His greeting of Bear-at-bay was characteristically vociferous; and then he sighted Buck, eagerly watching him.

"He is Papoose-born-a-man," Bear-at-bay explained. "Straight Tongue, here is a man child who looks as the hill, but stands up like the mountain." And briefly he recounted the affair at the hummock. "He speaks thus," he concluded, holding one finger before his mouth. "His tongue is not forked. If Straight Tongue does not want the boy, let him come to my lodge."

For a moment the astonished Dan could find no words. He stared at the lad through misty eyes and then gasped:

"Mother av Mike, I might have known, though! But wot w'u'd yiz expict different from a son av owld Hardy? Come here, son, and tell me about ut."

Buck eyed the old plainsman respectfully, albeit somewhat nervously. "Mo'mons kilt my folks," he responded, "jest three weeks ago. A Mo'mon gal run away one night from one of them trains o' theirs. Pap and mothah, they took her in. She hadn't no more than got in, when three men, all masked, kim right after her. Pap, he fit 'em, and they kilt pap—and mothah, too." Here the boy blinked and bit his lip. "I'm goin' out to git me a Mo'mon," he declared huskily. "Figgered if I kim fur enough, you wouldn't turn me back."

Dan's eyes twinkled. The lad was looking at him with such ardent hero worship that the Irishman could not but expand in the glow of it.

"An' wot c'u'd yiz do besides shoot Indians an' buffalo?"

The boy smiled nervously.

"Waal, suh, I can drive cavayard. Bill Cody is with Mistah Simpson's train, an' he's only 'leven."

"H'm! And wot ilse?"

"Waal, I kin make up po'try." Whereupon the boy lifted his voice and sang in a clear, sweet tenor:

> "Owld Mul-ca-hey is tough, they say;
> A bear took a bite at him one day,
> And bruk his teeth and went away.
> What a hell of a man was Mulcahey!"

Mulcahey whooped in unison with the bullwhackers. His eyes were wet and shining.

"Bedad," he roared throatily, wheeling to Bear-at-bay, "I'll kape me owld frind's bhoy, nivir fear!"

Radiance now flashed upon Buck's face; but this was dimmed almost at once by a fresh fear. "Won't yuh take Rose-dawn to Fort Laramie, too?" he anxiously pleaded. "I'll earn her keep on the way!"

"I'll see that yiz do," Dan replied with a grin. "Shure, an' we'll take her. Maybe it'll kape owld Rain-in-the-face from attacking us, eh?"

The boy now fairly danced around Dan, while Rose-dawn seized the Irishman's hand and pressed it to her cheek. Then Buck turned to Bear-at-bay. Hurriedly he dug into his pockets and from them produced a slung shot, a knife, a "cornelia" marble, a jew's-harp, a rabbit's foot, a kite string, a petrified toad, and a new three-dollar gold piece. All went into the chief's hands.

"You was mighty dog-gone good to me!" he declared. "I'd like to stay with yuh, but, yuh see, I got to git me a Mo'mon. I'm the only Hilton left."

Bear-at-bay smiled. "The hearts of Papoose-born-a-man and Bear-at-bay are as the dove beside the dove," said he. "Papoose-born-a-man shall ride to the kill on the best pony of my string."

Just then a man spoke on the opposite side of a near-by wagon, and Buck wheeled. All the color had drained from his face.

"Who is that?" he whispered tensely.

"That?" snapped Dan with a start. "He's a mon named Wilkins, a bullwhacker. They're after callin' him 'The Smiler.' But, why?"

The boy's hands gripped his rifle till the knuckles gleamed white.

"That voice—I'm not shore—but hit sounds the same. Three jist busted in that night. The gal was so scairt she jist screamed once and nevah said another word. One was a big man—an awful big man."

"Aha!" Dan's nostrils arched. "This Smiler is big—the spalpeen. But go on."

"Waal, the leadah—the one that give o'dahs—he was pretty nigh as big. Them

black eyes o' hisn looked like coals, way back in hollow caverns, I tell yuh! An' his black beard—hit were like—hit were like black snakes on his breast, in the candlelight. They was all masked. They jist beckoned to the gal—Milly Severyns, she had said her name was—an' pap grabbed for his rifle, and the biggest man snarls out: 'You will, eh?' an' shoots. Hit killed pap; and mothah she grabbed fer the gun; an' the biggest man—he killed her with his gun butt. I was at the winder, jest outside, when it happened. They chased aftah me—I had to run—I hadn't no gun, nor nuthin'."

"Which wan did this Smiler sound like?" Dan whispered fiercely.

The boy hesitated.

"Like that thar killer, but I cain't be certain."

THE train master stepped around the wagon, but The Smiler had moved. Dan had hired the man just two days before the train started, knowing little of him. He was a giant, being nearly six inches over six feet, and he carried nearly two hundred and forty pounds on his tremendous frame. Mulcahey did not like him. The Smiler had already shown the disposition of a treacherous bully. When he smiled, part of his yellow mustache disappeared under his long, sly nose, while the grin displayed two rows of yellow, serrated fangs.

"A domned fawner, too, where the boss is concerned," Dan muttered.

Stepping back, he called Zeke Harding and asked him if he had ever seen The Smiler among the Mormons.

Zeke shook his head. "But, of course, there were thousands."

"Yes, I know." Dan then turned to Bear-at-bay, who had been an eager listener. "Will yiz l'ave this in my hands, chief?" he inquired.

Bear-at-Bay's eyes glistened like bits of black mica. "My friend Clean Heart is dead," said he. "Blood calls for blood. If his son says, 'Here is the man who killed my father,' his scalp shall hang at my lodge pole."

Dan turned back to Buck. He noted the boy's pinched nostrils. The resemblance to the father was marked now.

"You say they was masked—all over the face, was it?" he asked.

"Yep."

"Well, then, me lad, remember this: the Hiltons was always quick on the trigger. Thot's a good thing, maybe, in time o' need. But age tells ye 'tis a betther and a bigger thing to be fair."

Stung, the quivering boy gave Mulcahey a reproachful glance.

"The Hilton's was nevah unfair!" he expostulated.

" 'Twould be unfair to bushwhack this mon and not be sure ye had the right wan, me son. Be shtill now, or I'll take a buckle to yiz, so I will."

In a moment The Smiler returned, and Dan called him. The man did not start at sight of the pale boy. Instead, he faced them with a cool and questioning stare, smiling a little, as was his wont.

"Smiler," Dan snapped, "where was ut yiz said ye came from?"

"Why, shore, I came from down Cairo way, in old Illinois."

"Is that the voice, son?" Dan asked quickly, but without taking his eyes from the armed giant before him.

A long sigh escaped Buck. "Hit's like it, but I cain't——"

And then, with a choked cry, he started to whip up the rifle. Dan caught it just in time. He wrestled it away from the youth.

"What did I tell yiz?" he thundered.

"His right hand!" the boy sobbed. "That thar tattooed 'H!' There were a tattoo mark on that thar killer's hand!"

"Look here!" gasped the pale Smiler, with his hand on his pistol butt. "What is all this about?"

Mulcahey soon made all clear, while several bullwhackers crowded closer, and a group of the Pawnees picked up their rifles and joined their chief. The moment was fraught with imminent tragedy.

The Smiler was pale, but returned Mulcahey's look with a brassy stare.

"Mean to tell me that boy could tell an H in candlelight?" he huskily protested. "Besides, I never was no Mormon, nohow, no time."

Bear-at-bay spoke tersely to Buck. "Say but one word, and Bear-at-bay will speak!"

The man under suspicion showed drops of perspiration on his brow.

"Hell!" he snarled. "*This* ain't no fair shake!" He suddenly placed his right hand behind him. "You tell me now what you saw on that thar hand!" he insisted hoarsely.

"Hit were an 'H,' I thought!" Buck savagely asserted.

"*Well,* then!" The Smiler retorted triumphantly. He brought out the hand. "That there's a 'B,' and an 'F' right next it. See? Besides—hey there, Small, you tell 'em. Wasn't it jest three days afore we j'ined up here that you tattooed them letters for me?"

The man addressed was a shrunken, furtive, dark-faced chap. The two had joined the outfit in company.

"That's the way it was," Small declared.

"Papoose-born-a-man has not spoken," the Indian chief reminded the youth.

A shudder passed over the boy. His hatred was out to the fore, and the temptation to act on moral certainty was almost irresistible. Yet he hesitated. Perhaps his ears *had* played him tricks. Assuredly his eyes had deceived him. He would have sworn that he had seen an 'H' on the hand of that huge murderer.

"I cain't be shore," he reluctantly acknowledged, with another shudder.

"Huh!" grunted Bear-at-bay.

But Dan commended: "Begad, yiz have won a victory, me bhoy, though yiz may not know it."

"Lucky for me, too!" quoth The Smiler, wiping his brow. "If he'd said the word, them Injuns—ugh! But I don't blame you a mite, losin' your folks that a way, son. A big man and a tattooed hand and all—why, no, I cain't noways blame you."

But the man's hearty, booming tones did not assure the boy. He knew that the giant would be his enemy through life.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN A WHEEL TRACK.

WHEN the gentiles of Hancock County, Illinois, rose in arms against the Saints, one of the charges hurled against Joseph Smith was that the politically ambitious prophet helped swell the thousands under his control by giving sanctuary to refugees from justice, who were then infesting the wild Missouri border.

"This mon may be wan av the divils who profissed Mormonism since thot time," said Dan, after they had parted from Bear-at-bay. "They do it to hide behind the skirts av those who are well meanin' among them. 'Tis plain, though, there is an ilimint av doubt. Manewhile, who knows but wot we may ketch thot very wagging train the gyrul is wid?"

"Oh, do yuh think we *could?*"

"Well, they travel slow, mostly. Anyways, till then we'll be after kapin' an eye on the mon; an', thin, if we're iver shure——"

The glint of his eyes completed the sentence and Buck nodded. Until he was certain of The Smiler's guilt, he would bide his time.

"But here's another thing," Dan succinctly added, regarding the youth shrewdly: "How much time do yiz put in hatin' thim Mormons?"

Buck showed his astonishment. "No time—an' *all* the time. I mean—hit'll allus be there, like somethin' in the bank, jest when I want it."

"H'm! I don't suppose yiz can see any good at all, at all in thim?"

"Naw. Never—no time."

"Well, yiz believe in bein' fair, annyways."

"I tried to show that."

"Yis. Now, did yiz know what one of yer Missouri milishy mobs did in '38? Shot down some twinty Mormon men, wimmen an' children from ambush, in cold blood, at Haun's Mills. Was thot right?"

"Well—no," came the grudging concession.

"All right. Then, in Nauvoo, when they come to arrist Joe Smith an' his brother, wot happined? Smith had ordered thot *Expositor* razed to the ground, bekaze it towld wot he said in privut to his council about polygamy. Well, shure, Governor Ford towld them Smiths they'd be protected if they submitted to arrist, didn't he?"

"Ah-huh! So pap said."

"Good! Then them Carthage Grays, guardin' the Carthage jail, shtood back, while a mob kilt the two Smiths. Was thot right?"

Two knots worked in Buck's jaw muscles before he replied. "They done deserved it!" he declared.

"Answer me quistion!" Dan sternly commanded.

"No, suh, it weren't right."

"Good!"

Easy and graceful in his saddle, the Irishman let his eye roam out ahead, where noon lay like a glinting sheen of gold upon the extensive flats and knolls of the prairies. Into his impressionable heart this lad had entered with one swift smile, and now upon his bachelor shoulders there sat an unaccustomed responsibility. He had welcomed it with an unsuspected, or, at least, an unadmitted, hunger; but through his Celtic nature, through all his whimsical inconsistencies, there ran a backbone which would not let him see that responsibility in any other than a serious light. So now he gathered his thoughts in order and resumed:

"Wance I was shot in Salt Lake City. I happined to be broke. Now, if I'd had money, they'd have charged me double, me bein' a gentile. But thim Mormons, they nursed me an' niver charged a cent."

"Yuh don't say!"

"Yis. Now, me bhoy," Dan went on sagely, "there's niver a human bein' or set o' human bein's built like a stone wall. They only look it betimes. Butt your head along it, an' sooner or later yiz foind a soft spot somewheres. An' there's another way to look at ut. Iverything works fer some good ind. Now, whin Kearny wanted volunteers for Californy, just before they started on their big trek West, he got a battalion av young Mormons, didn't he? He did."

"Some say hit was because the Mormons wanted a settlement, maybe, in California."

"Wot of it? Can't get around the fact that they wint. To fight them Mexicans. Well, an' if they hadn't been there handy afterward, who knows when Sutter c'u'd have hired enough min to dig his mill race? 'Twas thim thot dug the race where gold was discovered, quite be accident. 'Twas also Mormons wot dug up some silver in Utah an' started prospectors prowlin' there in the Sierras. Wot's more, they're showin' people wot kin be done in the way av irrigatin' desert lands; an' I'll gamble me shirt if iver there's a railroad goes through it that will be by way av Salt Lake City. Thot's bekaze it takes somethin' more than Chinese silks to support such a road, an' there's wan sittlemint, annyways, waitin' to help support it." Then he favored the partially impressed boy with a smile which wonderfully illuminated his animated visage, and concluded: "So thin, yiz will go along, helpin' to drive cavayard whiniver I tell yiz."

Buck had cheerfully relaxed into that comfort which all boys feel when an admonition ends.

"Do I have to sign Mister Alexander Major's pledge not to use nary a profane word, nor git drunk, nor gamble none?" he asked dryly. "How can I drive the oxen?"

"Well, now," Dan replied, with a proper judicious inflection, "thim bulls av ours undershtand but wan langwidge. Thot's oxenese. 'Tis only whin Mister Major is around it w'u'd be called swearin'. As for the rist—jist let me ketch yiz wance."

SO, with this understanding, the boy on his trim calico pony turned an eager face toward that still far-distant and invisible West, where towered in their mute grandeur the blue-and-silver Rockies. And what an expanse stretched before him! There was then not a mile of railroad between the Missouri outposts and the Pacific coast. In all that terrain only the Mormon stronghold and a few small, widely separated trading stations and military posts marked the presence of the white man. Before they reached Salt Lake City, they might encounter nomadic bands of Wichitas, Winnebagoes, Gros Ventres, Crows, Blackfeet or Shoshones. Over and above all, they would pass through the Wyoming country, then included in a section allotted by treaty to the Northern Cheyennes, the Arapahoes, and Rose-dawn's people, the

western Sioux, who called themselves Dakotas.

But the fright of his recent experience had passed; and now, buoyed by the strong, pure wine of his persistent optimism, the youth looked forward to the unknown as eagerly as any explorer adventuring upon an uncharted sea.

"Do you think that Minnesota trouble will put the paint on them Teton Sioux?" he inquired.

Dan shrugged uncertainly. Six years before this, the Santee or eastern Sioux had sold the bulk of their Minnesota holdings. Wroth over the nonpayment of annuities due them for lands now occupied by a great inrush of settlers, Ink-pa-du-ta, the Wahpetonwon chief, had broken out in March with a massacre of whites at Spirit Lake.

"All the Santees didn't favor this outbreak," Dan replied. "But"—here he became whimsical—"wot w'u'd yiz do if them western Ogallalas, an' thim Brules an' Hunkpapas has the paint on?"

"Let 'em come!" Buck cried boyishly, and he threw back his head to sing:

"Oh, I tell yuh how hit is when yuh first git on the road:
You've got an awkward team an' a ver-ee heav-e- load;
You've got to whup an' holler, and ef yuh sw'ar hit's on the sly!
Punch yore team along, boys! 'Root, hog, er die!'"

"Ha!" exclaimed Dan, serious once more. "Well, me bhoy, there's other ways av thinkin' about the Injun than somethin' you want to git bechune your sights."

"How's that, Uncle Dan?"

"Well, take Bear-at-bay. He's an owld horse thafe. An' wot he'll do to an inimy w'u'd turn yiz gray to see. But he remimbered his debt to your dad nineteen years, didn't he?"

"Yes, suh."

"Well, the Santee Sioux has the right of it, an' shtill only a few bruk out. An', by an' large, I'll say this: I'll give yiz a hundred bucks if yiz iver see an Injun spank a child, or if anny iver mistrates yiz while yiz are his guest; or if yiz iver see wan disrespectful to wan av their owld min; or if yiz mate wan who breaks his given word, or beats anny one out av a debt he's contracted."

This impressed the youth, but, two days later, Dan received proof that his talk concerning the Mormons had been received with mental reservations.

Already the sunny boy had become a favorite among his crew, made up of profane men, whose affection oftimes ran like a deep tide under the jests of tongues, which held no fault immune from badinage. He could sing and dance, and his droll exuberance was spontaneous. But on this night, Lew Simpson's train having been delayed by a bad ford, Buck slipped off to visit with young Cody. When he returned he was filled with elation.

"Talked to Jim Hickock," he confided to Dan, referring to a young man who was later to be known as "Wild Bill" throughout the West. "Showed me how to take the triggers out o' pap's single-action Colts. Gee! Beats this heah trigger pullin' all hollow. Man ain't no time to fool around huntin' fer triggahs in a pinch."

"So?" said Dan, hiding an indulgent smile under his mustache. "Goin' to fan your hammers wid yer thumbs, eh?"

"Bet yore life, suh."

"H'm! An' wot ilse did yiz l'arn?"

"Why, suh—take you. You wear yer guns butts front."

"Thot's bekaze I kin pull faster on a cross-arm draw."

"Uncle Dan, I think I got a quicker way'n that figgered."

"Well, show me."

Diffidently, but with manifest eagerness, the boy illustrated. His father's holsters were fastened low on his legs. Thus the butts of the revolvers, facing to the rear, were within the natural arc of the swing of his hands. With a movement swift as light and yet so well synchronized as to appear nonchalant, he produced from the holsters both heavy weapons. In the same movement they were turned side down, and, from an angle just below the waist, presented at the stomach of an imaginary enemy.

"Reckon I'll be set for them Mo'mons afore we gits there," he declared. "That way is quicker fer me than tryin' to lift

the guns higher an' swingin' the muzzles around."

"H'm!" Dan was impressed with the boy's quickness, yet some regret tinged his joy. "The measure av a mon is in his attitude, an' not in his quickness wid a gun," he remarked. "Now, I want yiz to l'arn to throw them guns about two licks ahead av an eye wink, bekaze yiz have to protict yersilf in this country. But I also want yiz to l'arn *whin* to throw thim—an' thot's the bigger lesson."

Nothing more was said; but the conversation recurred to Dan next day, as he rode for a time ahead of the train. Before him stretched a shadeless waste, where buffalo skulls lay white against the yellow. An upright prairie dog wiggled his forepaws absurdly before a collection of round, yellow mounds near by, and from them rolled away the mighty contours of the basking earth to black specks, which, at the meeting point of sky and earth, were bison moving in single file. The light breeze made pleasant music in the cottonwoods on his right, while the afternoon sun shone cheerfully on the swimming bosom of the broad and shallow Platte. So for a time Dan was steeped in contemplation of the wide landscape—its vastness—its eternal changelessness. But suddenly he looked down.

There on the ground was a buffalo skull, and beside the skull was a wheel track, and in the wheel track was a partially crushed book. Alighting, Dan retrieved it. It proved to be a Mormon prayer book. Within it were some loose leaves of a diary.

"H'm!" he muttered, after scanning the last entry. "If thot's the same Mormon train, it ain't but four days ahead av us." He remounted, musing. "I'll not be showing that little Injun, Buck, the book, though," he decided. "If we ketch them, maybe I kin handle the thing, mesilf."

CHAPTER IX.

"US HILTONS."

AS the plodding bulls pulled the wag steadily onward, Buck's spirits remained exuberant. He loved the trail. He loved the clean, sweet air and the undulations of the lower prairies on their gradual ascent to Fort Kearney and the roaring freighter's settlement called Dobey Town. Even when they passed this point and continued the climb through country, where the desert's torrid sun blazed pitilessly down on white sage and flats of alkali, and heat rose like a choking vapor from sandy stretches, where only dusty knots of bunch grass clung to life, Buck's joy was but slightly diminished.

"Some might call hit waste land," he said, commenting on the scarcity of trees, save for thin lines of cottonwoods and willows along the tepid streams, "but I'll take the worst of hit afore the best back East. A man kin breathe out heah!"

There were days when it rained in torrents, drenching him to the skin. On other days the wheels and the feet of the oxen kicked up clouds of alkali flakes, till the eyes of the beasts were rheumy, and their tongues lolling, and his own features were thickly encrusted with the stinging substance. Nevertheless, the train must go forward regardless of any man's comfort. Hence he often "ate on the run;" for punching an ox train over the road involved many a task at which he could lend a hand. There were oxen to be shod, loose tires to heat and reset, cold shuts to be inserted in worn chains, axles to jack up and grease, bull-whip lashes to plait, yoke sores to treat, fuel to gather, cactus spines to be extracted from the bulls' hocks, and a score of other jobs to perform.

But the boy never complained; instead, he thrived on it.

"I love the way the ole sun lays so warm on them brown patches," he confided in his soft drawl to his pony. "I like to see them buffalo bulls paw an' snort, an' them big jack rabbits jump most as high as the dog-gone moon, seems like. An' oh, don't I love the way them pretty pronged antelopes toss up theah silky haids so pretty an' defiant, an' then jest go hit!" And he looked at the western horizon with shining eyes. "There's somethin' there jest keeps assayin'; 'Come on, boy, come on! I've got somethin' heah to show yuh even bettah!'"

He loved the keen gulps of air, with the tingling oxygen, which set his blood to racing, and the warm feel of his pony between his legs, and the marvelous nights, when stars dangled purple and silver streamers from the stupendous prairie sky. He loved to lie in his blankets, growing ever drowsier, dreamily watching the coals glowing against the pervading dark, hearing the distant howl of a wolf, or the stirring of the patient oxen, placidly chewing their cuds. And his days were a continual delight. For what descendant of Daniel Boone and Anthony Wayne could ask more than the promise of an Indian attack ever in prospect? What young Hilton could wish more than a daily view of grazing buffalo and an occasional single ascending column of smoke rings, meaning, "The enemy is near!" He considered it an honor and a privilege to throw back his head and sing with the roaring crew:

"Oh, there's many strange sights to be seen
along the road—
The antelopes an' deer, an' the great big
sandy toad;
The buff'lo an' elk, the rabbits jump so high,
An' with all the bloody Injuns—'Root, hog,
er die!'"

Not even "Missouri bake" could dampen his ardor. This article passed for bread in their mess. The crust was burned, and the interior a mass of partially baked dough. He ate this with a wolfish appetite, and canned peaches, tomatoes, and sour-dough biscuits; and he also devoured greedily the "death balls" and "sinkers," which were fried in the long-handled pans. These were thin batter cakes, made of flour, water and soda, and fried quickly in hot grease. The death balls were differentiated from the sinkers by the addition of molasses.

The Smiler was now continually attempting to reëstablish himself by a persistent assumption of jocose camaraderie, and Buck found it hard at times to avoid the man. But the youth shoved his enemy into the mental position held by the lone wagons they sometimes passed, bound eastward and marked with the laconic word—"Bust!"

"Them things," he assured Dan, with a naïve smile, "gits under yore skin. But I aim to keep thinkin' rather o' the lazy warm currents theah is a-swimmin' in this ole golden air!"

SO the train proceeded steadily, eating deeper into empires of infinite magnitude and mounting always higher into the mountainous table-lands, till the earth swells were no longer rolling, but sharply upflung erosions from great flats which lay six thousand feet above the level of the sea. Up above the western rim then peered a faint blue line, which was Buck's first sight of mountains; and thereafter he moved in an enchanted world. Prairies and sage and alkali flats remained; but mesas and buttes now rose glinting and bare above the sweep of sage; and over the unmeasured vacancies presided the imminence of nearing crags. These, with their refreshing patches of snow and growths of green pines, lured on the perspiring travelers, promising shade and cool water.

Serene, above all this immensurable vista, stretched a sky without a cloud. Its delicate blue tints were unsurpassed. Day after day it remained thus, with no wind to mar the quiet. In the dawn Buck could trace easily the movements of his comrades by their trailing breath; but, by eight o'clock, summer was once more dominant in the exhilarating atmosphere.

That evening a sunset behind the peaks laid over all the earth a glow of purple and fiery reds; and when this had faded into the enroaching dusk, Buck, with little Rose-dawn and Dan, mounted a high mesa.

Within their vision lay at least ten thousand square miles of territory. It extended beneath them like a silver-tinted reproduction of a continent in bas-relief, with its buttes and coulees and its white-topped wagons and distant cliffs standing out in definite clarity. The chain of widely separated camp fires wound away till the last was as a tiny glowworm.

Dreamily Buck's eye picked out a distant gash in a mountainside, down which for ages a waterfall had plunged.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "I know now

why Injuns think outdoahs is the place to pray in."

Dan's eyes grew very soft, as he noted the lad's expression.

"And why?" the Irishman inquired.

"Why, with that big sky, an' them fleecy clouds swimmin' away off yondah, where the rainbow begins, hit's like—hit's like a big cathedral."

Dan was delighted.

"Bedad," he declared, "it is only those who feel so thot kin rade the poem av birds on the wing, an' see the tepee fire av the Great Spirit in the glorious colors av the sunset. Do yiz kape such thoughts an' treasure thim, me lad. 'Tis betther than anny gold yiz will iver get."

"I believe so," the boy answered shyly. "Yuh know, Rose-dawn told me the rainbow is a path fo' the moccasined feet of Injun maids goin' to the happy huntin' grounds."

"An' wot do yiz think av thot?"

"Well, hit's like—well, maybe like Santa Claus stories. But"—here he concluded in a rush—"I *like* to believe such beautiful things as that."

"Bedad, thin, I'll tell yiz more!"

So Dan's silver tongue unfolded for the lad the colorful fancies of the Indian. Thus the lad gained an understanding of the so-called savage, whose whole life was tinged with poetry and religious symbolism. And thus he learned how the eye which sights a rifle at a hated, land-stealing white may view the great Milky Way as a path for fallen warriors to the Land Beyond; how the wielder of a tomahawk may see in the gentle waving of the pussy willows the inspiration for a song; how the savage ear catches silvery voices, where others hear only the chuckle of a mountain brook; and how communion with the stars, the chinooks, the falling leaves, or the flowers upturned to the sun can inspire a warrior, like Red Cloud, to say with deepest feeling: "The wings of a bird are as thoughts that fly high!"

THESE revelations amazed and delighted Buck, and they gave him an added interest in little Rose-dawn. The grateful little girl had become his shadow. She had assumed the proprietary air of a little squaw ministering to the wants of her warrior. Never obtrusive, exceptionally cleanly, always deferential and obedient to Dan, and manifesting a certain innate sense of dignity beyond her years, she was ever in the background when Buck's thoughts were otherwise engaged, and ever quick to turn to him, with a smile, when he wished to talk to her. This she seemed to sense intuitively. It could not help but please and flatter the boy. He liked her more and more.

Before the men she was expressionless. But, when riding a pony of Dan's beside Buck, she expanded like a violet under the sun of his smile. Rapidly she added to his meager stock of Sioux phrases, till they could converse with some degree of fluency. And her quaint interpretations amazed him.

"Look! See how the moon laughs," she said once. And on another occasion she said: "The fawn's eyes are soft because it has flower thoughts in its heart."

In sharp contrast to this wistful yearning for thoughts to express a deep love of all things beautiful and gentle, she approved most emphatically of Buck's intention to kill a Mormon for vengeance. She was also highly pleased by Buck's prowess when Dan took her and the boy on short rides for buffalo and white-tailed deer.

"Ho!" she cried. "He is already a mighty hunter. I see him growing tall and straight, like the pine. I see him carrying his head as the bull elk tosses his antlers. I see him riding like O-nonda-soo-ga, leaping his horse, from crag to crag, on the mountain sky line at sunset."

But Dan, in his own rough way, was striving to keep uppermost the wholesome sweetness in the boy's character; and he was quick to check any show of conceit.

"Whiniver yiz hear hot air," said he, "let ut go out the other ear, lest it swell yiz till yiz bust. But yiz might lissen well to thot young mon, Harding, though. There's a mon who spakes from the heart and wid sinse."

But this advice Buck had not taken at once. That Zeke seemed modest, honest and kindly in his quiet way, Buck was ready to admit; but the man had

lived with Mormons! So the boy remained aloof till they were halted one noon to the east of Fort Laramie.

On this day Buck was walking along the train, looking with sparkling eyes at a distant mesa. It resembled a squat pile of beeswax slabs. Beyond it, on his right, was a big butte. It reminded Buck of a crumpled black chocolate drop, with the tip removed. Thus he was preoccupied and did not see the two small herds of bison emerging silently from behind a near-by butte, on his left. One was composed of cows, and the other of bulls, grazing separately.

Then suddenly there issued from a fissure in the footslopes of the butte a band of mounted Sioux, and the drivers scrambled for their rifles.

"No, no!" Rose-dawn shrieked. "See —they hunt only. Ogallalas and Hunkpapas!"

Dan repeated the cry in English, so the men held their fire, watching the scene.

Snorting and bellowing and kicking up a cloud of dust, the herds started off at a rolling gallop. After them streaked the yelling hunters. Almost naked, lithe and supple, they seemed to be but parts of the nimble ponies which dashed into the midst of the shaggy beasts.

Watching them, Buck saw Red Cloud, a powerful brave, reach the side of a mighty bull. Drawing the deerskin bow string back till the arrow head of flint touched the notch in the ash bow, the warrior released the feathered shaft and drove it through the great body. The arrow head protruded on the opposite side, and the beast plunged forward on its head, dead before he struck the grass.

But another Indian had only succeeded in wounding a dodging bull. This great brute whirled, with a bellow of rage, and came charging straight for the train. Buck turned sharply at the cry which went up and stepped into a gopher hole.

His leg went into the hole to the knee. Before he could extricate it, the bull was but a scant ten yards away. He heard shots. Rose-dawn screamed; but the bull never paused. There came an agonized, tear-choked cry from old Dan. Buck's foot came loose, and then, with the mad bull almost upon him, Zeke's slender figure shot through the air and knocked Buck out of the animal's path. Harding barely escaped death. The bison's horn ripped a patch of the thick, red-flannel shirt from his back and knocked him violently to the ground.

The bull then swept on, struck one of the ox leaders in Zeke's team a thundering blow, full in the side, and knocked the beast and his mate to the sod. The "nigh" ox was killed almost instantly. Bowling onward, the buffalo progressed some twenty yards before he staggered and sank down.

An instant later found Dan hugging an embarrassed boy and an equally confused young man, while Rose-dawn snatched up Zeke's hand and hugged it against her cheek. And Harding attempted to make light of his rescue; but Buck would not have it so. When quiet had been restored, he held out his hand.

"Us Hiltons," he said shyly, but quite gravely, "allus pay ouah debts. I'll shore be right obliged to yuh, suh, if you-all lets me have the honah of he'pin' yuh git yore sistah."

It may be remarked here that neither grown man grinned openly. On the contrary, Dan's eyes were extraordinarily warm and tender, while Zeke gravely accepted the proffered hand.

"I'd think it an honor to have you help me," he replied.

CHAPTER X.

SCARRED HANDS.

THERE was that in Dan's eye which said plainly, "Well, what the divil *are* we goin' to do wit' this bhoy?" But, as he strove to hide his emotion under a gruff order to keep an eye out for gopher holes in future, a shout from a bullwhacker turned their attention elsewhere. A cavalcade of bronzed, blue-clad dragoons was approaching at a trot, followed by a train of mule-drawn quartermaster supply wagons.

Buck immediately forgot the recent escape. Every flat-backed, leathery-skinned trooper in that approaching outfit was a hero in his young eyes. They were covered with alkali dust, and their

blue shirts were stained with white circles, where perspiration had dried; but no cadets on dress parade could have given him half the thrill. The banging of the frying pans, mess tins, and lariat pins on the cantle saddle pouches was music in his ears.

"They're the boys to whup them Mo'mons!" he exulted.

And now a cry from Dan electrified him still further.

"Bedad!" yelled the Irishman. "'Tis Major Busbee!"

Buck's heart leaped; for his father had often told him of a fight with Arapahoes years before, in which Hardy Hilton, Dan Mulcahey, and three enlisted men had arrived in time to save Lieutenant Busbee's life. "There were eleven braves he had turned into good Injuns afore we got there, though—and him alone behind his horse!" his father had told him.

"And shure," Dan predicted, "there's wan will be glad of a chanct at the Mormons."

"Majah Busbee?"

"Yis. Do yiz remimber that foine private stagecoach wot druv by this mornin'?"

Buck remembered. The coach had been drawn by six swift horses, and it was accompanied by three Texas cowboys and a small remuda. He had noted a tall aristocratic young man on the seat and a comely young matron and a little girl sitting within, accompanied by two colored servants. They were bound for California and had paused at the head of the train to chat with Dan.

"I forgot to tell yiz," Dan explained, "but thot was Major Busbee's son. His name is Don. Well, the major's wife is dead an' gone, but she were a Texas gyurl. She left her estate to young Don Busbee, d'y'mind—a cattle ranch so big the moon can't shine on it all to wance."

"An' now he's off for gold?"

"Yis. There's a fr'ind av his shtruck ut out there, an' Don shtaked him, ut seems. He's left the ranch wid a cousin an' is off to see wot California looks loike. Well, he an' the major's hardly on sp'akin' terms no more, all on account av Don's marryin' a Mormon gyurl."

"Huh!" grunted Buck. "That was her with him?"

"Yis. Her father was wan of thim proselyters, an' she were travelin' with him whin Don met her in Texas."

Dan then raised his voice to shout again. "Shure, there's the three helped your dad an' mesilf pull the major out av a hole! Sargint Krueger an' those sons av disrectitude, Corpril Alberson an' owld 'Rocky' Moore! Oh, glory be!"

His glad yell was echoed by Major Busbee, who spurred forward, beckoning the three striking veterans in ranks behind him to follow. All were as tall as Mulcahey, being over six feet in height; and with their wide shoulders, and their flat backs and thin shanks, not to speak of the identical manner in which they wore their side whiskers, chin tufts and fierce, outstanding waxed mustaches, it would have been difficult to chose one from the other in the distance. Even then they were gray at the temples; but they dismounted at the gallop, like light-hearted boys, and joined in a vociferous chorus around their old friend, Mulcahey.

It developed that they intended to draw badly needed supplies at the night's camping place, for they were on the way to Fort Laramie, after a campaign under Sumner against the Cheyennes.

Buck was overjoyed when he was introduced, and profane old Rocky Moore allowed him to "heft" his saber.

"Did hit *really* split that Injun right down to the chine?" he asked in awed, but not incredulous tones.

"Clean spang to the chine, sor," said Rocky, with extreme gravity. "So quick and slick, b'gad, that them two lengthways halves of the man stood up, looking foolish. So with that I took a sidewise cut at the middle of them halves, and quartered the buck, b'gad!"

WHILE they were all laughing at this display of Rocky's sanguinary imagination, a Sioux chief came riding toward them, his hand held on high. The warrior, whose arrow had pierced the bull, rode with him. Both were splendid figures of men, even among a nation of physical marvels. Their hands had been

mangled by the bills of live eagles, from which they tore the feathers for their bonnets; and upon their breasts were claw marks, made by grizzly bears killed in unaided combat.

"Atay!" Rose-dawn cried joyously, running forward. "My father, my father!"

"Begobs, I'd almost forgotten the littul gyurl, wot wid the dragoons comin' up!" Dan ejaculated. "Shure, it's owld Rain-in-the-face, an' young Rid Cloud, the Ogallala."

They saw the old chieftain stiffen on his horse, as though struck by a beam. He stared for a second, as one might look on the face of the arisen dead. Then he was off his horse, clutching the little girl to his heart. While she babbled excitedly in his ear, he stroked her hair awkwardly, and turned his back on the white men, lest they see his emotion. A full minute passed before he had regained his composure.

Finally he faced about.

"Ho, washechu!" he grunted; and, as he recognized Dan, his eyes lighted with unmistakable gratitude and admiration. *"Ho, mita koda!"* he hailed.

"Welcome, friend!" Dan returned, in Siouan. "Buck, come here, me bhoy."

Somewhat embarrassed, Buck came forward. But there was no outburst of oratory to confuse him. The old chief merely looked at him and spread his scarred hands wide, palms outward.

"He manes that all he has is yours," Dan explained. "Shure, no mon c'u'd say more. It comes hard to the owld mon, seein' as he hates all whites, save a few loike mesilf, but 'tis wan shure thing. Yiz kin bank on it the rist av his life."

Major Busbee joined the group then, and, in the ensuing parley, Buck was treated to a new thrill. He learned that the Teton Sioux, including the Ogallalas, Hunkpapas and Brules, were not on the warpath just then, because the Minnesota differences had been temporarily adjusted. They were also intending to hunt buffalo through September—the "Moon of the Wild Cherries." Three of their bands were encamped at Brigham's Coulee, where Dan and the dragoons planned to spend the night.

"You must come to our camp," Rose-dawn whispered to him. "I have told you of the Sioux boys. My Papoose-born-a-man is mightier still."

Despite himself, Buck's chest inflated. The fortitude and athletic prowess of the Sioux boys were remarkable. They could run all day. They could fast for two or three days without a murmur, endure self-inflicted tortures, and ride like centaurs. Buck was pleased to think that he could stand out as a man among them. So the boy could hardly restrain his impatience from then on till they finally sighted the camps below them in the bed of the coulee.

At a point up the creek Buck saw an emigrant train encamped. The Sioux squaws had pitched their tepees farther down, while the dragoons were camped in Sibley tents below the Indians. Hence the cheery camp fires, blazing in the dusk, held out three distinct points of interest to a traveler on a lonely trail.

BUT the Indian camp had the color which drew Buck's eye like a magnet. The white-skin tepees were decorated with paintings. Red sunsets, weird figures of men with animal heads, zigzagging streaks of lightning, and crescents or geometrical designs told of the occupants' deeds, contemplated missions, vendettas, or prayers. Lances and coup sticks, with fluttering pendants, were thrust in the ground before them. Horse plumes, wolf skins, and other "lodge-medicine" tokens hung above the entrances, and paint-streaked ponies grazed on the outskirts.

About a central camp fire, seated in a circle, lolled many copper-skinned bucks, smoking the calumet. In a maroon tepee, decorated with a green moon surrounded by a yellow circle, a medicine man chanted. Children rode about the camp in travois skins, slung between poles, and drawn by dogs. Babies hung meanwhile in perpendicular wooden cradles, which were suspended from upright poles; and near by knelt their black-haired mothers, scraping buffalo hides with elk-horn knives, or tanning them with a mixture of buffalo brains and liver.

In the light of the fires it was a scene

of nomadic freedom and romantic color. So it transpired that within the hour Buck found himself in the midst of an excited group at the lower end of the village. The old chieftain was engaged in the tiyo tepee, or council lodge. None of the warriors were near the boys and girls, save Red Cloud.

Long before Buck appeared in the village, Rose-dawn had been talking. She had been singing the praises of Papoose-born-a-man, brave slayer of the Kiowa. What boy among them could boast of such a deed? They could drag pieces of meat around at the end of a thong, while other boys shot arrows into it, pretending it was a buffalo. They were also fairly good at shinny, or breaking up little girls' games of mud ball or plumb stone. But who among them had killed a Kiowa?

All this had been too much for her brother, Kicking Antelope. He was a boy near Buck's age. He interrupted Rose-dawn several times, as she improvised a chant in her champion's honor; whereupon the little girl laughed gleefully and praised Buck the more.

"Huh!" Kicking Antelope cried at last. "The heart of Lame Bull must have been like that of Oopehsanska, the thrush."

"So?" taunted Rose-dawn. "Do Kiowas give coup sticks to thrushes?"

Kicking Antelope could not offset this. But, with the laughter of his mates ringing in his ears, he strode out, pounding himself on the breast. He spat on the ground at Buck's feet. He declared that he, Kicking Antelope, could kill *three* Kiowa warriors and with a shinny club.

"Huh!" Buck snorted, growing angry at last. He wished secretly that Rose-dawn might have held her tongue, but he was not going to run away now. "I think you're a durned bag o' wind!" he said in English.

His tones were understood, if his words were not. Kicking Antelope retorted, in Siouan: "The white boys' muscles are like *agyape tachangu*—white man's lung bread. No white boy can stand what a Sioux baby can stand."

Young-son-of-bear laughed stridently at this. This playmate of Kicking Antelope hated all whites bitterly. His father, a noted chief, had been killed by soldiers, three years before, near Fort Laramie.

"The *washechu* are so faint in the belly that they shoot Sioux before the Indians even raise a bow," this lad sneered, referring to the manner in which his father had been mortally wounded.

Buck's head went up, and within a few minutes he and Kicking Antelope, stripped to the waist, were standing side by side. Their arms were folded across their breasts. Their features were grim and set with high resolve. Red Cloud stood behind them, with a knife in one hand and some rawhide thews in the other. Rose-dawn looked on, her arms also folded, her eyes flashing with pride. Was not her champion proving to be all that she had said?

"Huh?" grunted Red Cloud, addressing Buck.

"Go ahead!" the pale youth declared, with a grim nod.

The young brave drew back the knife to plunge it through the muscles of Buck's back, when suddenly they were interrupted by a shrill, piercing scream. It was emitted by a little, black-haired white girl, then only three years of age, who came running out of the darkness to pound at the legs of the knife wielder, with her tiny fists. Buck recognized her instantly as the little girl he had seen in Don Busbee's coach.

"Shan't hurt nice boy—shan't hurt nice boy!" she screamed.

A cry of rage broke from Buck, while the Indian boys laughed and taunted him.

"You go away—you durned Mo'mon!" he ordered hotly.

"No! No! No! Bad ole Injun hurt boy." And the baby screeched again.

"Go ahead, durn it!" Buck commanded his would-be torturer; but it was too late. Mrs. Don Busbee came running from the direction of the emigrant camp to scoop up the runaway baby, while several squaws and three white men hastened toward them. They were Major Busbee, Dan Mulcahey and young Harding.

"Wot the divil's this?" yelled Dan.

Buck held out his blistered hands. "I helt them coals as long as Kickin' Antelope did," he exulted. "Then they made out no white boy could stand the 'willow jerk.' "

"Well, what the hell nixt!" gasped Dan, for the torture test, which Buck had proposed to endure with Kicking Antelope, meant a slitting of the skin and the passing of a thong through the aperture. They had then proposed to stand on their toes, while the thongs were fastened to a springy willow limb, and remain thus till one or the other cried quits.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FATES AND ONE BABY.

DAN found relief in a torrent of profanity and scooped the boy up in his arms.

"Major," he said, "I'll have to driss the lad's hands, so if yiz——"

But just here Buck interrupted him with a wild cry. His face was ashen in hue, his eyes blazing like points of heated steel. Over the heads of the excited squaws and Indian boys he had caught another glimpse of the major's daughter-in-law. She was turning back toward the emigrant camp with her little girl. But with them was a fair-haired girl of sixteen or seventeen. Her pale, frightened eyes were looking full into Buck's. She could not hide the flash of recognition; but at the same instant she wheeled and was off in palpable panic after the older woman.

"Hit's Milly Severyns!" gasped Buck. "Hit's them Mo'mons!"

"So?" snapped Major Busbee. His own eyes blazed. "She's the one poor old Hardy protected, eh? By gad, I'll round up that Smiler. I'll make her tell the names of those murderers in two shakes!"

He was gone on the instant, declaring vehemently that he would shortly return with a file of men. Dan then hurried the excited boy to the freighters' grub wagon, where the blistered hands were treated with soda, molasses, and buffalo fat.

"Shure," said Dan, "I don't know whether to pat yiz on the back or paddle yiz till ye smoke—ye little divil!" And he swore again and turned grimly toward the Mormon camp. "B'gobs!" he exclaimed. "But, if yiz have turned up owld Hardy's an' your pore mother's murderers, I'll lit be!"

Dan then consoled himself with tobacco.

"Well, the major's fair woild," he continued. "The bhoy jist stopped fer the night, so's his woife c'u'd talk to some owld frinds. As soon as he run into his dad, the bhoy was after him to make up wid the young woife. The major wouldn't, but the owld bhoy is in a sweat for fear the lad'll be kilt goin' through Utah."

"Don't blame him," Harding commented. "I saw young Busbee chatting with Eb Snow and his father in the Mormon camp, less than half an hour ago."

"Wot about thim?"

"I think Eb Snow is a Danite. He and his father are conducting the converts overland. I know this Eb Snow for a treacherous, scheming, oily hound. You'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, but he had his eye on Frances Harris—Mrs. Don Busbee now—when I knew them."

Here Major Busbee returned with Sergeant Krueger, Corporal Alberson, and a dozen more dragoons, including Rocky Moore. Buck snatched up his rifle. His palms were bandaged, but he nodded with grim satisfaction when he found he could manipulate his trigger finger.

"Wot the divil now?" Dan sharply interrogated.

"Why, shore," said Buck, in surprise, "ain't we goin' to kill 'em?"

"Hell, no!" roared Major Busbee. "Not that I blame you a bit. But if we land 'em, we've got to send them back for trial."

"Trial?" Buck's expression of amazement was ludicrous. "You cain't *mean* hit?"

"He does," said Dan. "Now, Buck, I want yer word you will not shoot till I say so."

Buck shook his head grimly. "I'll shoot soon as I'm shore I got the right man."

"Then gimme those guns!"

The boy handed over the weapons; but, throughout the trip to the Mormon camp, he did not glance again at Dan.

The Saints' emigrant train was arranged in two semicircles. Several camp fires blazed outside their wagon corral, and near by Buck saw Don Busbee's splendidly appointed stagecoach. His baby, Matilda, was standing with her mother before the coach, talking to three Mormon women.

The Mormons were singing, laughing and chatting, and their faces seemed very much the same as Buck had encountered everywhere. Yet there was a subtle difference. They were exceptionally cleanly faces, and upon their features was stamped a fervor which Buck had never seen equaled. It was particularly noticeable when the soldiers were sighted, and the singers fell silent.

"Why, you'd think they thought they was in the right!" was the boy's amazed thought, as he noted the lifted chins and shining eyes now turned toward them. "They look like—they look jest like they had a kind of fire burnin' inside 'em."

Major Busbee now spoke up gruffly, asking for the leader.

"That's Bishop Snow," one informed him. "What's the trouble?"

"Trouble enough. There's a girl named Milly Severyns with you, and I'm looking for the men who killed Hardy Hilton in Missouri."

"Always among the Mormons, as you call us!" the Saint protested. "Brothers, here is the hand of the oppressor again. Those Missourians took our brothers' lands by force. They confiscated their very food and cattle in the face of approaching winter. They sentenced our leaders to be shot——"

"Order!" boomed a deep, sonorous voice.

TWO men now stepped forward, the larger in advance. One might have picked them at a glance as father and son. Both of these Utah cattlemen wore an habitual air of funereal piety. Their booted figures were squat and heavy, while under their broad, black sombreros their wide, cadaverous features were still and pallid. Only their sloe-black eyes seemed to live, far back in eye sockets cavernous and shadowy.

No sooner had the leader spoken than Buck nudged Zeke.

"See that beard?" he whispered tensely. Although the upper lips of both men were clean shaven, the younger's beard was well trimmed, but Bishop Snow's hung like a black mane to his waist. "Hit was a beard like that I saw in the candlelight!" And when the older Mormon spoke again, addressing the major, Buck stepped forward impulsively into the firelight, crying:

"I'd know that voice anywheres, majah. That were the man who give o'dahs that night!"

An angry murmur arose from the Mormons, but Bishop Snow and his son were quite unruffled.

"Order!" the Mormon rancher intoned solemnly. "Major Busbee, I understand? I—ah—would like to know—ah—of what I am accused."

The brusque officer's explanation was terse and blunt; and, as he spoke, four soldiers came up, bringing with them a pallid Smiler, nervous and ill at ease. Major Busbee waved his hand toward the man.

"Never met this fellow, I suppose, Mr. Snow?"

"Never in my life, sir," was the imperturbable reply.

"Show me the girl, Milly Severyns, then."

"There is no—ah—such girl with us."

"Pick her out, Buck," snapped the major.

After a brief search through the crowd, Buck eagerly pointed out to the major the form of the pale girl.

"That girl," said the Mormon leader, "is my son's wife."

"Wife or not, she has a tongue," retorted Major Busbee. "Mrs. Snow, did you ever see this boy?"

The frightened girl looked at her husband, who merely glanced once at her. "I never saw him," she replied, in dead tones.

"Then you never ran away from this train in Missouri and sought protection with Hardy Hilton?"

"I—I was never in Missouri."

"No, and this train—ah—never saw Missouri," Eb Snow supplemented. "It —ah—came from Iowa."

"Nothing to have prevented you from switching over from the Missouri train, though," the major pointed out. "However, it's hopeless." He wheeled toward his son's equipage. "Don," he said, "you and I differed when you married. But you're not a Mormon yourself. Surely, if you can help untangle this——"

It was his daughter-in-law who interrupted.

"Shame upon you!" she expostulated. "Do you think I would stand back and shield such a murderer as you have described? I do not know this young woman except as Mrs. Snow. We only came up with this train to-day."

The major drew a deep breath. "Pardon me!" he forced out. Straightening his shoulders, he said to Buck. "Well, son, I'm sorry. This girl, Mrs. Snow, has had a change of heart, apparently. Anyway, I can't act on so little evidence." And again he faced his son. "Don," he requested, in a shaking voice, "I wish you'd reconsider."

"Oh, dad," the tall youth replied, "you're prejudiced. The Mormons are being blamed for every single crime that takes place within a hundred miles of them."

"Amen, amen!" came from a dozen throats.

"But it's particularly bad right now, I tell you!" the major exclaimed, his voice shaking. "There's this Pratt killing and that——"

HE was interrupted by a chorus of groans and cries. Parley P. Pratt, one of the original twelve Mormon apostles, had converted the wife of Hector McLean to Mormonism in San Francisco several years before. McLean removed his children to New Orleans; and Mrs. McLean's subsequent marriage to the apostle, and their joint attempts to abduct the McLean children had led to the killing of the Mormon by the enraged father near Van Buren, Arkansas, in the preceding May.

"Two of the dastardly gentiles held poor Brother Pratt!" thundered an excited deacon. "Held him back near Win's farm till that drunken assassin could overtake him. Shot and cut him into ribbons and left him to die like a dog by the roadside."

"An' jest for leadin' a pore woman from the darkness into the light!"

"Yes, and not one single effort made to arrest the bloody-handed slayer! There's a party of them Arkansans and some Missourians with 'em, joggin' on ahead of us. They boasted of the way Arkansas upheld that murderer. Said they were proud of McLean. Ah, brothers——"

Major Busbee held up his hand. His chest swelled, and his nostrils quivered, as he eyed them from under his thick, gray brows.

"If I was inclined to be unfair, I'd seize you, Snow, and you, Wilkins, and turn you over to the authorities of Nebraska!" he thundered. "But you'd have to be turned over to the Missouri authorities, and you'd never even be tried there."

"No!" cried one. "They would be taken out of jail by a mob and hung."

"Exactly!" the major agreed. "It's only the lack of proof that holds *me*. It wouldn't hold a mob." Facing his son once more, he cried: "Well, Don?"

"I'm going on," the son replied stubbornly.

Throughout the latter part of the talk, Buck had listened in growing amazement. He could not at the moment appreciate the cold integrity and love of impartial justice in Major Busbee's iron character. The lad only knew that he was at least definitely sure of that sonorous voice, belonging to the bishop with the black beard.

"I'll do some arrestin' myse'f!" he gritted suddenly, snatching at Rocky Moore's carbine.

He had almost succeeded in jerking it from the soldier's hand, when little Matilda toddled suddenly before him, stumbled, and tripped him. Before he could move farther, he was imprisoned in Dan's strong arms and carried away.

It was all too much for Papoose-born-a-man. He felt that the fates and one baby, Matilda, had combined against him on that memorable day.

"Darn her," he sobbed against Dan's leathery neck, "she had to go an' make a monkey o' me afore them Injuns—an' then, when I might 'ave got me my Mo'mon——"

But the rest was lost in heartbroken sobs.

THAT night his hands throbbed painfully, and he was unable to sleep. Arising from his blankets, he was walking restlessly along the edge of the camp when a slender form stole toward him in the moonlight.

"The heart of Rose-Dawn is heavy," she whispered. "My father is angry at me and Kicking Antelope."

"Oh, shucks!" he interrupted her, patting her shyly on the shoulder. So they stood silent a moment, their cheeks touching.

"Take this," she said, at last. She slipped the milk tooth of an elk into his hand. "It will be your good medicine."

She did not add that she had breathed many prayers over that treasure, yet Buck understood. He fumbled at his breast pocket, intending to give her some keepsake for remembrance of himself.

"No, no!" she whispered. "I would rather have—what you gave me first."

"Shucks!" Buck turned a brick red in the moonlight; but all was quiet, and he bent, intending to kiss her on the cheek. She forestalled this by suddenly lifting her warm, soft lips.

"Gosh!" Buck murmured a few minutes later, when she slipped away, like an elfin wraith, in the silvery silence. "Oh, gosh!" He touched his lips with his finger tips. "Gals are funny, now, ain't they? But maybe not so dog-gone funny, either!"

Don Busbee's coach pulled out at a rapid trot on the following morning, bound for Utah and California. The dragoons followed shortly, headed for Fort Laramie, while Buck's train set out at a much slower pace, but leaving the still slower Mormon train behind.

Buck did not see Matilda that morning. Neither did he see Eb Snow ride out later, with three other Mormons, mounted on swift horses, and heading by circuitous routes for the deserts of Utah. With them there rode the girl whom the youth had recognized as Milly Severyns, fearful and pale, but quite submissive. She was to be given no further opportunity to come in contact with gentiles.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAND BEYOND.

THOUGH Buck's bitter disappointment was not lessened any by the fact that The Smiler was to go on with the train, he searched out that which to him appealed as the "best thing" in prospect.

"I'll git me a Mo'mon in Utah, anyway," he prophesied grimly.

"All right," said Dan, "and have yiz forgiven me, son?"

For answer Buck smiled shyly, dashed his tears away, and began to sing:

"'I'll take me aggs fried!' Mulcahey cried:
'Wan on the botthom, the othah topside!'
An' the cook turned up his toes and died.
What a hell of a man was Mulcahey!"

So, while his hands healed, the train went on to Fort Laramie, where the dragoons had halted. Soon afterward it continued westward across the Wyoming table-lands.

The Oregon Trail at this point followed the North Platte and the Sweetwater River valleys. Peaks were in almost constant sight, and the vistas were breath taking. At times it seemed that only the soft, smoky mist of the mellow Indian summer kept him from looking on into the Land Beyond.

Where alkali flats were encountered, the plains were nearly barren, save for pincushion cactus, greasewood, bunch grass and white sage. On the other hand, many of the swales and verdant valleys between the hills were covered with abundant grass. And at this old Dan pointed a prophetic finger.

"'Tis thot grass will do more than all the gold the prospectors say is in thim mountings!" he declared. "Shure, min dig the gold an' l'ave whin it is gone. But mark me words—up here is the Sooz, an' thim northern Arapahoes an' Cheyennes. This is part av the siction the whites agreed to let 'em kape in the last treaty at Fort Laramie, six years agone.

But will civilization stand back an' let the redskins kape such counthry for nothin' but huntin'? No! Don Busbee says they're itchin' to drive the catthle across the Red River from Texas fer better grazin'. Some day you'll see thot railroad built. Catthle will sprid then from the Panhandle to Canidy. Then the white mon will have come to shtay."

Buck thrilled to the possibility, but could hardly envision it. Captain Stansbury had started a survey in '49, looking for a railroad route through to the sluice boxes of roaring California; but this project was generally looked upon as an idle dream. Thus far there had been no important discovery of gold in the Middle West. Politicians and Eastern capitalists were inclined to shake their heads gloomily, declaring that the subjugation of the hostile savages meant the maintenance of an army which would sap the resources of the nation. Homeseekers, therefore, pointed in vain to the example of the Mormons. Fort Laramie and Fort Kearney were still the only two regularly garrisoned posts along that part of the Oregon Trail.

"I only hope hit comes, though," Buck said, with a happy sigh. "Shore, I nevah want to live nowheres else!"

There were parts of the Oregon Trail which appealed to the boy as a path through Wonderland. Winds, sand and glacial action had carved odd figures in the multicolored rocks. Sparkling brooks cut silvery paths through green foothill meadows. Freakish formations of glass-like rock, ofttimes resembling towers, or partially completed figures of animals, shot up here and there in the plains. There were many fertile dells, where the oxen fattened; hogback ranges and dark caverns, where grizzlies and bighorn goats held forth; long lines of cottonwood, scrub oak, box elder, wild plum and cherry along the streams; and ofttimes, as he rode, Buck came within close view of pine and spruce on the mountain slopes, and white fir on the heights.

Farther on he struck terrain where the streams were like the Platte—shallow and thick with floating sand. Tepid lakes were covered with a scum of soda and alkali, resembling soapsuds. Bunch grass was scarce and dry. The alkali clouds were suffocating; the oxen sank to their knees in the sands; and, though ice formed in the water buckets at night, and the snow patches on the Wind River Mountains were in view, the men and beasts toiled by day under a pitiless sun in a welter of perspiration.

Regardless of this, Buck remained happy. He was nearing the northwest borderland of what then comprised the Territory of Utah. He sang, as he trekked upward between Granite and Green Mountains, passed Antelope Hills, and cleared South Pass. He believed that he had but to cross another sand stretch, and then follow the army through the cañon in the rose-tinted Wasatch Mountains to the desert with the purple sage.

His disillusionment, therefore, came like a douche of cold water.

Johnston at this juncture was en route from Leavenworth, and Colonel Alexander was in command of the vanguard. Captain van Vliet of the regulars was also on his way to Washington, with Brigham Young's defiant statement.

"If the government dare to force the issue," Brigham had declared, "I shall not hold the Indians by the wrist any longer."

At the time they were sighted by the Mormons, Alexander's infantry regiments had cleared South Pass. The Salt Lake Trail turned to southwestward here, following the Big Sandy Creek to its junction with Green River, thence over Ham's and Black Forks, past Fort Bridger and into Echo Cañon. This rugged defile is about twenty-five miles in length. As the only other practical means of approaching Salt Lake City, with the cumbersome supply trains, lay in a circuitous route to northward, as far as Soda Springs, and thence southward again by way of the Bear River valley, the Mormon general, Daniel Wells, had occupied Echo Cañon with some twelve hundred men.

To Buck's intense disgust, Alexander had not moved at once against the Mormons. When Dan's train cleared South Pass early in October, Alexander was encamped in Camp Winfield, on Mam's

Fork. He had double the men under Well's command, but chose to await orders from Johnston.

Nor was this all. The Mormons had made ready to destroy Fort Bridger and Fort Supply. They had also burned off most of the grass in the surrounding country. No cavalry had reached Alexander, and mounted Mormon scouts of the reorganized Nauvoo Legion, under Major Lot Smith, were now riding through the arid territory around and behind Camp Winfield. They were bent on capturing or destroying parts of Alexander's unprotected herds and baggage trains.

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *on the news stands April 7th.*

THE BOXING BUSINESS

HAS boxing, like baseball, passed from the healthy stage of a national sport to a paid professional business? Is a heavyweight champion grooming for a manly sport, to carry on the great tradition of physical prowess, or is he getting ready to enter the millionaire class? In the old days boxers of renown always drew to the prize ring a certain element of the better class. If champions were made much of by lords, each respected the station in life which the other graced. The boxer neither sought nor became a man of wealth. Prize fighting was not a means to wealth, but an end in itself.

There were exceptions, of course. But the case of a man like John Gully, who passed from the prize ring to the turf, then to Parliament, and finally to the ownership of a colliery, remained an exception. He was the father of twenty-four children and died a rich man. It is worthy of note, however, that when Gully fought Gregson, the Lancashire giant, the second time, it was for only twelve hundred and fifty dollars a side.

Of Tom Sayers, perhaps the greatest figure in the English ring, his biographer wrote: "With his name was associated all that was bold, generous, manly, and honest in the practice of pugilism." For his fight with John C. Heenan, the American champion, a fight of thirty-seven rounds, lasting two hours and six minutes, Sayers received a thousand dollars. He died a poor man.

Boxing was comparatively a poorly paid enterprise in this country until in our own day there appeared on the fighting scene the "promoter," who "staged" contests in stadiums, baseball parks, and in large arenas. The champions before the World War, men like Sullivan, Corbett, Fitzsimmons and Jeffries, never succeeded in accumulating sufficient money on which to live in comparative comfort. In those days, it is true, boxing was not in good repute, but there was always a sufficiently large number of substantial and reputable people who indorsed it. These champions before 1914 were content to fight for small purses, side bets, and at times for a small percentage of the gate receipts.

Since the World War the prize fighter has become in his line a man of big business. It really began with Dempsey, who proved himself a facile financier as much as a fighter. It is rather disconcerting to record that for three bouts with Carpentier, Firpo and Tunney, he received nearly two millions of dollars. No other profession can show such quick and big returns. Artists, scientists, men of letters, and doctors, who not only contribute materially to the health and happiness of the nation, but keep the white torch of civilization alive, do not receive such material rewards.

Boxing as a spectacle makes captains of industry out of its promoters and champions, but it contributes little, if anything, to the noble tradition of pugilism and the promotion of prowess among our youth. Neither art nor religion nor athletics can function sanely and wholesomely where they are made a means to money and not an an end in themselves.

Leguerre of the Lost Division

A Message to Don Miguel

By Howard Fitzalan

Author of "The Prisoner of Prayd-Amah," Etc.

When Leguerre, blasé secret agent of the Intelligence Control Division, was condemned to die by the Costa Castellano government, the code of his calling kept him from appealing for any help. There's a situation to shake even the resourcefulness and poise of a Leguerre—but it didn't.

THE vessel which had tarried briefly and furtively off the sand spit was, on the very face of her, a tramp. Her sides were rusted, and her decks unkempt; and, along with the blowziness characteristic of her breed, she had the hobo's magnificent indifference to the local statute.

Fifty miles farther down the Costa Castellano beach she would have found a deep-water harbor. It was plainly marked on her chart. Honest masters, with cargo for northern Costa Castellano, were in the habit of calling there. In the port of De Leon the *José Cuervo* might have comfortably tied up, and, with a conspicuous sparing both of her tackle and the vocabularies of her mates, have discharged onto a quay of solid stone the many heavy crates, stenciled for delivery to: "Liberty Reclamation, Alto Bravo."

That would, indeed, have been the proper thing.

But the sea mongrel's skipper and, as well, the berry-brown young man, in rather swankily tailored tropicals, who had come aboard with the crates at Baltimore, had evidently a larger respect for logic than for maritime convention.

Duties and port fees coming notably higher than blasphemy and perspiration, they had elected to scorn the conveniences available within a few hours' steaming, and to risk the Alto Bravo freight to the uncertain lighterage of the *José Cuervo's* life rafts.

If one knows the Caribbean, he will

need no explanation of the culpability confessed.

De Leon, as a string on the invitation of its channel and wharf, has a custom house. Where the tramp had dropped her corroded hook there was none.

There was no village on this beach; not so much as a single thatched hut—nothing but an empty sweep of broiling sand, with the jungle growing into its seaward salient in a widow's peak and a back-drop of mountains, that climbed away inland to heights maddeningly cool.

It was a desolate shore; and yet, at a blast of the freighter's whistle, it had sprung strangely alive. Men had come streaming, like so many monkeys from the jungle, to caper along the spit, while the first prayerfully laden raft was riding the ground swell in.

These were ragged men of a bewildering variety of epidermal pigment—red, yellow, brown, black. Some wore torn shoes; some none at all. In amazing contrast, the plump mustachioed comandante, who advanced with dignity among the dancers, was as smartly turned out as an officer of French cavalry.

The many-hued rankers were recognizable as a military force less by the tatters of uniforms which they wore than by the rifles and *machetes* they carried; but the profession of the leader was not to be mistaken. From the rowels of the spurs he dragged through the sand to the polished visor of his high-crowned red- and gold-kepi he was the soldier.

As he came to the water's edge, the raft had risen clumsily over a breaker and grounded, broadside on, and the half dozen huskies from the *José Cuervo* who made up its crew were running cases through the backwash, under a crackle of pithy and stimulating suggestion from the immaculate supercargo.

"I am General Zabarro," said the wearer of the gorgeous kepi, panting a little from the haste he had found not consistent with honor; "myself, I am Miguel Zabarro, señor, and I give you my blessing."

The brown supercargo bowed; but, even as he straightened, his gaze left the other and wandered dubiously off to sea.

"Blessings," said he, "are always acceptable. But I'll have to be very sure that I've met General Zabarro, you know, before I have anything else brought in."

HE explored an inner pocket, bringing forth a sheaf of ruled yellow forms, then a small square of pasteboard, unevenly torn at one side. With a smile and a shrug, the soldier produced a similar scrap. The younger man, carefully fitting the two together, perceived that the torn ends matched.

"Well," said he cheerfully, "*that* seems to be all right. I know you'll pardon the precaution, Don Miguel. It's just a matter of form. Only reason I was sent along was to see that your goods didn't stray into the hands of the Ruicistas. That wouldn't do—would it?"

The stout soldier had a pantomimic talent; graphically he registered distress.

"Ah, no!" He dropped the hands that had covered his medaled heart. "It would be ruin. And so, señor, you have come to unhappy Costa Castellano from that very cradle of liberty—from Washington. To think it!"

The supercargo's eyes were sober, as they met Zabarro's.

"I came," said he, "from Baltimore. Please understand that, general. Washington has nothing to do with me, nor I with Washington. My name is Nugent Leguerre, and I'm one of the most private citizens you've ever encountered."

Zabarro stared, frowning, and repeated his shrug.

"As you will, señor. But, assuredly, you bring the machine guns—the field piece—the ammunition?"

The dapper Leguerre consulted divers numbers appearing in stencil on the cases now stacked at his buckskin-shod feet, and checked off the several items on one of his yellow sheets.

"Water pump, petrol engine, dynamo," said he, reading off the entries. "We'll hew to the manifest, if you don't mind, Don Miguel. Of course, if on breaking out the goods you find there's been any error in the shipping department, you'll

be perfectly within your rights in refusing delivery."

"No, no!" cried the general, aghast. "It is accepted—oh, so gratefully, señor! You may call these things by one name, and I by another. But to the poor peoples of Costa Castellano—it is freedom you bring."

Another life raft had come pounding through the surf, as a power yawl, bobbing beyond the line of breakers, pulled the first one off the beach. This second raft bore a single big crate.

"And here, by the manifest," observed Leguerre, "is your concert grand piano, my general." He sighed. "I wish," he added with a definite note of complaint, "that I might remain in Costa Castellano to hear you strike at least the first chord upon it. But orders forbid. I'm to start home as soon as I've delivered my freight and a certain message, this same evening, if I don't miss my connection at De Leon. A banana boat will be sailing; she takes me to New Orleans."

"You do not leave with this good ship, then?"

"She's going on south. Her cargo's chiefly for Rio. You must know, Don Miguel, that her stop here is a result of private arrangement with the *Cuervo's* captain. The Shipping Board and her managing owners would, of course, absolutely refuse to countenance any irregularity. They'd run a risk of having her libeled—and there might be even less pleasant complications."

Once more, and a bit anxiously, Leguerre was looking out to sea. The red sail of the fishing sloop that had hovered in the offing, as the freighter steamed down the coast, made a tiny crimson blotch on the horizon south.

"I'd feel better," said he, "if that boat had been somewhere else. The rattle of the *Cuervo's* chain seemed to frighten her away, so she may have a guilty conscience herself. But just the same, general, I think I'd have my men postpone the celebration and get this stuff under cover."

Zabarro smiled.

"Have no fear, señor. Outside De Leon and Puerto Grande, all hearts beat with mine. The fishers are oppressed as sorely as the peons in Costa Castellano. Have you not heard of the infamous Ruiz net tax? Nevertheless, it is well to be safe. Even as the boxes come ashore, I shall send them back into the mountains."

He moved away, shouting brusque commands. Lesser officers, scarcely to be distinguished from their men, took them up. The festivities along the beach came swiftly to an end. One by one, with small soldiers worrying at them like ants collaborating in the transportation of a crumb, the cases began to disappear into the jungle.

LEGUERRE, seated on a box that had smashed in a tumble on the hard sand, yielding a rack of new rifles smeared with heavy oil, pushed back his sun helmet and settled somberly to the business of checking the cynically consigned "Liberty Reclamation" crates, as they came ashore. But there was protest in his eyes when they turned to the mountains.

In the jungle, presently, something that sounded startlingly like a machine gun commenced a raucous coughing. Leguerre was on his feet, with a hand on the pistol strapped in a holster against his thigh, when Zabarro came back to him.

"It is a tractor, señor," said the general, nodding inland. "You see, we are modern in all equipment but arms and uniform. Within a few hours the—the piano—will be in our camp. Already it is on its way. And very shortly there will be music in De Leon!"

"I hope not," observed Leguerre.

There was an arresting quality in his voice, and Zabarro's expression changed.

"What do you say, señor?"

"I believe I spoke of having a message for you, Don Miguel," said Leguerre. "The hope I've expressed is, one might say, the gist of it."

"Ah, this message!" exclaimed the plump Zabarro. "It is from——"

"From certain gentlemen," Leguerre cut in smoothly and quickly, "who fortunately developed a temporary astigmatism while the *José Cuervo* was loading. These gentlemen have the inter-

ests of Costa Castellano very much at heart, and they put their faith in Don Miguel Zabarro."

The general extended a brown hand, and Leguerre grinned.

"But it's not the kind of message you seem to expect, my general," said he. "I'm absolutely clean of documentary evidence. I am under instruction to communicate the wishes of my principals orally."

Zabarro's bushy eyebrows lifted.

"It is—unusual," he submitted.

Leguerre glanced significantly down the littered beach.

"So's this," said he. "So's everything." He thumped the box that was his seat and desk. "For instance, Don Miguel, this case. It's marked 'Sewing Machines'—but I'd most thoroughly dislike having my coat mended with one of 'em, while I was in it."

The soldier chuckled.

"I can believe you, señor. They send the needle deep. And now this message you bring—tell it to me, please."

Leguerre's eyes strayed to the distant sail. His voice became formal.

"First of all," he said slowly, "I have been asked to impress upon you the need of secrecy as to the source of this—ah—assistance.

"I am to inform you that the situation in Costa Castellano was very well understood and deeply deplored even before Colonel Montoyo was sent by you to the United States. It was known that in the last three elections the military had prevented a free expression of the people's will. Further, it was recognized that the self-perpetuating incumbent of the presidency had bent the courts of the republic to his will, making it impossible for those not in his favor to obtain justice; that he had visited ruin and even death upon all who opposed him politically, and that for the profit of his private purse he had opened Costa Castellano to a flood of shoddy merchandise from central and southern Europe.

"However, I am to disclaim on behalf of my principals and desire to dictate, or even suggest, the internal policies of the republic. In the event of the revolution's success, you, Don Miguel, as de-facto president, and, as well, your duly elected successor, may be assured of an absolutely free hand in Costa Castellano."

Don Miguel Zabarro brought his hand to his kepi in dramatic salute.

"You may take back the pledge of the revolutionary party," said he, "that, with Ruiz fallen, the republic will forever more be governed by and for its people."

But Leguerre had not finished.

"Lastly," said he, interrupting the extension of the general's remarks which appeared imminent, "I am to voice one single request. This is that unnecessary bloodshed be avoided.

"My principals, having available the counsel of men eminent in your profession, Don Miguel, have carefully studied the prospects of your campaign. They believe that, since these goods have reached you safely, your triumph is inevitable, and they are convinced that, with the force described by Colonel Montoyo behind you, the best strategy would be a march directly upon the capital.

"They urge, therefore, that you make no attack on De Leon or other towns north of Puerto Grande. If federal troops oppose you in the field before you have arrived before the capital, you will have no choice, of course, but to engage them. You will greatly favor those for whom I speak, however, by avoiding action other than decisive, where native or foreign noncombatants might be endangered. This, General Don Miguel, is my message."

Zabarro devoted a moment to thought.

"I had not," he said, "been prepared for this. It was my plan to take De Leon first, for it is the key to northern Costa Castellano, and the revenues of the customs are considerable.

"But my gratitude is great, señor. I shall make the sacrifice which you have asked. The campaign shall be as my honored friends suggest. Tell them on your return that Don Miguel strikes at Puerto Grande!"

A raft had brought in another big case, almost as large a one as had held the euphemistically termed "concert grand." Don Miguel, gravely saluting again, went off to superintend in person its

transfer, and Leguerre returned to the prosy detail of his supercargo rôle.

Now and again, as his clerical labors permitted, he gave his attention to the swarms of little soldiers trotting back and forth across the beach. They were better disciplined, it occurred to him, than their nondescript appearance implied—would probably be a reasonably efficient outfit in the field.

He sighed as he checked off a case stenciled: "Glass! Handle with Care!"—a case which held, he knew, shells for the field gun. It was going to be a nice little war; just the sort that all wars should be.

It would be short and sweet. Romance would be in it. A few might be killed, a few wounded, but not so many as to overshadow the glamour. For one who had known that other war, this could be nothing but a diversion. There'd be rifles rattling out the air, machine guns supplying the tenor, and that good old bowser in the piano case to bark the bass—just enough of their Wagnerian harmony for the proper sprinkle of paprika.

THEN a flag fluttering down; a triumphant parade through abandoned gates; a pleasant sensation of being approved by sparkling dark eyes behind jalousies; a conqueror's night in the plaza, with the liberator in the palace, and officers of the new republic strutting to the sough of a Spanish waltz.

Staying on with Zabarro, Leguerre thought wistfully, would be like being invited, for a night, into the cast of one of those bully, swashbuckling old-time musical shows—even better than that, being privileged to live the flannelly tenor's part.

A mighty temptation assailed him. If he should happen not to catch that banana boat out of De Leon, wouldn't it then become his logical course to stand by Don Miguel? The man, with all his pomposity, was reputed one who knew his trade. Judge Gunther, chief of that pigeonholed arm of the United States government which Leguerre served, and which Washington now called the "Lost Division," had said that even the big wigs of the general staff held respect for General Miguel Zabarro. Surely, then, a week or so would see Don Miguel in Puerto Grande, and what would so small a delay amount to?

And thus did Satan, in the helmet of Adventure, wrestle for the soul of Nugent Leguerre, reiterating that world-old taunt of the tempter: "Who will know? Who will know?"

At length, Leguerre came actually to envision his nether majesty at his elbow, and then his mood of black unhappiness passed. He laughed aloud.

"To Hades with you, Señor Diablo, and your one-horse Armageddon! I'm ordered home, and home I'm going. It's all in the game. Some other time, old thing!"

Zabarro had been close enough at hand to catch Leguerre's voice, if not his words.

"You called, señor?"

Leguerre nodded.

"Everything's ashore, and the *Cuervo* seems to be getting up her anchor," he said. "It's past noon; and if it's fifty miles to De Leon, as I've been told, I haven't a great deal of time to spare. May I trespass on your hospitality, Don Miguel, for a guide and a mount?"

The small general bowed and pressed a hand to his heart.

"For my life, señor," he murmured, "if ever the gift of it should serve you. More than a guide, you shall have an escort of honor, *amigo mio!*" And, turning, he shouted: "Felipe!"

So it came to pass that Leguerre, ruefully considering the episode of the Baltimore crates at end, so far as he was concerned, rode down the Costa Castellano coast with a cavalry point before him, a semidandy of a captain, who was General Zabarro's nephew, at his side, and a half dozen soldiers of the revolution trotting their tough little mountain horses at his heels.

The sun was dropping behind the hills when the point halted at the crest of a rise. Leguerre, cantering to his side, saw the sea once more. Two curving arms of sand, that came together like a lobster's claws, enclosed a small and all-but-land-locked harbor. A quay jutted into

the water. Beside it were grouped a half dozen warehouses, with roofs of corrugated iron, and a square building, over which floated the flamboyant orange-and-purple flag of the Costa Castellanoan Republic.

"Below is De Leon," said the captain. "It is the *Hermana* that makes ready to depart—your ship, señor. From here you must go forward alone. You may make a gift of the horse, if you will, to the comandante. I think he will not have it long."

"Gracias," murmured Leguerre. He closed his hand over the captain's in a brief, hard grip. "Once upon a time, Beltran," said he, "a fellow countryman of mine was sent with a message to a general of Latin blood and the name of Garcia. There were high jinks then, but those days are gone forever. We have the age of efficiency now, the era of touch and run. You don't follow me? Well, it's not important. Adios!"

It was a good two miles down the slope of the miserable road, Leguerre estimated, to the harbor. He dug a heel into the mare's ribs, for a clanking, ominously suggestive of chain in hawse pipe, had come up to him. As he surmounted the last low hill outside the town, he saw that the *Hermana's* wheel already was churning.

"A spot connection," he whispered, leaning forward on the mare's neck. "Shake it up, girl!"

RACING through the street along the harbor, he had a kaleidoscopic impression of groups in doorways, of brown *muchachos* and sooty pickaninnies scrambling from his path. His mount was all but spent, stumbling, when he reached the quay.

A considerable reception committee awaited him on the quay. There were more than a dozen soldiers, all with rifles; and with them a couple of officers, one scarcely more than a boy. The elder officer, eying Leguerre shrewdly, made a quick deduction as to his race.

"Please to dismount, señor," he invited in halting English. "Please to give an account of yourself."

"Haven't time, general!" Leguerre flung out, his eye on the moving banana boat. "I've important business with the master of the steamer yonder. He—forgot something."

"But he will come again, señor," observed the officer blandly. "He is here every third—what you call Sat'day. By 'n' by you can see him, yes."

A swart civilian in torn jersey and dilapidated sea boots had come down the quay. To this individual Leguerre's new friend turned.

"Did you see the fellow in white clearly through your glass?" he demanded, now in Spanish. "Could you know him, Pablo, seeing him again? Is not this the man?"

Leguerre became conscious of a single-masted boat wallowing in the short chop alongside the quay. Her sail, now furled, was red. The booted man had come from the direction in which the sloop lay, and he was nodding.

"Si, Señor Coronel," he said. "It is he!"

The officer advanced toward Leguerre, his hand on the grip of his revolver, his white teeth flashing under his waxy mustache.

"It is not needed for you to speak, señor," he said. "I have the pleasure to arrest you as the confederate of the traitor, Zabarro, the enemy of Costa Castellano!"

The soldiers had begun an enveloping movement; the boy officer had come forward and was reaching for the bridle. Leguerre leaned over and brought his fist down on the wrist of the extended arm. Simultaneously he brought the mare back on her haunches, wheeled her, and sent her leaping up the road of many *muchachos.*

"Until the *Hermana* comes again!" he shouted back.

A gun banged behind him, and an invisible something went snarling over his shoulder.

Other rifles came into action. Rounding a protective corner, yet unscathed, Leguerre saw two soldiers running into the road to intercept him. He yanked his pistol from its holster and flung it at them.

"Viva Zabarro!" he shouted, sweep-

ing past, as the taller of the pair went sprawling in the mud. *"Viva libertad!"*

He glanced back an instant afterward. The second soldier was still in the road. His rifle went up. It roared. From the mare came an agonized, almost human cry. She went stiffly and steeply to her knees. Over her head went Leguerre, riding on alone into a sudden and starry night. His last dim, borderland impression was of some one turning off the stars.

THE faint, pinkish light filtered through the grating. The window under which Leguerre lay was set high in a damp stone wall. Stout irons, sunk deep in the masonry, barred it. They were hardly more than a hand's width apart.

Before he had come to take inventory of himself and his surroundings, Leguerre knew that the pink was a dawn. He had a momentary difficulty in placing himself—couldn't immediately think back.

"I'm a hospital case," he concluded. "I've been in an accident."

He felt like a hospital case. His throat was dry, his head ached abominably, his neck was stiff and sore; pain stabbed his right shoulder when he used the arm to push himself upright.

This, though, he perceived, was no great shakes of a hospital. The conventional white and aseptic bed was missing. The couch from which he had risen was a mere bunk, wooden, dubious. Instead of bleached hospital sheets, he had been covered with a sleazy and not-too-clean blanket.

He dizzily recollected having had a pistol. It was gone now, and so was the holster that had held it. The suit he remembered as a creamy sort of Shantung, done for him in a lot of a half dozen, was no longer to be identified offhand as an achievement of the incomparable Park Avenue Carmichael. Lying about in it in that way hadn't improved its appearance. It was rumpled and soiled.

Leguerre sighed over it. He'd dash into a cab and snap the curtains down pronto, if they were to discharge him in this deplorable shape. He wasn't a fit object to be seen.

It came to him vaguely that he wasn't where a whistle or a raised finger would bring a taxi. What was the name of the place? De Leon? And hadn't there been a row?

In the back of his mind a gate swung open. There was a picture beyond it of an ignominiously horizontal soldier and another in the same uniform lifting a rifle. Then the fog dissipated, and he had it all straight.

"Nice mess!" he grumbled. "And I've been complimented on my flair for diplomacy. Now look!"

Unsteadily he walked across to the window. It was not so high in the wall as it had seemed. Its lower sill was at his shoulder.

He looked out upon water. It was a harbor; but the land closing it in didn't have the lobster-claw conformation he had remarked from the hill above De Leon. And, too, if this was De Leon, the business of the port had been briskly picking up. Last night—or *was* it last night?—there had been only the one steamer in the harbor, and she had been on her way to sea. This morning there were six or eight big craft silhouetted against the brightening east.

The sun shoved up obligingly above the horizon to give him a better light on the baffling seascape. Against the yellow ball reared the fighting top of a sleek, gray warship. A bugle sang across the water, and a flag fluttered at a steel masthead. Leguerre caught his breath at sight of it and came, from force of habit, to attention.

"Gee! You look good to me!" he whispered.

It was an American cruiser out there. Her near presence warmed him for a little with a specious comfort. The people on the gray ship, if only they knew, could have him out of this in a twinkling. Perhaps he wouldn't even have to solve the problem of getting word to her; perhaps it was on his account the cruiser was here.

But, when his head was clearer, he laughed at himself grimly. Washington wasn't using the navy to chase up mud-

dlers and fetch them home to the prodigal's pudding—not this year. Whatever the errand which had brought the war vessel into Costa Castellano waters, he might be perfectly sure that it had nothing to do with the predicament of young Mr. Nugent Leguerre of the Intelligence Control Division. Probably the commander of the cruiser, himself, believed that the once overriding Intelligence Control Department had ceased to function, with the signing of the armistice. So complete had been the division's eclipse that certainly the great majority of Americans, even the well informed and officially connected, did think that.

AND, for that matter, as Leguerre well knew, the misconception was rather deliberately encouraged in these days. The Lost Division, down to a shadow of itself, subterranean in its workings, served only one master now. Judge Gunther had gone to Congress for the last time in that early postwar year, when the divisional appropriation had been cut to the slender bone which his own salary represented, but still he had a cordial, sometimes an eager, welcome at the White House. And from the White House, drawn out of a fund beyond the ken of the bookkeepers and case keepers of politics, came the money that kept the skeleton of the indomitable old I. C. D. organization wired together.

For all the benefit and protection that Leguerre might expect from her, the cruiser might as well have been in Singapore.

In Costa Castellano he was on his own. That was the tradition of his service: Every man for himself. Only last year, big, good-natured, deceptively vapid Jim MacCloud had been stood against a wall for a lesser affront to the international proprieties than this running of arms to Zabarro had been. MacCloud had died game—silent, when a word might have —— But that was part of the job! A man knew it when he went in; he could get out, if ever he felt uncertain of himself.

Here, even as he had insisted to Don Miguel Zabarro, Nugent Leguerre must needs stand before his judges as the "most private of private citizens." He could not play that trump of the casual American in difficulties in a foreign land—could not claim the protection of his flag. There must be no newspaper pother, with its attendant possibility of a protest at Washington—at the White House itself.

If he couldn't find a way out of the hole, then must he stay quiescent in it and manfully take the medicine handed down to him.

At a sound in the corridor outside the laced-steel door facing the window, Leguerre turned from his moody contemplation of the warship. Some one was peering in at him. It was a man in a dusty blue uniform, like those worn by the soldiers on the quay. He drew a revolver from his belt, held it up, so that Leguerre might have no doubt as to his formidability, and turned a key.

It was another, though, who entered the barred room—a man with a shiny black beard, in a wide panama and clothing of some thin material, as shiny and black as his heard. The soldier-jailer, with his gun still much in evidence, closed and locked the door behind him and walked away.

"Ha! You are oop!" cried the bearded visitor, perceiving Leguerre on his feet before him. "Then I have cheated me of two-t'ree hours' sleeping. You spik Spaniss, maybe?"

"Not a word," replied Leguerre, amiably falsifying.

"It is good, then, that I am educationed in Englis', no? I am *medicina*—gov'ment doctor. You have veree hard head, señor—veree strong neck. I think you do not need me now."

"I need," said Leguerre, "a little information. I don't seem to know where I am. Last time I had track of things, I was having a little altercation with the police in De Leon."

"Yess; those polices were *soldados* of the republic. So now, señor, you are in Puerto Grande. You have travel' one 'undred mile, but all the way you sleep. It is too unhappy, I think, that you wake up."

"But I don't feel that way about it," said Leguerre blandly. "I'm not suffer-

ing any, and it's been a glorious sunrise."

The doctor lifted an expressive shoulder.

"I am 'appy," he said, "that you have enjoy the dawn. Per'aps you will not see manee more. Do you not understan' the penalty for the offense which you have done? In Costa Castellano a state of war is now existing. You have dealt with the gov'ment's enemy, Zabarro, and also you have attacked upon the republic's arms. They will give you trial by court-martial."

"So that's it?" queried Leguerre. "May I say, doctor, that charges are easier made than proved?"

Again the physician shrugged.

"I am not of the law or the military. I am of the service of public 'ealth. It is for other ones to say if the gov'ment's proof is good." He paused, brushed away the problem with a gesture, and said: "Per'aps you are 'ungry, señor?"

Leguerre smiled.

"I hope that's an invitation, and that you're not going to hold me down to an invalid's diet."

"Ah, no," said the doctor. "The señor will have the best of food." He motioned toward the small table which, aside from the bunk, was the only other article of furniture in the stone-walled room. "See, you will breakfas' and dine in elegance! It will not be for you to subsis' on the food of the prison, which it is meager and—pfau!—not good. Two 'undred dollar have been taken from the señor's possession. That will pay."

Leguerre's eyebrows raised.

"I must have had something more than five hundred dollars on me," he observed. "There was that amount in my wallet, alone."

"Two 'undred American dollar," repeated the physician with asperity. "I have seen. And what use to argue, when one will not be needing more than this will purchase?"

Leaving Leguerre to ponder that, he sang out for his errant cicerone. From a distance a voice answered his call. The guard returned and, producing simultaneously his pistol and his key, opened the cell door.

"At eight o'clock," the doctor told the soldier in Spanish, "Tia Rosalia will come with food for our chained pig. You may save yourself the double journey by permitting her to remain with him until he has eaten. Be assured she will bring no implement with which the prisoner may do himself harm; his fingers shall be his fork. When Tia Rosalia has once more packed her basket, she will call."

Leguerre, exploring his pockets after the pessimistic medico's departure, found that, although his sapphire-set case was missing, the cigarettes it contained had been left to him. Elsewhere he came upon a pasteboard folder that held a single priceless match. It lighted the first cigarette, the first cigarette lighted the second, and the second the third; and he was thriftily nursing the last of them all when the promised "Aunt Rosalia" arrived.

THE dusty soldier marched ahead, and in the corridor he repeated his evidently habitual maneuvers with key and gun.

Duly introduced into the cell with Leguerre, and there abandoned, Tia Rosalia set to work with no further conversational preliminary than a curt, "*Buenos dias, señor.*" That she was a woman advanced in years Leguerre could only judge by her prison sobriquet, by her rusty quality of voice, and by her bent and angular figure. After the fashion of her race, regardless of age, she wore a thick veil to hide her features from the stranger male.

She spread a cloth, wrinkled but clean, on the rickety table; from the basket which she had brought she conjured forth coffee, in a fat brown olla, and a dish immediately and zestfully identified by Leguerre as *huevos à la rancheros*—at any rate, the Costa Castellanoan equivalent of the sauce-flooded fried eggs he had come to know so well on his several Mexican assignments.

"The doomed man," quoted Leguerre cheerfully, "ate a hearty breakfast."

Tia Rosalia, amazed both by his sang-froid and his appetite, was staring, as he turned to; and presently, observing that, instead of using his fingers as a

fork, he had ripped a sliver from one of the thin, wooden dishes and thus equipped himself with a practical spoon, she chuckled a tribute to his ingenuity.

Somehow, she seemed to him less inimical after that. When, later, she put before him a packet of the black-coated native cigarettes and a box of tiny wax matches, he was seized with a poignant regret that he had misled the doctor in regard to his knowledge of Spanish. If only he dared talk to her, it occurred to him, Tia Rosalia might in course be won over as a friend; and if she came from outside the prison, as he was certain she did, she might render him invaluable service.

If he could get a whisper of his plight up to Turling, who'd still be in Tampico, he might be sure it would be relayed swiftly on to Gunther in Washington. That, in the chief's routine phrase, would be "cricket;" and he might be equally sure then that Gunther would do all that could unofficially be done to pull him out of the scrape. Certainly some one would be down, with all possible speed, to stand by in Puerto Grande until a chance of aiding him presented, or until—— Suddenly he thought again of MacCloud.

Leguerre, after he had lighted one of her cigarettes, tried Tia Rosalia in English—asked if the tobacco was grown in Costa Castellano. She shook her head.

"No spik—no sabe—Engliss," she said and called shrilly for the guard.

A moment later her footfalls were dying in the corridor, and with them died Leguerre's brief hope.

By mid-afternoon, when the woman returned with sundry highly seasoned luncheon dishes, he had completed a painstaking and disillusioning examination of the cell. He had stood precariously on his table, as he tested the window bars, so that his whole strength might be applied to them; but when perspiration bathed him from head to foot they had given not an iota.

The walls were tight. The mortar between the stones had set like rock. Nowhere was there a niche into which even a finger could be pressed. The steel door —though he realized as he inspected it that egress in that direction would leave him still far from freedom—was solid. The lock did not come through, and the door's latticed construction denied him even a glimpse of it.

Without tools other than his hands, Leguerre knew the cell would hold him as long as his hosts cared to have him stay. The sole possibility of winning out of it lay in overpowering his jailer; and, since the soldier apparently was resolved to keep not only the gun, but the gate, between him and his prisoner, that was a possibility scarcely worth entertaining. Better to wait, he sanely reasoned, for death before a firing squad. Something —anything—might happen before that time came. Luck was a funny thing, anyhow—with cards, with dice, with life. Who could foretell the "breaks?"

IT was after nightfall when Rosalia appeared with dinner—a baked chicken, bread, jelly, more of her tingling black coffee. Leguerre ate now by the light of a candle she had brought to him. The woman sat at the far end of the bunk, watching him, her thin, worn hands folded on her skirt.

"*Pobrecito!* He is so young—so young," she murmured; and, though the words were no more than a breath, Leguerre heard and dreamed again.

That night he did not sleep so well, but it was perhaps less worry over the prospects of the morrow than suspicion of his cell bed which kept him wakeful. His fatalistic philosophy—a most convenient resource in those occasional moments when Destiny seemed bent on turning her game with him into solitaire—had now become his buckler.

In the morning the prison doctor followed Tia Rosalia on Leguerre's calling list, and after the doctor came a stranger. This was a side-whiskered young officer, carrying a swagger stick and affecting a monocle that gave him more than a little difficulty. He remained in the corridor and spoke through the door.

"Has the señor any complaint to make against his treatment?" he asked in suave English of distinct London flavor.

"Not yet," Leguerre assured. "Except, perhaps, that it's a little close in

here during the peak of the heat. An awning would help. But an electric fan or a small veranda would be better."

"The señor," said he of the single glass, "will not be long inconvenienced." And he had the air of one who has given a promise.

"I've been told," said Leguerre, "that I'm accused of all manner of terrible things under your Defense of the Realm Act. If that's true, I'd like to know if I'm to be permitted to consult counsel —given a chance to prepare a defense."

The officer tugged at his mustache to conceal an ironic smile.

"You are a citizen of the United States, señor?"

"When at home," nodded Leguerre.

"Then know," said the Latin, neatly catching up the monocle as it slid down his sorrel cheek—"then know that the Casto Castellano government is the good friend of your country. Its citizens have all privileges in our land."

"Such as?" suggested Leguerre.

The officer no longer concealed his smile. It was now beatific.

"Ah, you do not believe me! Then let me assure you that Mr. Balthus, the United States Minister to Costa Castellano, has been very promptly informed that we have an American prisoner. You will presently know that is the truth. He has expressed a wish to see you, and at noon I shall return to escort you to him."

But Leguerre, when the bearer of the news had gone, found not so much encouragement in the unanticipated turn. He went to his window and looked across the harbor, as he thought over this new development—its portent—its probabilities.

A launch from the Yankee warship was landing at the wharf north of the prison. Three officers in snowy ducks came ashore. Two of them passed from his view, arm in arm. The third came by his window. Leguerre stiffened. This was a fellow he knew—Chichester, a young lieutenant who had been much in evidence socially around Washington a year or two since. Without raising his voice, Leguerre could have claimed his attention.

The call came to his lips and died there. It wouldn't do to have Chichester in on this business. He was a Tennesseean, a hothead, the son of a Congressman of many terms' service. No matter what pledges were exacted of him, Chichester would as like as not start a political hurrah, if other means of aiding a friend were to fail.

Glumly Leguerre watched the sailor out of view, and held his peace. There, again, went a prospect of life and liberty, but honor bound him to let it pass.

Chichester gone, his thoughts went back to the prospective interview with the American minister. He found himself wishing that, instead of an unknown quantity, such as Balthus, some rough-and-ready diplomatist of MacReady's stripe were representing the States here in Puerto Grande. The MacReady school was inclined to paraphrase Decatur—"My countrymen, right or wrong," was their slogan. And they didn't drop their problems back on Washington, either. They wrestled them out on the ground; and put them in their dispatches, if at all, in obscure paragraphs.

HE didn't know much about Balthus. The minister to Costa Castellano was, comparatively, new in the diplomatic corps. This was his first post. He'd been sent down here a couple of years ago—soon after the administration turned over on the second term.

After that, not a great deal had been heard of him in Washington. Before—what had he been? Hadn't he come from somewhere in Indiana—a sort of crusading, reforming political factor, a right arm of righteousness, a virile enemy of grog? The writing on the Balthus card in Leguerre's mental index was dim, but here and there still legible.

Unquestionably, the minister was no weakling. At home his career had been nothing if not positive. He was the sort of man who, with mind made up and backbone set, would be immovable.

The monocle was Leguerre's watch that morning. When it reappeared he knew morning had gone. This time the officer brought a file of soldiers with him, but even the presence of so strong a support did not cause the timid guard to

abandon his concerted production of hardware. His ready revolver menaced Leguerre, as the key turned.

Even the officer smiled.

"Be safe, Pedro," he murmured. "Always take your good precautions. One never knows when snakes will strike." Then in English he addressed Leguerre. It was noon, and the American minister waited.

It had been expected by Leguerre that some prison office would be the setting of his interview with Balthus. But therein he was wrong.

The bilingual captain crossed a courtyard, with his prisoner enveloped by his detail behind him, and passed through a gate opening onto a narrow street that ended in a pier head.

Other streets the procession traversed were narrow, too, and so jammed with jeering crowds that sometimes there was difficulty in pressing on. Evidently word that an American had been captured, after having established contact with the rebel Zabarro, and would pass this way under guard, had been spread generally through the town.

But Leguerre soon observed that all eyes which he met were not hostile. There was sympathy, approbation, in some. Nor were all the outcries that greeted him abusive. Sporadically there were cheers. Once, when the march had covered perhaps a quarter of a mile, a sonorous shout rang from somewhere above:

"Viva Zabarro! Viva el Americano!"

Then momentarily the parade halted. The captain snapped a command, and two of his men, fixing bayonets to their rifles, separated themselves from the detail and kicked at a door.

Shortly after that, they came to a part of town where avenues were straight and wide and palm-bordered—the foreign section, obviously. Leguerre had marked his destination while it was yet squares away. It was a great white-walled house over which floated a flag, like that which had thrilled him when it flashed against the young sun at the cruiser's masthead.

The butler who opened the carved legation door to the party from the prison was a squat Oriental, and at sight of him Leguerre inwardly caviled. These ubiquitous little men beyond doubt made excellent house servants, but experience had taught him they could be dangerous people in diplomatic households.

IN the legation some one had been playing on a piano—one of those homely, haunting Carrie Jacobs Bond things. The music ceased in the middle of a bar. Leguerre, passing along a broad hall, at the swaggering captain's heels, had a glimpse of a tall, slim girl in white.

She had, he thought, just risen from the piano. She stood in a drawing-room that fronted the avenue. Apparently she had advance information in regard to the business of the visitors. Quite as distinctly as that she was pretty, Leguerre got the impression in that one fleeting glance that pity shone in her eyes.

Ahead of him, at the end of the hall, a door swung in under the spry butler's pressure. Beyond was a large room furnished as a library. At a desk in the middle of it sat a man whose lean, lantern jaw seemed mismated with the full-lipped, forensic mouth above it. Despite the heat, he wore heavy black clothing of semiclerical cut, the coat open to reveal a roasting, double-breasted vest, edged at its V with white.

"This is Minister Balthus, señor," said the captain, at his suavest. "Your country's honored envoy to mine."

Balthus said nothing, but sat regarding Leguerre from under drawn brows. The silence became oppressive to Leguerre. He spoke.

"I understood you wished to talk to me, sir."

"I wished to *see* you," amended the American minister, with emphasis implying a distinction. "Have you anything to say to me."

Leguerre pondered. He had resolved to set no store by Balthus; but, for all that, he was experiencing a let-down.

"Nothing, I'm afraid," said he, "not utterly banal. Of course, it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance."

The minister's uncompromising face froze harder at the lightness of the tone.

"I can't return the compliment, Le-

guerre," he said in a flat, chilly voice. "I'm sorry to make yours—sorry to have to acknowledge you as a fellow countryman. You stand on the equivalent of American soil at the moment; but, by the Lord, sir, you're not welcome upon it—not fit to set foot here!"

Leguerre clenched his teeth on the hasty word his tongue would have lashed out. He bowed.

"Then I can't expect a great deal of Costa Castellano's justice, if you speak for America's," he quietly observed. "Are these sentiments all you have to communicate to me, Mr. Balthus?"

The minister's extraordinarily large and bright-blue eyes bored through the spectacles that straddled his thin nose.

"Isn't it enough for you?" he demanded. "Would you like to have me tell you precisely what I think of men of your kidney—men who go about the world with firebrands, and, when they are apprehended in the very act of putting flames to the neighbor's house, come crawling to enfold themselves in the flag they have disgraced?"

The color had ebbed from Leguerre's cheeks. The red was before his eyes. He saw that Balthus was physically big and powerful of shoulder, and a wild desire surged in him to vault the desk, tear off the square-framed spectacles, and register his protest in precincts behind them. But curtains at his left had stirred. Where they were parted, he saw the face of the girl in white, now as pale as he felt his own to be. Her nearness, thus disclosed, aided him in getting a grip on himself. She was probably the diplomat's daughter, although there was no resemblance apparent between them. And she, intuition told him as plainly as had her eyes, judged him less harshly.

He stood mute until he was certain his blood was safely below the boiling point.

"Please remember," he said then, "that I haven't called for the flag's protection, Mr. Balthus. And I give you my word that, come what may, I shall not ask for yours. If the request had not been made by you, I'd not be here now—never would have sought you. Naturally, you have the privilege of believing or not believing that."

The corners of the minister's mouth drew down in an acid smile.

"Perhaps," said he, "I am availing myself of that privilege now. But we'll pass that. What part of the States do you hail from, Leguerre? What do you call your occupation?"

"Does that really interest you?" Leguerre asked coolly.

"Merely for purposes of record."

"Well," said Leguerre, "it happens I've traveled away all sectional prejudice. I'm equally at home almost anywhere in both Americas. As for occupation, I'm afraid there's none I can confess to. I'm known to a wide circle as a gentleman of leisure."

Balthus rubbed his large, blue-veined hands together.

"You are surprisingly frank, young man," said he. "A cock-and-bull story would have completely ruined your chances with me. It is possible I may yet be able to help you in some way—at least, to save your neck. That depends on whether your frankness is inherent and susceptible to development."

"What does that mean?" Leguerre asked bluntly.

BALTHUS, studying him, twiddled the chain that spanned the unseasonable waistcoat.

"You are a rascal, Leguerre," he said unctuously; "but, after all, only a small one. You have been a tool in cleverer hands. Seeing that, repenting and changing heart, you might aid me in getting after the big fellows in this Zabarro filibustering."

Leguerre met the gimlet eyes.

"I still don't understand," he said.

"Is it possible to make it clearer? The government of Costa Castellano, which is a government recognized by and extremely friendly to the United States, is interested in plugging the stream of the bandit Zabarro's supplies at the source. In that, given adequate proof, the American government would zealously coöperate. I believe I can guarantee you your life, my man, if not your immediate freedom, if you will assist——"

Leguerre's shoulders squared.

"Possibly," he said musingly, "I've had

a misconception. Do you represent the United States, Mr. Balthus, or the Republic of Costa Castellano?"

The minister flushed angrily.

"You're infernally insolent," he snapped. "You know who and what am."

Leguerre's voice took a sharper edge.

"In your official position, Balthus," said he, "I can and would do nothing but defer to you. But further exposition of your proposal is quite unnecessary. Personally, to sum up briefly, you may go to the devil!" He faced the Costa Castellanoan captain. "Isn't the interview concluded?" he asked mildly. "I think his excellency is through with me."

Behind him, as the library door closed, the American minister was washing his hands in the stifling, steamy air.

"Absolutely!" he cried. "And forever!"

IT was on the following morning that Escobar, the prison doctor, killed Leguerre's last hope. He had merely dropped in, he explained, to condole with the prisoner.

"I have said before," he remarked, offering Leguerre a cigarette from his case, "it is un'appy you have such strong neck. With no more pain you could be dead, but now it is necessar' you die again."

"Have they sentenced me without taking me before my judges?" he asked. "Well—it's a more efficient way, when the court has its orders from the first."

The doctor flicked away an ash.

"War time," he pointed out, "is difference from peace time. In court-martial, by our law, accused do not appear. For him speak an officer of the republic, and your officer have los' his case. Oh, but he made the veree grand battle. Even your own Minister Balthus have said he could do no more. And then, alas, as quick as the thing is done and cannot be took back, this war is over!"

Leguerre's guard fell.

"Over!"

"Si," nodded the doctor. "Yess, señor. And the arms which you have brought to Zabarro are the capture of the republic. They were taken before he could come to use. That is not so good news, ha?"

Leguerre strode to the window, stared hard at the bay, and after a little wheeled on Escobar.

"Go on, Pollyanna!" he invited savagely. "Give me the rest of it. I suppose the money's been used up, and I'm not to eat again until—I don't have to."

"Oh, no!" protested the doctor. "You will have the best, señor." His loose-hung shoulder went up. "It is only four day more, so——"

When he had gone, Leguerre sat thinking soberly of something he had noticed about the wall of that courtyard below. There had been a place where the stones were chipped and split, as by volley firing from not far away; and on the clay floor his sharp eyes had detected a single flattened bullet.

Tia Rosalia, conventionally introduced with revolver and key, came soon afterward with his luncheon. Deciding the time had come when all chances were justifiable, he told her in artfully limping Spanish that he knew a little of her tongue.

That opened a floodgate. She tried to tell him through her veil, while he stood by, trying to look as if the greater part of what she said were lost on him, how she sympathized—that she, herself, had had a son.

In the evening, sympathy again barred all else from her speech; but next day she had sufficiently accustomed herself to descend to gossip. Most of it was of no concern to Leguerre. Some, though, interested him mightily.

Tia Rosalia, it appeared, had a cousin in service in the American legation. The cousin had told her that Señor Balthus and his too-beautiful niece, the Señorita Alice Hammond, who was to wed young Major Carre of the cavalry, had been often of late in dispute. Their quarrel, strangely, had its root in the prison. The demand of the señorita, it had been gathered, was that Señor Leguerre be given a protection which Señor Balthus loudly insisted would be denied him.

There was a detailed report of one particular and final conversation.

"If you do not help him, I will," the

Señorita Hammond had been distinctly overheard to say.

To that the reply of Señor Balthus had been, by most reliable report: "If you meddle in this, before God Almighty I will hold your name to shame through the length and breadth of two countries! You will forever afterward be dead to me!"

Apparently Tia Rosalia had been certain Señor Leguerre would be pleased by this backstairs tidbit. For, were not all men so made?

BUT Señor Leguerre, after due consideration of the tidings, frowned and growled. He didn't seem to approve of the señorita's championship of his cause. Nor did he approve. The girl, powerless to give him aid, was only creating an impossible situation for herself. Her stand warmed him. He was grateful; but he wished she had more sense. He knew he had correctly estimated Balthus as a man who would not forget easily, nor easily forgive opposition to the right, as he saw it.

His uneasiness in regard to the girl was increased when he saw her in the street below his window. This was on the day after Tia Rosalia had spoken of her, and all afternoon he had been watching the officers and men shuttle-cocking between cruiser and shore. It was dusk when she came, but neither that nor her veil prevented him from recognizing her instantly.

She had halted on the opposite side of the street, and was gazing up—looking directly at him, he felt. Somehow, she had found means of identifying his window from without. She tossed something which, in his brief glimpse of it, looked to be a note tied around a pebble. It missed the window, struck the wall, and dropped back onto the walk, near the girl.

But, after she had stooped to recover it, she hurried away. Presently Leguerre saw that a barefoot soldier, hidden before from him by the angle of the wide embrasure, had entered the street.

The following evening the girl returned. Her marksmanship was better now. Her pebble sailed between the bars. When Leguerre picked it up and went back to the window, she had vanished.

As he had been sure the day before, a message was fastened to the little stone. It was just a line, unsigned:

> Keep heart. Something will happen tomorrow.

That sounded like business; yet worry over the girl's position was the greatest emotion which her note aroused in Leguerre. Had she only waited, he would have spoken to her—begged her not to stake her own position, in Costa Castellano and in her uncle's home, on what must at best be a forlorn hope. But now it was too late. He could only wait and watch.

Through the morning and through the afternoon, waiting and watching were in vain. It appeared that the girl's plans must have gone awry; and this, by the curt official communication which had verified the intelligence transmitted by Escobar, was next to his last day above ground. He already had begun to take what comfort he could out of the nebulous prospect of a reunion with Jim MacCloud. He wondered if a fellow, after he was through with the world, did have a chance to get together with friends who had shaken its dust before him—and if there could possibly be any nice little places there, with striped awnings and tables on the sidewalk, where travelers could match notes.

This day of promise ran as other days, its routine undisturbed. Tia Rosalia brought breakfast, then luncheon. The one difference lay in her. She was not so voluble, perhaps, because now her term of duty was so short. Her voice trembled when she called to the guard; she choked over her adios.

At night, the black old figure seemed to Leguerre more stooped than before. The motions, as the candle was lighted and the table set, had not the former birdlike swiftness. She said no word during the time the soldier, as was his wont, stood peering into the cell. But, Leguerre recollected, she never did.

"Don't fret over me, señora," he said when the guard had gone. "They say, in my country, that the good die young.

Perhaps all this has been arranged as a tribute to my virtues."

Then, having spoken his thought aloud in English, he tried to find some way of expressing it in the crude Spanish which he had made her believe was his best. He wouldn't be fluent now, for all the temptation—couldn't leave her with a memory of deceit. He'd got to like her tremendously; possibly, he thought, for somewhat the same reason that more celebrated prisoners of history had taken up with mice and sparrows. But, anyway, she was a good old sort.

HE came from the window, beyond which the tantalizing warship was a blaze of lights, multiplying themselves in the watch, and found himself a victim of bewitchment.

The old woman had vanished.

Where she had stood was a slim young man in identically the same Shantung suiting in which he, himself, was clad. And the other suit, the candle showed him, was rumpled and muddy, too.

A laugh, very soft, greeted his stare.

"This is the day, and something has happened," said a voice that matched the laugh.

Then he recognized the Carrie Jacobs Bond girl of the legation. This was she, in breeches and boots and belted coat, with her mass of brown hair closely shingled.

She pointed to the bunk.

"There's the cloak and the veil," she whispered. "It's dark, and they're so used to old Rosalia that there isn't a chance of detection. Cover yourself. The guard may come back."

Leguerre made no move.

"What do you think *you're* going to do?" he asked.

"I'll stay," she said. "There'll have to be a prisoner of some sort left behind. You don't think they'd let two of us out, do you?"

"Hardly," said Leguerre. "But, look here! You evidently don't realize what you're doing."

"I think I do."

"It's unthinkable."

"Not at all," said the girl coolly. "I've proved otherwise—by thinking it up. You were fortunate to have established yourself well with old Rosalia. I found her almost willing to consent to my proposal without pay. She's frightened to death; but I put her to bed and provided her with a story that will see her through, if she'll stick to it."

Her aplomb was amazing.

"Can you believe I'd walk out and leave you here?" Leguerre demanded.

"That is what you must do."

"I refuse—absolutely."

"You can't. Please don't be heroic. Be—be practical—and hurry."

She was imperious, untractable. Leguerre changed his tactics.

"Do you know what would happen to you if I were to do as you want me to?"

"Not much of anything. I expect there'll be fur flying; but certainly I won't be shot. My sometimes impossible uncle is a powerful personage in Costa Castellano."

"There are other things worse than being shot—for a woman," said Leguerre. "You're engaged to be married, are you not?"

The girl's chin lifted haughtily.

"Is that pertinent?" she queried crisply.

"I think so. And isn't your fiancé an officer in the local army? Pardon me, but that's a short way of saying it."

"He is. But, secretly, he is heart and soul with Zabarro. If I have helped you to escape, he will only rejoice."

Leguerre shook his head.

"You don't know the Latins as I know them," he said; "don't understand the temperament and the customs and the point of view. They cloister their women, and the women they take for their wives must be of that kind. Do I make myself clear, Miss Hammond?"

"You do not."

"That's because, as I've remarked, you don't know the race. My answer to anything you may tell me about Major Carre is that he's a Latin. Let it be known that you were here with me—alone—and you would be forever compromised in his eyes. So you must go quickly and at once. Put on those things and call Pietro."

The girl's chin went higher.

"I am not going," she said.

"You'll have to," returned Leguerre. "For *I* won't! When I tell you I'd rather die than bring disgrace upon you —for that's what it would be in Costa Castellano—I think you can believe I mean it."

"You're not going to die. If I have to——"

She broke off. In the distance a gun had boomed.

"What's that?"

"Perhaps a belated sunset gun," said Leguerre. "Somebody might have let his watch stop—a rule-of-thumb man."

She picked up the cloak and thrust it at him.

"Please!" she said.

"No," said Leguerre; "that's final. I say, 'Please.' too."

"It's useless," the girl told him. "I'm going to count ten, and if you're not Tia Rosalia when I've finished, with the basket on your arm and ready to go home, I'll wreck everything your chivalry desires."

"You won't do that—can't."

"You'll see. I'll shout for Pietro in my Tia Rosalia voice—stand before him like this—tell him to call his officer. Then will I be compromised? You think I won't do it? Well, one, two——"

Back of the town somewhere, the same gun roared again. The noise of rifle fire ensued, and, far away, a machine gun went into action.

Transfixed, the two looked into each other's eyes.

"Zabarro!" whispered Leguerre. He laughed wildly. "That damned doctor lied!"

Then suddenly he was silent, regretting the laugh. It had attracted Pietro. The soldier, for once curious, was audibly on his way down the corridor.

Leguerre snatched the black coat, flung himself into it, and hunched his shoulders, as he adjusted bonnet and veil.

"Yes, I'll go now," he breathed. "You—God bless you!—may stay!"

Solicitously, when his revolver and key were both tucked away, the wary Pietro led Tia Rosalia for the last time to and through the prison gate. Outside, in the shadow of the wall, he found himself most brutally repaid. Tia Rosalia had pulled back one of her withered arms and struck him on the point of the jaw with, as he later reported, a hammer. Pietro lay down untidily and slept.

There were three horses tethered to a diminutive tree just beyond the gate. Tia Rosalia loosed them, struck two smartly upon the withers and sent them galloping away, and vaulted into the saddle of the third. With veil and cloak flying, uttering guttural cries, she sped along the water front and at the first corner turned inland in the direction of the now-incessant firing.

Outside the town Tia Rosalia ceased to exist. The cloak and veil fluttered into the road, and it was Leguerre who was racing for the lines of the Zabarristas.

An outpost recognized him and halted a hasty companion in the act of lifting his rifle.

"It's Señor Yankee—of the beach!" he shouted. "Hold!"

To Don Miguel Zabarro himself, standing with his "concert grand" not far in the rear, reveling in its music and its flame, the outpost led Leguerre. There was a hasty conference in crackling Spanish.

"In two or three days," said Don Miguel, "we will have Puerto Grande reduced. Then we take what is left by storm."

"You don't have to wait. The time for storming is now. The federals are in confusion. I saw that, rushing through. Half the town will welcome you with open arms. Give me one company—a hundred men—fifty. I'll account for the prison and prison barracks. I've been in them. I know."

He prevailed. While shells screeched over their heads, the Zabarristas charged. A troop of cavalry had been assigned to Leguerre. He led them over the route which he had recently traversed. Coming to the prison gate, he found Pietro still lying beside it in a condition of blissful detachment. The other guards had departed, perhaps for the front, perhaps for the rear.

Ahead of his men, alone, Leguerre raced to his old headquarters, flaunting a borrowed pistol and Pietro's key. He opened the cell and greeted the attractive occupant.

"We have met the enemy," he said, "and haven't left them a thing. Now I'm going to take you home—uncompromised. I know a back way out—if you know a back way in!"

ONE day out from Puerto Grande, the following week, a roll of the New York boat threw Nugent Leguerre, gentleman of leisure, into the wiry arms of Benjamin Balthus, the relieved late United States minister to the Republic of Costa Castellano.

Just a moment before, but without the knowledge of Balthus, Leguerre had been enjoying the society of the former minister's niece and her new and slightly deceived husband, Major Carre, of the staff of the de-facto President Zabarro of Costa Castellano.

"You!" said Balthus.

"Myself," said Leguerre, smiling. "Thanks for saving me a fall. My neck is a weak vessel—might have broken. Would it be too much to say, your excellency, that I possibly owe you my life?"

MOVING MOUNTAINS

PERHAPS, after all, Mohammed had some reason for believing the mountain would come to him. At all events, mountains do move. Not only is there the recent report of two moving mountains in Europe—that of Domen Fawr, in Monmouthshire, England, and that of Mount Arbino, near Bellinzona, in Switzerland—but last year the inhabitants of Meeker, Colorado, were able to observe the conduct of a moving mountain near their town. In fact, the inhabitants of Meeker were decidedly disconcerted, not to say excited, when they discovered that their moving mountain shifted more than a hundred yards in two days and completely blocked the one road which joined them with the outside world.

Geologists and scientists have so far obtained no irrefutable data to explain this phenomenon. One explanation offered is that the moving mountain has become top-heavy. With the passing of time, rain and water seepage have made the top too heavy to be supported by the lower layers, which then slide to a lower and more secure position.

Other scientists are of the opinion that the moving mountain is nothing but a landslide or landslip. This opinion is held by Julian D. Sears, acting head of the United States Geological Survey, and by Professor Berkey, head of the department of geology, at Columbia University, New York City.

The moving mountain at Meeker in shifting caused a gulch to be filled, and thus saved the cost of a bridge. But the shifts of Domen Fawr brought about more disastrous results. By shifting the river bed, the Monmouthshire mountain made thirty families homeless. For a time, Mount Arbino threatened to blot out the entire city of Bellinzona. Within two days, a mass about seven and a half miles long and more than five thousand feet high was in motion.

Inclosed Please Find $500,000

By Roy Hinds

Author of "In One Corner," "Ransom," Etc.

In the assured safety of his florist shop, old Oliver Tuft dealt discreetly in "the benevolent side of crime." The potency and extent of his odd influence was well demonstrated in that Landers bank robbery——

THE contact of metal on window glass penetrated the consciousness of Oliver Tuft, with the sharpness of a driven lance. For several minutes after retiring in the bedroom behind his little florist shop, in Mulberry Street, the old gentleman had lain in pleasant, drowsy wakefulness, listening to the tapping of snowflakes on the window-panes and the roar of the blizzard. He had dropped asleep with the untroubled ease of an infant. Deep, dreamless, sleep imparted a look of peace to his ruddy face.

Then he came up to a sitting posture in the bed, alert, eyes exploring the gloom, this way and that, finally fixing themselves on the frame of the window, looming white against the background of the storm outside. The shade flapped; for, despite the blizzard, Oliver Tuft had lowered his window a trifle at the top.

He was cold, yet a film of clammy perspiration gathered on his brow. His heart beat so rapidly that an aching constriction manifested itself in his chest. The hand fussing with his thick white mane trembled.

No sound other than the beating snow came from the window. No shadow appeared there to apprise the old gentleman that an unexpected visitor lurked outside.

"I must have been dreaming," he assured himself; yet his eyes remained riveted on the checkerboard pattern of the window.

But he had not dreamed. A dark object appeared outside the glass, quivered a moment in the cold, took the form of a human hand holding a coin, and again the metallic click smote the silence of Oliver Tuft's establishment, with the sharp importunity of a bugle call: *Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick!* The hand vanished.

The old gentleman's feet found the floor, then his slippers. All of a tremble, he got into a warm robe. He approached the window at an angle, stealthily, and peered out. A man was huddled below the sill. The white blanket of snow in the fenced-in yard showed broken spots—the tracks this furtive caller had made in getting to the window, after clambering over the alley fence.

For just a moment, Mr. Tuft studied the huddled form. He hurried into his kitchen, unbolted the door, opened it, and stuck his head out.

"What do you want?" he demanded, fighting to exclude the quaver from his voice.

The caller, crouching, approached the door. Mr. Tuft kept himself prepared to slam and lock the door at a moment's notice.

"I'm Gilbert Coyle," came the response in a hoarse whisper. "Made it away from that joint in Pennsylvania, and——"

Oliver Tuft flung wide the door.

"Come in," he said.

Gilbert Coyle, young, clad in shabby garments picked up here and there in his flight from prison, overcoatless, his face pinched and blue with cold, came gratefully out of the storm.

Oliver Tuft wasted no time. He closed the windows which had been opened for ventilation. The equipment for a fire in the grate had been left in a basket by Mr. Tuft's assistant and right-hand man, Archibald Snow, before he went to his room in the lodging house above, and Mr. Tuft utilized this now. He bustled about the living room and kitchen, in some excitement, smiling, uttering reassuring phrases. He put the teakettle on to boil on the gas stove in the kitchen, while Gilbert Coyle warmed himself and smoothed his steaming garb in front of the grate in the living room, resting after his arduous journey and inhaling the pleasant floral scents which came from the shop just beyond.

"Your shoes," Mr. Tuft invited; "take them off. I know your feet are wet. Pray, take off your shoes and stretch your feet before the fire."

"Thank you."

NOT a word of explanation did Tuft permit until the nocturnal visitor had regaled himself with thickly buttered bread and tea. Then, in the glow of the open fire, they talked.

"You didn't put up no argument about letting me in," Coyle remarked. "Thought maybe you'd wonder and, maybe, think it was too much of a chance to take, knowing me only slightly."

"I know you've been in trouble," Mr. Tuft rejoined, smiling benignantly. "I never shut the door in the face of a man in trouble."

"I know; but coming like I did, out of the alley at midnight, with a price on my head——"

"You couldn't very well come otherwise, considering the circumstances. It must have been difficult."

"Tough—I'll say it's tough! I kicked outa that joint day before yesterday, about noon. I 'most froze to death, laying in the woods. That night I hooked a ride with a truck driver who didn't ask no questions. I'd stolen some clothes from a workman's shanty. But I'll bet that driver was wise. I dropped off his truck about daylight and hid again. I traveled all last night, walking and catching rides. To-night I made it into New York, and here I am."

"Very interesting, the things you boys go through," the old gentleman remarked. "I often wonder how you stand it."

"A fella can stand anything," Gilbert Coyle asserted, "when he's got a job to do."

His host studied his face which, under happier conditions, would be termed good looking. But it was a hard face now—thin, worried, grim. Bitter lights shone in the eyes.

"A job to do?" Mr. Tuft repeated. "Yes, yes—a job to do. Well, I assume that what the newspapers have said about you is correct, Mr. Coyle. I read of your affairs with a great deal of interest, having met you once. It was an astounding thing, that bank robbery over in Pennsylvania. Half a million dollars! Why, there were no such hauls in the old days. Of course, bank robbery was something I never engaged in. When I was young, as you've heard—I believe I

told you when we met before—the gentle art of swindling was my line. Benevolent swindling, I called it. I worked on men who could afford to lose, and always on men who expected to profit unlawfully themselves. But no matter. I was, I suppose, a crook, though I like to think of my activities in those days as a trimmer of trimmers. It eases my conscience.

"When a man grows old, that is an important thing—his conscience—as you will ascertain when the carefree and reckless spirit of youth has sobered somewhat. Now it soothes my conscience to think of my unlawful doings as games in which I took money away from those who sought to 'trim' me. When I gave all that up and entered the legitimate business of selling flowers, it also soothed my conscience to think that, perhaps, I might help to right a few of the wrongs that are every day coming up in this uncertain world. Naturally, I thought of helping some of my old friends to evade the injustices which they are always open to. There are more of these cases than I imagined. When men like yourself learned about me, they began to keep me busy, until now, I must confess, the business of selling flowers has become merely a side line. I declare, you boys keep me busy!"

"I ain't gonta bother you much, Mr. Tuft—only a little loan maybe, so's I can get some decent clothes and a place to live till I can——"

HE paused. His eyes took on a more bitter glow. Mr. Tuft wondered. His recollection of Gilbert Coyle's affairs offered no explanation for bitterness. As a matter of fact, Gilbert Coyle's eyes should reflect elation and exultation of spirit, for wasn't he free to enjoy the proceeds of the daring robbery he had committed?

Mr. Tuft frowned.

"I don't know," he said, "whether you rightly understand my position or not. I —ah—I should make it clear to you at the outset. I do not mean to imply that you are not welcome to the hospitality I have so far extended, nor that you should not regard yourself free to make any request for help which you may have in mind. Help and friendship will be forthcoming, so long as they do not involve me in crime. I believe I told you before that I sometimes engage in crime, but only for benevolent purposes—that is to say, where crime is necessary to right an injustice. I do not, for instance, assist any man in the preparation of crimes where profit is the sole object. You are a young man badly in need of assistance. I shall be pleased to start you on your way, but——"

"You'll do more than that, when you've heard what I've got to say," Gilbert Coyle cut in.

"Eh—eh? What's that?"

"I say I've got a job cut to order for you."

"Am—am I to infer, Mr. Coyle, that there are circumstances connected with that bank robbery and your subsequent imprisonment which have made you the object of injustice?"

"I didn't intend to ask you for much help, Mr. Tuft. I didn't think things out much before coming here. I come across on the Christopher Street Ferry, and I had just one penny in my pocket—the remains of a dollar handed to me by a truck driver along the road. I was walking through the streets in the blizzard, making it across town, when I come to Mulberry Street. I thought about you, and what you told me when I was in here with a coupla friends a year or so ago. So I sneaked around in the alley, and here I am. But, since you been talking about helping a guy that's had it heaped on him—well, I've sure had it heaped on me!"

Mr. Tuft plucked thoughtfully at his mutton-chop whiskers, and eyed Gilbert Coyle with quickening interest.

"You have?" he inquired. "You've had it heaped upon you—injustice? I declare, I had no such idea." He cleared his throat. "In fact," he added, "I assumed just the contrary. I thought it more than likely that you were the one who had heaped it on—heaped it onto that Pennsylvania bank, to be explicit. As I understand it, you robbed the vault of that bank of something like half a million dollars—three hundred thousand in

money and two hundred thousand in negotiable securities. Not one penny of the loot was recovered, if the newspapers are to be believed."

Gilbert Coyle helped himself to another cigarette from a box provided by his host. He lit it slowly.

"The newspapers," he presently returned, "printed all they could find out about it—and a whole lot that they guessed—but they haven't got the whole story yet."

Mr. Tuft's interest was now at a high pitch. The adventure and the drama that he found in his contacts with denizens of the underworld had always been sufficient to keep him out of bed at all hours of the night, and here he found himself confronted with a case of extraordinary proportions. First, the central character was notorious from coast to coast—young, but not too young to have already made his black mark in the records of crime.

Gilbert Coyle, bank robber, sporting a string of aliases, debonair, dashing in the bravado with which he performed his misdeeds, had long ago appealed to newspaper reporters as a worthy subject for colorful stories of crime. He was guilty of much more than that for which he had been brought to the bar of justice. His latest job was a robbery which wrecked a small-town Pennsylvania bank and compelled it to close its doors. Not one cent of the loot had been recovered. It was thought that Coyle had accomplices, though none had been apprehended, and Coyle being a tight-lipped young crook, the authorities had obtained no information from him, either in respect to his supposed confederates or the disposition of the loot.

He had been sent to prison for twenty-five years. That had been about five months previously. Now he had escaped.

Conviction had been obtained mostly on circumstantial evidence. The job bore the marks of his handicraft, which was well known to detectives in various cities. Arrested, he had been positively identified as the man who had spent several days in a hotel in that small Pennsylvania town, immediately preceding the robbery. His automobile was also identified. In fact, attachés of the bank identified him as a man who had visited the establishment several times on one pretext or another. It was not a miscarriage of justice. The circumstances of his having been in that town and of having visited the bank were rightly taken by the jury as evidence of guilt, and when his record was aired in court, he was convicted.

He had no quarrel with the jury. He had visited that bank with burglarious intentions. He had broken into the bank, had broken into the vault. These acts constituted burglary, but——

"I never got a cent out of that vault," he was saying to Oliver Tuft.

"Never got a cent!" the old gentleman rejoined. "Astounding, amazing! I declare——"

"It was cleaned out," Coyle went on in a quiet tone, "before I got into it."

IN silence Oliver Tuft stirred and replenished the fire, moving like a man on the verge of exciting events, fearing that an ill-chosen word might check the story he wished so much to hear. But the young bank robber evidently had decided that here was the place to tell his tale, here was the spot at which he could obtain help in the project which had urged him to such a desperate chance at escape.

"I cracked down on that vault alone," Coyle related, "but I had help in getting inside. It was made easy for me—the break-in. All I had to do was open a back door, that had been unlocked and unbarred, and walk in, like you'd walk into your own store. It was that easy."

Mr. Tuft continued to gaze in rapt attention.

"Astounding!" was his only rejoinder.

"Course I done things to a window on the inside," the burglar went on, "that made it look like that was the way I got in; but that was all bluff. I was already in. I didn't have to monkey with no window. I only done that to leave signs, so's nobody'd get a hint that it was an inside job. But that's what it was, an inside job, and the guy on the inside was big stuff, too. He was the cashier."

During the pause, Mr. Tuft remained absolutely silent. Gilbert Coyle lit an-

other cigarette, stared into the fire a few moments, and resumed:

"His name is Plattman, that cashier—Andrew Plattman. He's about fifty, a bachelor, straight as a string in his home town, but once in a while he comes to New York. Then he ain't so straight. He's a cut-up. He's got baby dolls scattered around this man's town, and they keep him busy digging up bracelets and necklaces. That's what put him in bad at the bank, but nobody knew it. I met him around the cabarets and played him for a sucker; I found out he had a bunch of worries on his mind. Drinking together, with me trying to figure out some route to his dough, we got pretty well acquainted. He's short at the bank, and he wants to cover up. Well, I'm the boy that can cover up for him. I let him know that. The job grew out of that. With the vault robbed—cleaned out—there ain't nobody can say he's short. There'll never be a hint of that.

"Simple, eh? I go there and crack the vault. I clean it out. We're to split fifty-fifty. He gets a big drag, close to a quarter of a million, and, besides that, he covers up what he's already stolen. I get around a quarter of a million, and my way made easy into the bank. Soft!

"It looked like the softest thing I ever hit. But this Andrew Plattman decided to grab the works. He hooks the dough and gets it out and away, before I go in. He locks the vault up again. While I'm working on the vault, he's somewhere out on the road, with all that swag in his car, racing for wherever he put it. That's the way I size it up. I don't know just how he done it, but he couldn't have removed that much plunder in his pockets. He must have used a car. Only thing I know, there wasn't no dough—not one penny—in the vault when I got inside of it. But things was fixed pretty for him, eh? Window looks like it's been worked on by a burglar, vault drilled and cut to pieces, inside doors cut open, locks smashed. Soft for that cashier. Nobody thinks of an inside job, and he's got the whole works buried some place. And can I squawk? What good will it do me to squawk? A squawk is a plea of guilty. I get my jolt, anyhow. He's clever, that cashier. He knows I won't spout. So I think he's the guy that tipped the police off to me—gave 'em a hint that I'm the mysterious guy that's been hanging around town. I don't know, but that's my hunch. It makes it better for him, don't it, if the cracksman is convicted and put away?"

"Yes, yes," Mr. Tuft agreed. "But did he never make any effort to help you—to send word to you, while you were in jail?"

"Not that guy! He never give me a tumble any time. I looked him in the eye in court, and there was never a flicker in his eye. He's got brass. Well, they had me. Only game for me was to wait, to see if I could beat the case by lack of evidence on the other side, and if I couldn't beat it, still to wait. If I squawk, I lose all chance of getting a crack at that dough. If I hold my tongue, some time I'll get out, one way or another, and then it'll be my turn. That guy's got the dough. I'm out. It's my turn now."

Oliver Tuft nodded.

"And he must be pretty much worried, if he knows you have escaped," he suggested.

"Not so worried as he will be when I crack down on him."

"Crack down?"

"Oh, I ain't gonta bump him off. I don't work things that way. Crack down—I mean I'm gonta separate him from that dough, all of it, or what he's got left. He won't even get his fifty-fifty split. It's mine."

Mr. Tuft, thinking deeply, wandered about the room, the expression of his countenance varying between grave resentment over the betrayal this young man had received at the hands of his confederate and delight over the opportunity which seemed to present itself for him to right a wrong.

"I don't know about that," he said presently. "It's difficult to decide just who can claim this money. Certainly it doesn't belong to this man, Andrew Plattman, and I can hardly see that it belongs to you. If it's a question of the money going to one thief or the other, I should say that you are entitled to it.

But we shall see. Now, do I understand that you wish me to take some action in the matter?"

"I'd like that," Gilbert Coyle assured the old gentleman. "You can do a lot more'n I can. I gotta be careful how I show my face. You got friends that can look into things—fellas you can send out to that town of Landers. I can't show up there."

"Yes, yes; I see. Now then, that's a problem—to find where this man has concealed the money. His bank was closed. As I understand it, the bank was taken over by a committee of the creditors, as were all the assets that remained. I recall reading that in the papers. That means that Andrew Plattman, who was cashier and one of the principal stockholders, has the status of a bankrupt. He could not afford to display any considerable amount of money. I presume he has disposed of the negotiable securities through secret channels, or is trying to; that the stolen fortune is hidden until such time as Plattman thinks it safe to use it. It is very difficult for him in a small town. He cannot produce money without exciting wonder as to where he got it. I suppose he is endeavoring to reestablish himself in business, and then to bring forth his stolen money in small amounts, as though they were legitimate profits. I declare, it is a situation which arouses my curiosity. I should certainly like to look into it."

"Go ahead," Gilbert Coyle urged. "I'll give you all the dope I can about that fella and that town."

He did that, before he departed for an obscure little hotel, fortified with a sum of money advanced by Oliver Tuft.

NEXT morning Mr. Tuft slept late—so late that Archibald Snow, letting himself into the front door of the florist shop and finding everything quiet, went out to a restaurant for breakfast, instead of preparing it in the living quarters at the rear. Archie's gaunt eyes, however, wandered over the living room and detected cigarette ends in an ash tray on the table.

"Visitors!" he informed himself.

Yet, when he returned from breakfast and found the old gentleman astir, young Mr. Snow made no inquiries. If he were to get any information, it would be forthcoming without questions. He pottered about the shop, while Mr. Tuft got his breakfast.

Archibald was a handy man, in more than one respect. His air of funereal melancholy, as he moved about among the thick array of flowers, clad as he was in a swallowtail coat of black, one lank strand of hair forever falling down over his eyes, gave him the appearance of an undertaker moving among the floral offerings surrounding the remains of the lamented. Between this grave young man and Oliver Tuft there was complete understanding; for the elder knew exactly whence Archibald came, though allusions to their former ways of life were always veiled.

Just now Archibald Snow, in his swallowtail coat, stood near the breakfast table of Oliver Tuft, who was already clad in his frock coat. Mr. Tuft surveyed his assistant with good-humored benevolence.

"Archibald," he said, leaning back with the comfortable air of a healthy old gentleman who had just partaken of a copious breakfast, "I have been meditating on the curious fact that no matter what vicissitudes or fortunes overtake a man, he remains essentially the same in spirit."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—I suppose that's true."

"Now, when I first met you, Archibald, I observed certain details. You were, if I may be pardoned for referring to an unhappy incident, engaged in the business of effacing yourself from observation. I believe that the night previously you had made an uninvited call in the household of a gentleman who awakened to find his worldly wealth considerably depleted as a result of your nocturnal visit. He was so much discomfited by this fact that he informed the police, and the police, in their usual assiduous manner, went on a quest for finger prints. Unhappily, they found prints in the household which corresponded with certain specimens of your finger impressions which they had on file in their archives.

"It was only natural that the police should make an endeavor to slap their eyes upon you, and only natural that you should attempt to keep them from doing so. You told your troubles to a friend, and he suggested that there was an old gentleman running a florist shop in Mulberry Street, within a small stone's throw of police headquarters, whose life had not been altogether blameless, and who might undertake, out of sympathy, to conceal you for a time from the prying eyes of the law. You came here, and you have been with me ever since. I have, if I may say so, found the association extremely pleasant."

"Thank you, sir, Mr. Tuft."

"Now, when you came to me, Archibald, you had to a considerable extent disguised yourself. That is to say, you had affected clothing of a quality and style entirely different from your usual garb. You wore a derby, where previously you had worn a cap. You had altered your gait and your general physical deportment; yet you neglected one detail. I see that even yet that one characteristic remains. I refer, Archibald, to your necktie. Never have I known your necktie to be adjusted properly, although I have seen you under all sorts of conditions. Your necktie is always askew. It is always the same color, black—a little black string, tied in a careless knot, and never, by any chance, do you permit that knot to conceal from the general public the fact that you are the owner of rather a large-headed collar button of gleaming yellow gold."

Archibald stuffed a long forefinger between his collar and his Adam's apple, wriggled his long neck, and nodded.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—I suppose you're right."

"I was only going on to say," the old gentleman added, "that the police overlooked that. They broadcasted almost a complete description of Archibald Snow, his height, his weight, the fact that his shoulders were slightly stooped, the color of his hair and eyes, the unusual dimensions of his ears, the general cast of his earnest countenance; yet they did not advertise the fact that Archibald Snow, under any and all conditions, wore a stringy black necktie perpetually out of adjustment. Now, if I were seeking to find you, I would not go about the street looking into men's faces. A man can grow a beard and otherwise alter his face. No, indeed! I should look at every necktie that crossed my range of vision. When I found a stringy black necktie, with the knot sagging below a big collar button, I would know that my quest was ended."

SNOW nodded and waited patiently. Mr. Tuft cleared his throat pompously.

"But that one ineffaceable characteristic of Archibald Snow," Mr. Tuft proceeded, "has nothing to do with the matter that now concerns me, except in so far as it reveals a curious trait of human nature. A man bent on concealing himself or his acts neglects something. Search deeply, and it will be found. I have in mind the cashier of a small-town bank who undertook, by conspiring with a bank robber, to have his establishment looted in such way that no evidence of an inside job would remain. My interest in the affair begins at the point where the bank cashier, the supposedly upright citizen, double crossed the bank robber, who makes no pretensions to being upright; who, even if he is a thief and a robber, nevertheless has a respect for the code that pals, under any and all conditions, should play fair with one another. I am not endeavoring to justify the art of bank robbery under any conditions. But I am interested in the fact that one man has been made to suffer for a crime from which the other got all the advantages, by a contemptible underhanded trick."

Archibald Snow's interest had picked up. He understood well enough that Oliver Tuft often engaged in crime, "for benevolent purposes," and he was used to his circuitous and verbose approaches to vital subjects. He saw that Mr. Tuft had at last got down to the kernel of the nut he wished to devour.

"What's on your mind, Mr. Tuft?" Archibald inquired.

"I wish, Archibald, that you would get into touch to-day with two very good

friends of ours. I refer to 'Slopey' Moore and 'Quicksand' Jones."

Young Mr. Snow nodded gravely and again performed the gesture of thrusting a long forefinger between his throat and collar and wriggling his neck in a preoccupied manner.

"Meaning," he suggested, "that you've got a job for a burglar and a confidence man."

"True—true, indeed! And I should like any one to tell me if there is a more capable burglar in the city of New York than Slopey Moore. And I ask you, is not Quicksand Jones one of the smoothest talkers and the slickest articles who ever plucked a sucker?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—they're both clever."

"Is it not a fact that Quicksand Jones is so called because any 'sucker' who gets into his toils is sure to be bogged?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—that's right."

"And they're both square?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft."

"That's the point exactly," Oliver Tuft asserted. "When a man finds it necessary to deal with burglars and confidence men, he is wise if he picks those that are square. When squareness and cleverness are combined, as they are in Slopey Moore and Quicksand Jones, almost any enterprise of a shadowy nature is sure to succeed."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—that's right."

AFTER an interval of three days, Slopey Moore, burglar—called Slopey because of his sagging shoulders—followed Quicksand Jones into the small Pennsylvania town of Landers. The fact that the three days had given the confidence man ample time to get the lay of the land in respect to Andrew Plattman, cashier of the defunct bank, and the probable location of the loot, was evident from the coded telegram by which he summoned the burglar to the scene of action.

Now, the modern crook presents no outward evidence of his calling. He strives to look the part of a decent citizen bent on honorable business. well dressed. It was so with the burglar and swindler. Both were fairly young and had the brisk, enterprising manners of traveling salesmen. Being a confidence man, Jones had cultivated the arts of genial friendliness to a high degree. The burglar was more reserved. Neither spoke the vulgar vernacular commonly associated with thieves. As Slopey Moore put it:

"A man like me doesn't wear his jimmy for a watch charm."

So the citizens of Landers had no suspicions that a burglar and a confidence man were in their midst—least of all, Andrew Plattman, against whom the energies of this conniving twain were directed.

Mr. Plattman, a shrewd, righteous-faced man of middle age, was still counterfeiting the air of grave melancholy supposed to have been induced by the crash of his business. He was everywhere looked upon as a victim of misfortune. No suspicion of his honesty had raised itself. Surely he was not to blame because his bank had become the object of thieves; because the vault had been looted to such an extent that the business could not be carried on. He was, apparently, a bankrupt, yet it was only natural that the good citizens of Landers should favor him in any business by which he sought to reëstablish his fortunes. His frequent absences from Landers were looking upon as business trips in connection with some enterprise he meant to float. Landers waited expectantly, sympathetically, ready to lend a helping hand to a worthy citizen when he should embark upon whatever project he had in mind.

Andrew Plattman had just returned from a visit to New York. He let it be known that he had induced a friend in the city to lend him a sum of money, and with this he would go into business.

"Promotion and development," he replied in answer to the questions of his friends and neighbors. "I'll let you know in a few days. It's a big thing for Landers, as well as for myself."

Andrew Plattman never suspected that he was an object of extraordinary surveillance. Slopey Moore and Quicksand Jones became living embodiments of the old adage that it takes a thief to catch a thief.

They presently left the town of Landers, having got what information they had been sent after. In the little parlor of Oliver Tuft's, behind the florist shop in Mulberry Street, they told what they knew. This information necessitated a wait of several weeks, during which Moore and Jones pursued their own affairs. They were on hand, however, when Mr. Tuft again called them, and, with warm spring in the air, the burglar and the confidence man again appeared in the small town of Landers.

Simultaneously there appeared an announcement in the Landers weekly newspaper, both in an advertisement and a news story, that Andrew Plattman proposed to launch an extensive civic enterprise, which was nothing less than the booming of the picturesque little town and its attractive lake as a summer resort.

These possibilities had long been talked of in Landers. The town was ideally situated for such a venture, and the completion of two automobile highways through Landers gave the town better connections with the outside world. There was considerable idle land around the lake. Andrew Plattman proposed to form a stock company to take over this land, clear it, and build a summer hotel and a golf links, with additional inducements to summer visitors. He had, from the outset, no trouble selling stock, and in a very few days he had capital enough without digging into the money he had obtained through his connivance with Gilbert Coyle, bank robber.

Things moved swiftly. The moment arrived when the first spadeful of earth was to be turned for the hotel. This was more of a sentimental gesture than it was an operation in advancement of the building; for, scarcely any of the land had been cleared, and it would be some time before actual building work began. The breaking of ground, however, was an event in Landers which was to be participated in by the town officials, the mayor having been chosen to wield the spade, and the gesture would, of course, spur the stock-selling campaign. Landers foresaw a boom of considerable proportions, and the townspeople were grateful to Andrew Plattman for taking the initiative in bringing to fruition their civic dreams.

Between Oliver Tuft's shop in New York and his agents in Landers a thorough discussion of all these contemplated events was had by mail. The final letter of instructions from Mr. Tuft rather startled Quicksand Jones and Slopey Moore. They discussed it.

"Do you think we can do it?" the burglar asked.

"Well," the confidence man replied, "we can do anything he says, but it sounds like a crazy stunt to me."

"It surely does."

They talked of ways and means.

"Wonder if he knows what a chunk that much money makes?" Moore pursued. "Anybody'd think it was a roll of bills a fellow could carry in his vest pocket."

"We've got a car to carry it in."

"I know; but putting it away, as he instructs, is some job."

Nevertheless they had no thought of doing otherwise than as Oliver Tuft suggested.

"That means we've got to have a shovel," Moore said, "and maybe a pickax."

"It does," Jones agreed; "and it also means that we've got some night work to do."

THEY did it that night. Under cover of a moonless sky, the two invaded the same alley which Gilbert Coyle had invaded on a previous occasion—the same alley into which opened the same door. It was the back door of the building which once housed the bustling little bank; but no particular pains were taken now to keep out such fellows as these. The banking floor was unoccupied, except for some of the cumbersome fixtures of the defunct bank.

Access was readily gained by the skillful Slopey Moore. They stood inside, puckering their nostrils at the disagreeable, unventilated smell, common to vacant buildings. The irony of the situation appealed to the more imaginative confidence man.

"It's like frisking an empty joint," he remarked in a whisper.

"Huh!" the burglar grunted. "So's the United States treasury empty."

Jones chuckled.

Quickly they found the vault. The evidences of Gilbert Coyle's operations thereon still remained. Moore examined the jagged aperture which Coyle had left in the door, by cutting out a piece close to the locking device. He explored the whole with his fingers.

"An expert job," he commented. "Coyle knows his business."

"And we know ours, eh?" Jones rejoined.

"I hope so."

The vault had been locked again, but, of course, Slopey Moore had the same means of opening it that Gilbert Coyle had had, with the advantage, of having the preliminary work done. He had merely to employ a pair of pliers in pulling back the bolts which held the door fastened, and to open the ponderous door. That door was a relic of the days when heft was regarded as offering the most baffling obstacle to burglary. The lighter doors of modern vaults, equipped with various devices and made of harder stuff, cause the bank robber much more concern than such a heavily constructed portal.

Evidences of the previous burglary continued to be revealed in the light of the alcohol lamp employed by this pair. Inner doors had been broken open. The locks of various compartments had been put out of business. Yet one had been repaired—the lock of a strong compartment. This, it was understood, had been done soon after the burglary, when the stockholders of the bank still had hope of averting bankruptcy. The repair work had been stopped when that hope vanished. But it had gone far enough to provide one compartment which could be strongly locked.

It was not, however, secure enough to resist the expert efforts of Slopey Moore. It was a locking device equipped with a combination, stout, but much smaller than the device on the main door. Slopey, with the big door closed behind, used a hammer on the knob of the combination wheel—used it carefully, so as not to break off the knob before he had loosened the wheel. In time he got the wheel out of its socket, and was thereby enabled again to employ his pliers. He pulled back the bolts of this door and opened it.

And in that compartment, in three suit cases, they found the loot hidden away by Andrew Plattman.

In the ordinary course of events, a pair of burglars, getting their hands on the plunder, have nothing much to do, except to get it out and make their get-away. Get it out they did, but no thought of a quick get-away entered their minds. There was still considerable work to do in Landers. They took a look inside the suit cases and confirmed their faith in the information they had picked up.

It was a dazzling sight. Paper money, stacks of it—piles of it; considerable gold, in big and small coins; securities, with rich gilt edges. The burglar heaved a sigh.

"It's awful, ain't it?" he said mournfully.

The confidence man agreed with him. Awful, heartbreaking, that they could not —— But they drove such greedy thoughts from their heads.

"There's a twist to this job other than money," the confidence man reminded his associate, as he took from his pocket a note written on plain paper, signed with the name of Gilbert Coyle, and laid it on top of the money in one of the tan suit cases.

Five hundred thousand dollars—half a million! It was awful. Yet they went through with their task, as laid out for them by Oliver Tuft, removing only fifty thousand dollars from the suit cases.

Slopey Moore pocketed half and Quicksand Jones pocketed half. They felt better.

"Twenty-five apiece isn't so bad," the burglar said. "I've done harder jobs than this for much less."

"I, too."

They got the suit cases to the back door. Slopey remained there on guard, while Quicksand went a block or so away, got their speedy roadster, and drove it into the alley. They quickly piled the suit cases in the baggage deck of the car and drove off.

Around town they drove for some little time, to ascertain if their movements so far had fetched any one on their heels. Satisfied that all was well, they then drove to the vicinity of a railroad tool shed. The padlock of this was easily broken. Provided now with a sharp-bladed shovel and a pickax, they drove out of town to the vicinity of the lake, around which Andrew Plattman's latest enterprise was to take form.

On foot, exploring territory which they had previously been over, they presently found the spot where a little flag stuck out of the ground. There they smote the earth with pickax and shovel.

THE faces of Moore and Jones were among the crowd that gathered next day for the ceremonies in connection with the breaking of ground for the big enterprise which was to bring a boom to Landers. The mayor and city officials were there, and Andrew Plattman, too. Mr. Plattman was head of the Landers Development Company, and he was obviously very well satisfied with life and the prospects it held for him. Would not he be able in time to fetch out his hidden fortune, bit by bit, and add it to his visible wealth? He felt himself the possessor of half a million, as well as being on the way to vast riches in connection with his development program.

High hats gleamed in the spring sunlight. Frock coats were having an airing long denied them. Almost the entire citizenry of the town was there, innumerable stockholders, big and small, in the company behind the boom to be inaugurated this day.

The mayor clutched a spade handle in his white pudgy hand. He made a few appropriate remarks. In the name of the community he thanked Andrew Plattman for organizing a venture which had long been talked of in Landers.

"And the spadeful of earth which I shall presently turn," he said, "will mark the site of the summer hotel which will be a keystone to Landers' future development and prosperity. About this lake will spring into being a beautiful park. The rough ground we now stand upon will soon be trod by the thousands of visitors, who will be attracted to our community by the beauties we propose here to create. Nature has bountifully given us the lake, the hills and the wonderful trees all about us. It is our task to develop, to alter, to assist nature. Her beauties we shall retain, adding to them the comforts and the luxuries and the conveniences which will cause our community to blossom as a resort for wealth and fashion. I bespeak for the hotel, for which I now break ground, a long and prosperous career."

Some one plucked the little flag from the ground at the mayor's feet. He sunk the spade into the earth, giving the blade of it a vigorous push with one heel. A look of puzzled dismay came to his face, as the blade of the spade refused to proceed farther than three or four inches into the ground.

He pushed again. The spade seemed to have encountered a rubbery substance, which gave a little, but still offered an obstacle to getting out anything like a spadeful of dirt, unless it were merely scooped off the top of whatever object was concealed beneath. It was disconcerting.

The mayor had been bent on getting a big spadeful of earth, with which to make a grand flourish. Now it was evident that the soil had already been tampered with at that spot, and the suspicion that some practical joker, some enemy of Andred Plattman, had perhaps been busy, crossed the minds of the mayor and the dignitaries who stood near by. It would be embarrassing if the ceremonious excavations of the mayor should uncover a dead animal or something deplorable like that.

Andrew Plattman stepped forward. The mayor was prodding the earth with the spade.

"Some one's been digging here," the mayor whispered.

The diversion had lasted only a few moments. The mayor was about to shift the scene of his activities, a few feet, anyhow, to avoid the butt of a possible joke, when a gleam of tan-colored leather appeared in the earth disturbed by his spade. This caused him to rake away considerable dirt.

IT is likely that only two pairs of eyes observed the consternation which then registered on the face of Andrew Plattman. He divined that a suit case had been buried there. A suit case caused his mind to revert instantly to the three which he supposed to be safe and secure in the abandoned bank vault —the hiding place he had lately chosen, after moving the loot about from place to place. He had worried continually ever since he heard of Gilbert Coyle's escape from prison. And now he had a premonition that Gilbert Coyle had struck.

The eyes of the crowd were on the ground, at the point where the mayor and others were now busy. Quicksand Jones and Slopey Moore watched the renegade banker who had turned promoter.

Plattman recovered his composure and watched men take a suit case from the earth; then a second suit case, and a third. He knew now. He knew the suit cases. He was done for. Somehow his own culpability would be revealed, and, instead of receiving the thanks of the townspeople, so recently expressed by the mayor, he would be driven from the community, if not locked up and sent to prison.

But he kept a straight face; assisted, as a matter of fact, to get the last case out of the ground.

"Gentlemen," the mayor said, "there is a mystery here. Know anything about these suit cases, Andrew?"

"Nothing," Plattman replied.

The crowd was pressing about with curiosity.

"They might be bombs," some one suggested.

There was a general scattering. Even the mayor and group of dignitaries drew back a trifle. But the alarm soon vanished. It was decided to open the suit cases. The fact that there were three of them dispelled the idea of a bomb. One was opened. Money—bundles of it of it—was revealed, and on top of the money was a note, signed with the name of a bank robber who had stirred the community's imagination before.

The mayor read the note aloud:

"To the Citizens of Landers: I hereby take this way of restoring the money and securities I stole from the bank in your town. You know that I have escaped from prison. I went to the place where I had this money hid, and all I have taken of it is the fifty thousand dollars the stockholders offered as a reward to any one who would reveal where I hid the stuff. I don't think the depositors in the bank will begrudge me that, as that much, anyhow, was paid back to them out of assets that remained. The money and securities in these suit cases will pay back the depositors in full. I am glad to do this, as I intend to go straight from now on, and I think I am entitled to the reward as much as some one who found where I put the money. I hope some day to get a pardon. I heard about the summer-resort place you are going to build in Landers and about the cashier of the bank being behind that, so I thought it would be a nice surprise to him to put the money where it would be found in this way. I know that Mr. Plattman will have a big load taken off his heart by his ability now to pay back his depositors.

Gilbert Coyle.

Andrew Plattman did have a big load taken off his heart. He had listened to the reading of the note, expecting every next word to be an accusation, and when the thing was finished, he sighed with relief. He found his hands being wrung by the townspeople. His face was very white. A man who has just lost half a million isn't exactly himself for a few minutes.

He joined in the good words that were being said about Gilbert Coyle, but under his breath he cursed him.

Quicksand Jones and Slopey Moore departed from the town of Landers soon thereafter.

IT was the only way I could handle it," Oliver Tuft was saying to Archibald Snow, as they sat a few evenings later in the living room behind the Mulberry Street shop. "A great wrong had been done. Somehow, that wrong had to be righted, if I am to maintain my reputation of engaging in crime for benevolent purposes. If I had merely taken the money away from Andrew Plattman, I would have become a party to the bank robbery. By returning it to the depositors, I get it away from Plattman and

at the same time place Gilbert Coyle in a favorable light. I feel that the men who did the work out there are entitled to the reward, but, of course, the public cannot be apprised of the true facts."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—that's right."

"Plattman," the old gentleman went on, "never had a chance when Slopey Moore and Quicksand Jones got on his trail. He never made a move in that town that they didn't see. I think the trick of hiding the money in the abandoned bank was good—very good indeed. Whoever would think to look there—a wrecked vault—and with Andrew Plattman holding the keys to the building? But he did not know that a burglar and a confidence man were watching him.'

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—that's right."

"So far as I can see, every one should be satisfied. Coyle is out of prison. I understand that there is a movement on foot in Landers to get him a pardon; and, strange to say, the boy shows signs of going straight. I guess that stiff prison sentence hit him harder than anything ever did. The way in which the money was restored appealed to the imagination of the people of Landers. Coyle has many friends there. I hope he gets clear completely. I declare I do!"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tuft—that's right."

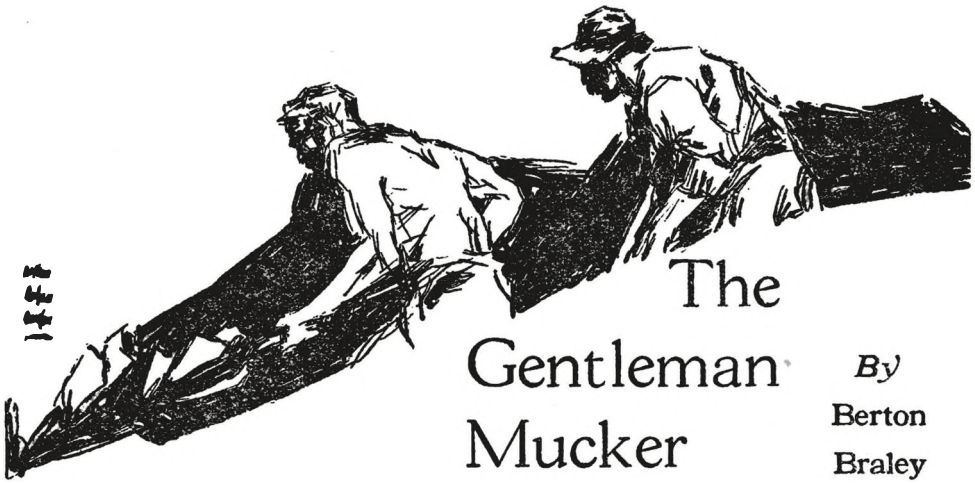
More entertaining stories by this familiar author, Roy Hinds, will appear in future issues of THE POPULAR.

WILL NEVADA PAY CAPTAIN PETE?

SUBTLEST of Piute Shamans, Captain Pete is a venerable medicine man among his people in Nevada. He is regarded by all his colleagues as the most powerful rain bringer in the State. Captain Pete, some months ago, when all Nevada was cracked and burned with drought, and men and animals looked up to the unpitying heavens for rain, decided to force the rain spirits to yield to their necessity. For three days and nights, Captain Pete prayed and danced, and used his Indian magic, and then the rain came.

We may not agree with Captain Pete that the rain came in answer to his incantations, but we do agree with him that the legislature of Nevada should give him some monetary recognition for his efforts. All his fellow Indians in the State are in favor of his claim for compensation. We may be skeptical about the cause, but there can be no skepticism about his "good intentions." More than one Western State has spent good money experimenting with "Caucasian" rain makers, in the name of science.

Science is well able to look after itself and its own experiments, but the lovely and poetical myths of the Indians will fade away in the clear light of latter-day knowledge. In the meantime, Nevada could make a handsome gesture by giving a dole to this old Indian medicine man who still cherishes a belief in rain spirits. Science can clean up the Augean stables of civilization, but only these lovely myths and belief in spirits can keep alive the divine fire of poetry. If paying Pete is tantamount to encouraging superstition, in the eyes of the educated, we can only hope we are on the side of the angels.



The Gentleman Mucker

By Berton Braley

(A "Gentleman Mucker" is a college engineer who works as a "mucker" or shoveler underground.)

WHEN I was a Gentleman Mucker
Down deep in the Neversweat Mine,
I did my first trick with the shovel and pick
And found it was hard on the spine.
Those workings were named by a liar;
I panted and puffed and I swore,
I steamed at my work in the heat and the murk
And I know that I Neversweat more!

I'd rowed on the crew for my college,
I'd played as a back on the team—
I thought I was fit but I had to admit
That mucking took power and steam.
It sure made an amateur tucker,
But though I'd have liked to resign,
I stuck as a Gentleman Mucker
Down deep in the Neversweat Mine,

I thought myself rather a hero
To labor down there, underground—
A fellow like me with a college degree—
But, after some looking around,
I met with a whole bunch of others
Who'd won a C. E. or B. A.,
Yet who worked on a shift in the stope and the drift
Where men have to sweat for their pay!

When I was a Gentleman Mucker
Down deep in the Neversweat Mine,
I learned the real stuff that's in men who are rough—
The comradeship loyal and fine;
I learned of their strength and their weakness
I shared in their sorrow and mirth—
That big-hearted, proud, stalwart polyglot crowd
That came from the ends of the earth.

I've finished my underground training,
I'm up in an office "on top,"
But I won't forget how a mucker can sweat
Till his clothes are as wet as a mop;
And if some one's wanted to devil
And short-change that underground mob,
I'm stating right here—and I'm making it clear—
That I'm not the man for the job.

Believe me, I'd crown any sucker
Who asked me to work on *that* line,
For *I've* been a Gentleman Mucker
Down deep in the Neversweat Mine!

Mr. Kelly's Corpus

By Robert McBlair

Author of "Revenge," "Red Moon," Etc.

Macedonia, "Fish" Kelly's wife, didn't 'preciate what a fine man she got. 'Cordin' to Lawyer Little, no woman 'preciate a man till he's daid; so it was up to Fish to go an' *be* daid, by hook or crook.

NAPOLEON died at St. Helena. Antony perished in Egypt. Mr. "Fish" Kelly met with Lawyer Little in front of Benny Hooton's barber shop, at No. 21 Queen Street, in colored Huntersville.

"Hey, Fish! What's matter? Better tuck in 'at mule lip of yourn befo' somebody step on it. Come set down."

Mr. Kelly's large black oxfords, with sliced air vents over strategic corns and bunions, shuffled to a stand on the uneven brick sidewalk. His lean figure, in a black and diladipated suit, wavered uncertainly, like an enormous ebony measuring worm, wearing a flopping black hat and having protruding teeth and two prominent white spots for eyes. He sank into the old wooden chair by the barber's pole and gradually emerged from a coma of pain to realize that Lawyer Little, seated opposite him, wore a look of curiosity on his bacon-colored face.

Fish Kelly drew a deep breath. After all, he and Lawyer had been friends always, whereas the troubles of matrimony had brewed for only the last few years. There was something of comfort in the familiar sight of Lawyer's battered and greasy opera hat, bottom up on the sidewalk. Lawyer's shaven head, pointed on top, rounded off into comfortable terraces of perspiring chin. The patched swallow-tailed coat, once black, but faded now to a dubious shade of green, strained at the horseshoe nail which held it across the bulging paunch.

"What's matter wid you?" Lawyer repeated irritably.

Fish Kelly's pointed Adam's apple jumped and fell above his baby-blue celluloid collar. Despite himself, a tear brimmed over, zigzagged down the ebony face, and stained the shrill-red tie.

"What's matter wid you?" cried Mr. Little for the third time.

"Macedonia," replied Fish, sniffing. " 'At wooman don't love me no mo'."

"Is dat all!" exclaimed Mr. Little.

" 'Is dat all?' Ain't dat enough? S'pose you was married three year an' come to find yo' brown-skin beauty cuttin' eyes at dat slick-haired Washington Jones. An' jes' when ever'thing was wrong—no clothes, no money, no nothin'. An' now——" Mr. Kelly's voice broke. "I wisht I *was* daid," he added with mournful earnestness. "If I had a gun I'd kill myse'f—if I had de nerve." He drew a tremulous sigh. "I wants to git away f'um all of dis—forever."

The ensuing silence was so prolonged that Mr. Kelly, remembering who was sitting opposite him, grew uneasy. He looked up to find Lawyer Little regarding him intently.

"Is you insured?" inquired Mr. Little pleasantly.

"Wid de African Livin' an' Daid Society——" Mr. Kelly informed him. And then he stopped. "What dat got to do wid it?" he demanded.

"Nothin'," replied Mr. Little. "Nothin' a-tall."

"You ain't studyin' 'bout killin' me for 'at money, is you?" Fish tried to make it a jest, but his eyes protruded.

"I warn't thinkin' 'bout killin' you," answered Mr. Little blandly. "I was thinkin' 'bout how nice 'twould be if you an' me had dat money." He rubbed a fat, bacon-colored hand across his oily brow and essayed a wide, nonchalant yawn.

"I ain't never heerd of nobody gittin' no insurance money," asserted Fish Kelly, rising, "widout somebody die. Naw suh—dey's got to be a corpus delicktee."

Lawyer raised his eyebrows and looked at Fish steadily.

"I done already got de corpus delicktee," he said. There was a silence during which they stared at each other. "Set down," directed Lawyer. "Dat's right. Now you listen. You know you is my frien', and a frien' of mine is a frien' of mine. You wants to git away, an' I don't blame you. Ain't but two things to do. One is, kill de other man; but you ain't no killin' kind. De other thing is to kill yo'se'f. Wait a minute, now. Set still twell I gits th'ough."

AS an aid to the power of his eloquence, Little took out and put on a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles. Mr. Fish Kelly, realizing his thralldom to the schemer's spellbinding, trembled, as Lawyer gripped his knee.

"Fish Kelly," murmured Lawyer, fixing Fish with a bespectacled glare, "you is my frien'. It hurts me to see you victimized by dat wife you got. She ain't nothin' but a fool woman." Fish frowned, and Lawyer changed his course in mid-air. "What I mean," he explained, "is dat she really love you, but she don't know it, 'cause she don't 'preciate what a fine man she got. Yas, suh," Lawyer continued, fired by the obvious pleasure of his audience, "she projeckin' round an' riskin' losin' de bes' man in Huntersville. Can't nobody tell 'em nothin'. Dat's de way a wooman is—she got to find out a thing for herse'f. Now, what I'm talkin' 'bout is dis." Lawyer grasped Fish by the arms, shook him gently back and forward, as he talked, so that Mr. Kelly's churning brain received an impression of two silver-rimmed tubes, out of which proceeded a voice in the accent of truth and of angels. "Ain't no woman 'preciate a man twell he's daid, nohow. Look at dese here widows! Can't talk 'bout nothin' 'cep'n' what good husban's dey had, an' when he was alive dey spent dere time bustin' him open. Dis here high-brown Macedonia of yourn, she don't think you is nothin', now. But listen!" Lawyer twisted his fat neck to make sure they were not overheard. "S'pose somebody come an' told her de man she been treatin' so bad is burned up in a shack on Church Street? S'pose dey tells her dat his good frien', Lawyer Little, is done scoop up de bones an' bringin' 'em home? Does she feel bad, den? Is she sorry, den, she been projeckin' round?"

Fish Kelly pictured the errant Macedonia, three years wife of his bosom, weeping over the charred bones of her faithful and mistreated husband. He swallowed and blinked.

"How she gwine to feel when yo' old

frien', Lawyer Little, what she always callin' out of his name—how she gwine feel when Lawyer Little git to managin' de funeral? Yas, Lawd! How she gwine feel when de Odd Fellows lines up behind de hearse, wid a ten-piece band? How she gwine feel when de Livin' and Daid Society turn out han' an' foot, to walk in de street an' honor de man she done so wrong? Yas, L-a-awd! How she gwine feel when de Pythians gallops in de procession, wid de sashes round dere bosoms an' dere high hats on? How she gwine feel when Preacher Jackson raise his hand over de bones of her lovin' husban', an' say: 'Ashes to ashes, an' dus' to dus'?' "

Mr. Little's eloquence was interrupted by a sob from his audience. Fish disengaged his arms and rubbed his eyes.

"You is right, Mr. Little," he agreed huskily. "An' after de funeral, I gwine walk up to her, an' I gwine say to Macedonia——"

"You gwine do *what?*" demanded Lawyer. "You ain't gwine do *nothin'*. Befo' de funeral, I gwine put you on a train."

"You mean to say you ain't gwine to let me see my own funeral?"

"Dat's you!" said Lawyer Little bitterly. "Wants to git me jailed! Go on 'way from here. You ain't de only corpus in Huntersville. I been studyin' dis thing ever since I found dem bones on de river bank. Fact is, I been talkin' it over wid Mrs. John Henry. John Henry, he ain't been seen hide or hair of, an' Mrs. Henry, she got insurance on him, too. Trouble is, she ain't willin' to believe he's daid; de las' time I talk wid her, she run me off wid a knife. But dat woman like her dope an' gin, an' time she think it over she'll be askin' folks whar I is at. Go 'way an' leave me be."

Mr. Little picked up the opera hat, tilted it over his nose, and clasped his hands upon his stomach. Mr. Fish Kelly, about to rise and walk, spied on the opposite sidewalk the swaggering glory of a maroon suit, white spats, green fedora, and twirling yellow cane. Mr. Washington Jones gracefully crossed the street and knocked on the door of No. 11, which was opened at once by Macedonia. Mr. Jones disappeared within the Kelly hallway.

"Mist' Little," asked Mr. Kelly, "couldn't I never come back?"

"Sho you could!" Mr. Little pushed back his hat. "You jes' got to be 'way long 'nuff for we-all to git dat money. It ain't yo' fault, does de 'surance folks pay for some burned-up bones. If you was to git any of de money *yo'se'f*," added Lawyer, "dey might jump on you; but I ain't gwine let you git in no trouble. Naw, suh! A frien' of mine is a frien' of mine."

"When you want me to leave town, Mr. Little?"

"De sooner de better. Dis evenin'. You come by here for me in an hour or two, an' I puts you on de train."

"How you gwine manage dis thing, Mr. Little?"

"I gwine go up an' down Church Street, telling folks I seen you drunk in a shack. Doctor Greenbeck, he owe me money for licker he done sell on prescription, an' de coroner take his word 'bout de deaths in dis section. De newspapers gwine come out with a big headline how Fish Kelly done got burned up. De nex' night, we gwine have de funeral. Some funeral, boy! When I buries my frien's, I buries 'em so dey stays buried."

"I got be gittin' home," said Mr. Kelly, rising.

THERE was certainly an unpleasant implication in Mr. Little's last remark, but the fever of jealousy would have driven Fish through fire, if on the other side he could touch Macedonia's heart.

"I'll be back, Mr. Little, like you say."

Fish shuffled morosely down the street.

He was nearing No. 11, when the door opened to emit the rainbow glory of Mr. Jones, who was thrusting two ten-dollar bills into a wallet. Pausing on the sagging doorstep, he doffed the green fedora in a bow which brought his sleek black hair and high-yellow face almost level with his knees. From the hall floated Macedonia's flattered voice.

"Don't forgit, now! To-morrow night, or I'll sho' be mad!"

The door closed; Mr. Jones twirled his

yellow cane down the street. Fish Kelly's shoulders and body felt too heavy for his trembling legs to support. This was Mr. Jones' third call within a week; tomorrow night would make the fourth. And Macedonia, when he had asked her this morning about the gentleman, had snapped that it was none of his business. As Lawyer Little had remarked, Fish was not of the killing kind. It had always seemed to him a miracle that Macedonia, light "complected" and learned of books, should ever have become his wife and the mother of his child. He had loved her in their marriage, with the unquestioning adoration that a weed might give to the sun which brought it life. To have her turn away from him merely left him in the dark.

He felt that he couldn't go in and face her. But a force he could not resist drew his shuffling steps into the doorway of No. 11, along the narrow hall, and into their parlor-bedroom, where he received another blow. Macedonia's prim figure, in the old, but neat, brown dress, sagged across the arm of the red-plush chair. Her high forehead rested against the sharp edge of the window sill, and she was shaking with tight, gasping sobs.

Fish Kelly slammed the door and stood there, swallowing.

Macedonia started, quickly stopped crying, and dried her eyes. She smiled at him, and this hurt Fish most of all. She chose to hide her struggle from him; she had never hidden things from him before.

"Fish"—she bent her high-coiled, glossy head over her purse—"here's a dollar. You better go up to Mr. Greenberg's an' git somethin' for supper."

The money reminded Fish of Mr. Jones and the wallet. He shuffled out to the kitchen, turned on the water over the sink, and, while it was running, he looked into the tin gingersnap can on the second shelf of the cupboard. The two ten-dollar bills, the sum of their fortune, had passed from the gingersnap can to Mr. Jones. As he shuffled back through the parlor, Macedonia rose, put her arms around him tight, leaned back her comely oval face and looked deep into his eyes through reddened lids. For a week or more she had been strange with him; this was stranger than ever. It was almost as if she was telling him farewell. He couldn't bear it, and he tore free from her and found his way blindly down the hall.

"Good evenin', Mr. Kelly!"

It was the beaming Doctor Coddy, about to enter the Kelly portal and bearing a slip of paper in his hand. Fish remembered that Macedonia had complained of a pain in her chest, but it could be nothing serious, with Doctor Coddy so cheerful. He mumbled a return of the greeting and shuffled off to Mr. Greenberg's delicatessen, where he purchased some eggs and bacon and handed them over to a boy to deliver to Macedonia, with the change.

AFTER this he turned aimlessly into Monticello Avenue. The wooden clapboard houses with sagging porches, a gray-haired lady smoking a pipe on her doorstep, a mangy dog, an ancient goat—these things, familiar since childhood, now looked strange and hurt him by reminding him of Macedonia's strangeness. It was through a blur of tears that the homely setting of Huntersville floated by him. He hardly knew how the time had passed when he shuffled down Queen Street to find Lawyer Little seated again before Benny Hooton's barber shop. But, in the meantime, he had decided that, if he never saw Macedonia again, he would leave her in funds, at any rate.

"Mist' Little," he murmured, dropping on a chair, "dat 'surance is made out to Macedonia. I wants her to git it. An' I—I ain't never gwine come back."

"You ain't never gwine go *'way,* if you talks like dat!" retorted Lawyer. "Who doin' all de plottin' an' a-plannin'? Who runnin' all de risks? Who gwine put up de cash for de funeral? Me!—dat's who! I ain't got but 'bout a hundred dollars, an' I's preparin' to spen' most all of dat on you. Yas, suh. Folks gwine talk 'bout Fish Kelly's funeral after they done forgot eve'thing else. I needs dat money, too, to pay my fine when dat bootleggin' case come up nex' Chewsday. Dat's de reason we got to work quick. Here, you sign dis paper. Here a 'delible pencil—spit on it."

"Is dis gwine give Macedonia——"

"Sign on dat line befo' I pick up dis chair an' bus' you open. Sho' it gwine give Macedonia—— I got dat Washington Jones write it for me, cep'n I didn't tell him no names. He know 'surance, dat's his business, if he *do* look like a Chinee."

"You gwine take care of Macedonia, ain't you, Mist——"

"Sho I is! Ain't you my frien'? And, boy!"—Lawyer, suddenly cheerful, smote Fish a massive blow between the shoulder blades—"boy, dat funeral's gwine be a funeral!"

"Don't you reckon 'twould be all right for me to wait and——"

"Naw, I don't," retorted the fat gentleman, plopping his hat on at a debonair angle, rising and lifting Fish by the arm. "I reckon you better take yo' foot in yo' han' and come right on now to de station for Charlotte, North Carolina." He led Fish around the corner and hustled him down Church Street. "Come on right th'ough de station. Don't need to have no ticket. Dar de train, all set to start."

The tall, lean, lugubrious black man and the cheerful bacon-colored gentleman, boarded the nearer of two day-coach trains.

"Here a dollar for yo' ticket," said Lawyer, as he deposited Fish in a cindery red-plush seat. "I got to go an' git busy."

"Dollar!" exclaimed Fish, blinking his prominent eyes. "I can't live in no Charlotte on no dollar. Fifty dollars, Mr. Little."

"Dat's you—makin' trouble! Here! Take dis twenty dollars an' hesh dat mouf. I got to drap off."

From the platform had come the hail of "All aboard!" Fish looked out of the window in time to see Lawyer waddle off through the station, the greenish coat tails flapping above the run-down heels. Departing this life forever, and not even a wave of farewell from his oldest friend, Fish, who had wept more the past week than he had wept all of his life before, felt his throat again begin to ache. There came the clanging of a bell and the *choo-choo* of a locomotive. The sounds gradually diminished, but his car didn't move. He peered across the concrete platform and was surprised to see that the other train had disappeared.

"Hey, colored boy," said Fish to a man with a duster, who was dabbing at the seats, "when dis here train go to Charlotte?"

"Dis train ain't *never* gwine to Charlotte. Charlotte train jes' done lef'."

KELLY experienced a strange feeling of relief. His eyes rolled warily about him, as he dropped off the coach, passed through the station, and shuffled hastily over to Main Street. This was the white-folk business section; the heavier trucks and drays were not permitted to drive along it, and the chance of his being seen by a Huntersville resident was fairly remote, particularly as most of the shops had closed. He secluded himself within the graystone portals of the Marine Bank until dusk had grown to darkness. Then, driven by the pangs of hunger, he slunk inconspicuously up to the corner and purchased two plums and six bananas at the Greek fruit stand, which was just closing.

Church Street, lit at an occasional corner by the blue sputter of an arc light, wound off with a dim glimmer of trolley-car rails toward Huntersville. Fish, moodily munching, thought he saw a glow of red against the distant sky, but his attention was diverted by a sign in a clothing-store window across the street: "Young Man's Society Model Suits, $13.50."

He went over, just as an eagle-faced gentleman emerged from the store, with the swiftness of a spider from a web. Five minutes later Fish was admiring the fit of a coat across his stomach, while the gentleman held a handful of the coat twisted at the small of the back. Next Mr. Kelly was the purchaser of a hat, to go with his suit; and finally a pair of shoes were found which were large enough, after Mr. Kelly had bought a ten-cent can of foot powder. Mr. Kelly's twenty dollars had dwindled to a dollar and a half. The gentleman was suggesting something "nobby" in neckties, when a clanging fire engine dashed by toward Huntersville. The customer rushed to the door, observed an unmistakable flare

of red in the west, and fled toward the east, leaving his old clothes in the shop.

Fish didn't stop until he was again ensconced in the dark niche of the Marine Bank doorway. It had shaken him to realize that at one end of Church Street he was burning up in a deserted shack, while at the other he was the proud possessor of a new suit of clothes. He certainly must not be seen. He bethought him of a row of old shacks on the other side of Huntersville, out of town, yet near enough to the truck farms to make sustenance available. After allowing a couple of hours to elapse, he emerged into the sultry summer night and shuffled westward along Monticello Avenue. When he crossed Queen Street, he couldn't forbear turning aside to pass through the block that so recently had been his home.

The dwellings were dark and silent. Mr. Kelly's heart beat heavily at the thought that Macedonia was inside No. 11, and that he was walking past, unknown. Then a prickly chill ran over him. At the side of the door, just above the level of the knob, was pinned a black crape now, with long, black streamers. Fish Kelly was dead.

After a moment of stupefaction, Fish ran uncertainly across the street to the lot behind Isham Waters' woodyard, skinned a fence, and followed a devious course of lanes and alleys, to emerge again on Monticello Avenue, several blocks away. He began to become depressed by the enormity of what had happened. As he hurried toward the suburbs, he shook some of the foot powder into his long, black palm and smeared it over his face; then he tied a handkerchief under his chin, with a knot at the top of his head, turned up his coat collar, and pulled down his hat. But he passed no one, and, with a sense of relief, came at last upon the old shack at which, in times of bachelor poverty, he had slept before. The door yielded. He had no matches, but his feet discovered a mattress in the corner. He dropped down upon it. There was an aroma of occupancy about the place—a blended aroma of pipe smoke and gin; and snuff and sardines. But it was long after midnight, and no one was there, so Fish lay his potato-shaped skull upon his arm and fell into a fitful slumber.

He dreamed that he heard the shack door open; that some one struck a match and lit a candle. He dreamed that he turned to see, and discerned, in a bright-red dress, which did not conceal the powerful sinews of her arms, the raw-boned figure of Mrs. John Henry, who set the candle upon a wall scantling, and, observing her boudoir occupied, extracted, after a moment of fumbling, a curved and gleaming peeling knife from the intricacies of her corseted bosom. Fish sat up and rubbed his eyes and found that the dream wasn't a dream at all.

THERE was Mrs. John Henry, swaying upon her bare heels, slightly wall-eyed, her flaccid, yellowish-brown face twitching from the dissipation into which she had plunged, after her first and only husband, on their bridal evening, had disappeared across Duke Street bridge, chased by a bad man with a gun; a Mrs. John Henry unquestionably under the influence, and apparently bent on homicide.

"Wait, Mis' Henry! 'Tain't nobody but Fish Kelly!"

Mrs. John Henry brushed the peeling knife across her eyes, as Fish Kelly scrambled to his feet. She staggered sideways and leaned a muscular hand upon the splintery wall. Her bloodshot eyes were suddenly queer and cunning in the candlelight; her huge flickering shadow was like another presence in the gloom.

"Back to ha'nt me, is you?" she murmured in a low, vibrant voice. Her green teeth shone, as she raised the knife.

"Wait, Mis' Henry," Fish quavered. "I ain't no ha'nt. Dat warn't me what burned. Don't you 'member dem bones Lawyer found by de river? He jes' after de 'surance, Miss Henry."

"You tryin' tell me my John Henry daid?" Her scream split the silence. The candle toppled from the scantling. Fish leaped aside in the dark and jumped for the door, as her rush impacted against the further wall. His lunge knocked the door shut. With a squawk, he tore it open and dashed through the weeds to

the road. It was some time later that he threw himself, breathless, beneath a copse of young magnolias.

"'At woman crazy," he concluded, panting.

He slept. Later he woke to find the sun glaring straight down at him through the spear-shaped leaves. From a near-by field he filched some carrots and radishes, and the heart of a cabbage, which kept away hunger till the gold of noon had rusted into a purple dusk, and the lights began to pop out, far down the road. Pretty soon, after the women had come home from cooking for the white folks, the funeral procession would be starting from No. 11 Queen Street. Even while Fish Kelly fought against the lure, he was dusting the foot powder lightly on his face and adjusting the handkerchief over his chin and ears. In his new clothes, and with the hat pulled over his prominent eyes, he did not think he would be observed. The people would be looking at the procession. He turned up his coat collar and shuffled homeward through the white dust of the oyster-shell road.

As he neared the paved streets and the corner lamps, Fish began to grow nervous; he heard the music of a band; and his course was decided by a glimpse, two blocks away, of a bright-red dress. He cut into an alley and, by climbing fences and darting across intervening streets, made his way through lanes and back yards to the yard of Isham Waters' wood shop. Kneeling in the tall grass behind the whitewashed wooden fence, he peered through the aperture left by a missing board.

On the sunken sidewalk in front of him, a drain from the ice house had made a deep puddle, but each side of it was crowded, as far as he could see in either direction, by colored men and women and children. At the opposite curb of the cobbled street, the glass sides of a hearse and the black of its carved wooden draperies, stood out cold and solemn in the spluttering beams of an arc light hissing somewhere to the left. Behind it a horse-drawn, rubber-tired hack fronted the plumed head of another horse. Far down the cobbles, the scuffle of feet, the clearing of throats, the murmur of voices rose on the warm night air. A big black man, the sash of a Pythian across his breast, clattered by on a piebald horse, reined in suddenly, and removed his high silk hat. There was a rustle of motion, as the men on the sidewalk took their hats off, too.

THE hearse shut off the door of No. 11, but into the line of Fish's vision bobbed the end of a flower-covered black box. It turned slowly. Ted Harpy, one time rival for Macedonia's favor, carried the near rear end; in front of him showed the sleek black hair and yellowish face of Mr. Washington Jones. Ahead of them, carrying the front near end of the coffin, waddled Lawyer Little. Mr. Harpy and Mr. Jones, although serious, were composed. Not so Lawyer. In his free hand he carried a handkerchief. At every third step his bullet-shaped head would shake violently, as if from an irresistible paroxysm of grief; he would bury his greasy face in the handkerchief and give way to sobs.

Fish Kelly had been watching in a sort of paralysis of horror and curiosity, but Lawyer's emotion aroused his own grief. He remembered all the kind things he had done, all the injuries he had suffered. Here was being buried a man who had to die before his neighbors could appreciate him. And now they were sorry. The members of the African Living and Dead Society were there with their band. The Pythians had come forth to honor Fish Kelly dead, whereas alive they had thrown him out for non-payment of dues. The men who had been his enemies had come to carry his coffin; right now they were sliding it into the hearse.

Through a blur, Fish saw Lawyer Little hurry back to the house. He returned, wearing his opera hat and leading by the arm a bent, slender woman swathed in veils of deepest mourning. It wasn't until she climbed into the first hack, and Lawyer got in beside her, that a familiar movement told him this was Macedonia. It was too much. The pent wells of Fish's grief burst forth into a painful weeping, so that he sensed rather than saw the slow beginning of the procession, timed from down the street by the cheerless strains of a funeral march.

As his sobs diminished, it came to Mr. Kelly that the funeral procession was moving in the opposite direction from the church, in order, of course, to make a wide circle, so as not to waste the spectacle of the plumed hats of the society members and the sashes and regalia of the Pythians. Fish knew that he should not go to the church, but his intimate relationship with the obsequies drew him like an enormous magnet. In a daze of sorrow and haste, he debouched upon the street and in the semidarkness shuffled rapidly past the backs of the watchers and toward the Last Baptist Church. The disguising handkerchief had slipped unheeded about his neck. The pallid mask of foot powder had thinned and spotted from perspiration; his eyelids were red, his upper lip swollen. Two black lines, from tears, ran from his bloodshot, prominent eyes to his sagging mouth corners. In his new black hat and suit Fish resembled the returned ghost of some thin and sorrowing circus clown.

The pine doors of the stucco church were open. Fish shuffled up the steps and advanced into the vestibule. Although the edifice was empty, there was no place in the stiff wooden pews for a man to hide. He remembered having hidden behind the open front door when a boy, and looking into the church through the crack. He was returning toward the door when he saw the sexton and Preacher Jackson just starting up the steps. He was caught. He turned and ran along the aisle between the pews and the wall; when he heard footsteps strike the wooden floor of the vestibule, he dropped behind a pew.

"Dey'll be gittin' here in a minute," he heard Preacher Jackson quaver. "You better put dem leaflets round now."

The old man went off to the small room at the side of the choir stall, followed by the sexton. Fish had lifted himself to flee, when he heard other footsteps start up the stone stairs from the street. The congregation! He would have to get out of those pews. A double row of palms and rubber plants stood in tubs by the chancel wall, opposite the choir. With a frantic dive Mr. Kelly pierced a way through the branches and subsided on the floor against the wall, perspiring profusely.

HE was afraid to raise his head above the level of the tubs and look, as the rear of the church gradually filled with the rustle and scuffle of the congregation. He quivered, as Preacher Jackson and the sexton moved two wooden objects right up against the plants. Presently the mournful strains of the band drifted in from the street. Next thudded the heavy tread of six men in step beneath the weight of some burden. They came right up to Fish Kelly's hiding place. He heard their little grunts, as they heaved the coffin down and dropped it on the two supports. The odor of lilies and roses began to drift upon him. A dried leaf fluttered between two tubs and rustled to the floor by his ear. For a terror-stricken instant he fancied it was a hand reaching out for the back of his neck. But the pallbearers departed, and, after a moment, the quavery voice of Fish's old friend, Preacher Jackson, ascended against the shuffle of late mourners finding their seats.

"Brethren an' Sisteren! We done come together to honor de las' remains of a frien' an' a neighbor. We gwine read over him de service of de Lord to he'p speed him on de long way home."

There was something affecting in the old man's simplicity. Murmurs of approval hummed in the congregation. Sounds of "Yas, Lawd!" "De long way home!" "Praise be to Glory!" An electric feeling ran over the people, causing an almost imperceptible swaying in unison to drift as a rustle to Fish's ears.

"Befo' we reads," the old man went on, "I wants to hear some good things about our frien' what has gone to prepare a way for us. I knowed his ma an' pa. He war christened by me in de old First Baptis' church. I preached de funeral of his parents. I said over him an' his mournin' wife, right dar, de sakkament of de marriage ceremony. I christened his child. An' now I got to say to you dat dis man Fish Kelly warn't a bad man. He had a kind heart. He never looked for no trouble. He war a faithful an' lovin' husban', a careful fa-

ther. I say to you dat he will sit wid de righteous. What does you say?"

The old man stopped. The breathing of the congregation, rising and falling in time, was like a pulse in the stillness. A whimper, uncontrollable, in Macedonia's familiar voice, uncoiled like the lash of a whip. There were moans and groans from the assembly. Fish writhed to his knees in agony. Through an aperture in the leaves he saw a man standing up. Slick hair—yellow skin. It was Washington Jones.

"Mr. Preacher," he said in his gracious manner, "befo' we hears from dem as knows him bes', I would like to say my word. De bes' way to jedge a man is by what those think of him who loves him bes'. An' while we is praisin' de daid, it won't do no harm to say good of de livin'. I wants to say a word 'bout Mr. Kelly's widder."

Mr. Washington Jones paused. The church grew still. Fish found Macedonia's slender, black-clad form, shrunken and motionless, in the front pew. Beside her loomed the bulk of Lawyer Little who, with a fat hand on his knee, as if ready to rise, was looking over his shoulder at the speaker impatiently.

"I ain't betrayin' no confidence," the cultivated voice continued, "when I say dat las' week Fish Kelly's widder thought she was goin' die from a germ. I thanks God dat, yestiddy evenin', Doctor Coddy told her she was mistaken. But what I wants to say is, when she figgered she was near death, she thought mos' of her husban'. She come to me to git out life insurance in his name. She took her las' dollar an' give it to me to buy insurance in favor of Fish Kelly, if she die. Dat shows de kind of woman what love Fish Kelly. An' dat shows Fish Kelly."

Mr. Jones sat down. Fish Kelly felt something breaking up within him. This was the Macedonia he had misjudged. She had straightened in her pew, and, with hands clenched, was staring upward, as if her soft-brown eyes were seeing beyond the beams of the ceiling. There was a movement beside her. Lawyer Little, the spectacles silvering the bridge of his shiny nose, one hand under the frayed greenish coat tails, raised the battered and greasy opera hat high for attention.

"Brethren an' Sisteren," he shouted, "you done hear what Mr. Jones say. An' he is right. Fish Kelly was dat kind of man. I knows, 'cause I done pay for his funeral. I done pay my las' cent, 'cause he was my frien'. Dey is folks in dis audience what has scandalize my name. Dat's 'cause dey don't know me. But Fish Kelly could tell 'em. He could tell 'em dat a frien' of mine is a frien' of mine." The wily Mr. Little was embracing this heaven-sent opportunity to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of his fellow man. A born orator, with a gift for the dramatic, he whirled from the congregation and extended his hands toward the flower-infolded coffin.

"Oh, my frien'! Oh, Fish Kelly!" His voice, mellow and pleading, with a tremolo of pathos, echoed from the rafters. The unexpected appeal had a strong effect upon the audience. There were uneasy shufflings, moans, groans and sighs, more of trepidation than approval. "If you could only speak for me an' you," Mr. Little continued. "Come back, I asts you, to them as loves you. Come back to yo' faithful frien'. Come back to yo' weepin' widder. Come back to de folks what has misbejudged me an' you so bad!"

AS Lawyer ended, the rubber-plant branches behind the coffin parted. The bulging eyes and smeared pallor of Mr. Fish Kelly's own familiar countenance looked through.

Fish had never been able to resist Mr. Little's eloquence. In his present shaken condition it was more than he could bear. The petty deception of a funeral that wasn't a funeral, melted from his mind in a wave of love for his wife, for Lawyer, and for his fellow man. With the tears streaming down his ebony face, he stepped out, tripped over a tub and plunged scramblingly forward. The congregation, taking this as a direct assault upon them from the grave, rose as one man, and made for the outside air.

They stood not upon the order of their going. Pythians battled with society members for the right of prior egress.

Gentlemen, forgetful of chivalry, climbed over or under the weaker sex; while the ladies kept up with the current as best they might by clinging to fleeing necks and legs. Sashes, plumed hats and other regalia seemed to have lost their importance. The air was full of cries of: "Leggo me, fo' I kill you!"

Even Lawyer Little had blanched and fallen back. But over his fleshy countenance grew next a glow of rage, presently accentuated, as his eye took in Mr. Kelly's brand-new clothes. He was lifting a clenched fist against his friend, when from behind him rose a piercing scream.

It was Mrs. John Henry, in the remnants of a bright-red dress. She was stepping toward Mr. Little over a sea of Pythian tall hats and sashes, plumed triangular hats of the society, and hats of a more common description. And in her muscular hand gleamed a peeling knife.

"Whar my John Henry?" she shrieked menacingly. "Whar my John Henry?"

It was an unreasonable question to ask of Mr. Little at that moment, but Mr. Little didn't stop to remonstrate with her. He leaped lightly toward the chancel, caught an end of the coffin, and slung it in her way. Mrs. John Henry tripped over it, but arose promptly on the other side, garlanded with flowers, but barring the way to escape, and no less murderous.

On either side of Lawyer was a plaster wall, and behind him the solid expanse of a stained-glass window, picturing John the Baptist. For the fraction of a second, Lawyer looked at the crazed Mrs. Henry and hesitated. On the lifted peeling knife was impaled a lily; perhaps the symbolism was not lost on Mr. Little's mind. At any rate, there seemed to be but one course to take, and he took it. As Mrs. John Henry sprang toward him, he turned and dived through the stained glass window, carrying John the Baptist with him.

Mrs. John Henry followed. Behind the church was a white-washed paling fence, about five feet high. Lawyer cleared it, with the ease and grace of a gazelle. Beyond that loomed a high-board fence, and Mrs. John Henry gained upon him. There was something, however, in the concentration and eagerness with which Lawyer scaled that fence.

"She ain't gwine ketch him," said Fish, turning back to the church. He was astonished to find it empty, save for Macedonia, who was coming toward him, holding out her arms.

Things had happened too fast for Mr. Kelly. The events of the immediate past were something of a blur. But here in Macedonia's eyes was something unmistakable and real.

"Baby!" he cried. "An' I thought you was projeckin'!"

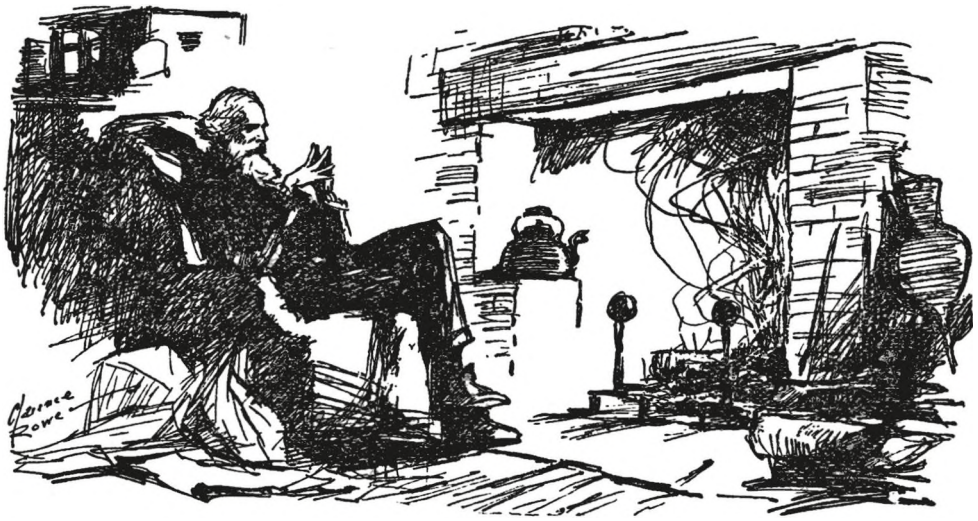
Macedonia flung herself into his arms. Fish still felt shaky within; but the funeral had been a glory neither moths nor rust could corrupt, nor thieves break in and steal; and here was his own Macedonia, her arms tight around him.

"My Fish ain't daid! My Fish ain't daid!" she was sobbing against his coat.

"He done riz again," Fish agreed comfortingly. "But if dat Lawyer Little let his foot slip, dey sho gwine have to open dis church for another corpus delicktee."

ARIZONA'S "BIG SNOW"

UNUSUAL and startling phenomena in nature have always been used by simple peasants to reckon time. Everybody has heard about the "Big Wind" in Ireland, and that Johnny's grandfather at that time was eight years old. The people of southern Arizona are likely to remember the "Big Snow" of December 26, 1926, as an event from which to reckon the time of future occurrences. The Big Snow will make a date in history, for southern Arizona seldom drops her sunbonnet and drapes herself in a white blanket. When this sedate lady cuts up capers, people sit up and take notice. About once in a generation, southern Arizona departs from the even tenor of her ways, which are sunshine and sand, and invites the elements to sport with her.



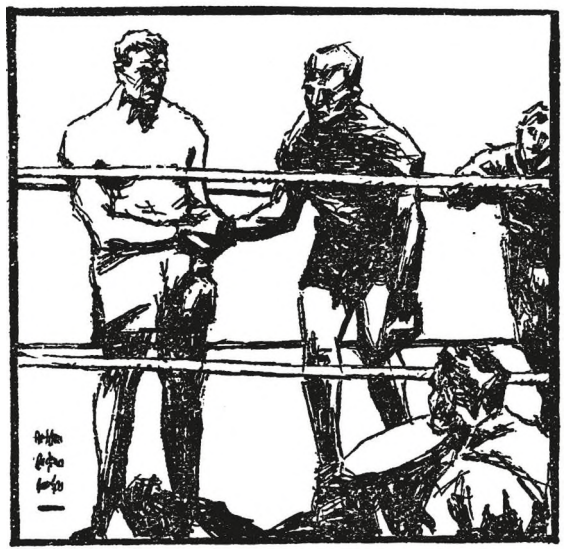
Cricket Lore

By Calvin Johnston

I LIVED in a wood alone,
And I had a hearth
Where a cricket lived under the stone
And he sang, when the winds did groan,
With a singular mirth—
A ballad of Mother Earth.

He'd once been a wayfaring fellow
'Mid grass, root and leaf,
Who drew plaintive notes from his cello—
A minstrel of grief;
But now, in his old age and mellow,
He'd a rosy, a cozy belief:

That one was not happy until
He dwelt under the stone;
And the cabin's last echo would shrill
With a mirth all his own—
When tempest was heard on the hill
And I dwelt there alone.



The Jawbone of an Ass

By John D. Swain

Author of "The Coming of the Campbells," Etc.

The learned and dignified Professor Higgins knew nothing about the gentle art of sock and block. On the other hand, "Chick" Hopper was ignorant of the professor's field—the art of hypnotism. Like Jack Spratt and Mrs. Spratt, however, the two worthies collaborated.

IN the numerous intervals between his short-time vaudeville engagements, Professor Euclid Higgins, the hypnotist, occupied a modest office-kitchenette on Columbus Avenue, where he treated patients for insomnia, inferiority complexes, bad investments, or anything they chose to think they had.

The professor was a man of imposing presence and a beard of noble proportions. He had light-blue, protuberant eyes, in one of which was a pronounced cast; and with those whom he could control, he was surprisingly successful. Of course, he could not operate on everybody. The brainless minority were safe from his mesmeric eye. As he was wont to express it: "One must have something to hypnotize, or you can't work on him!"

On a certain winter morning his waiting room contained a single visitor. Viewing him through a rent in the portières, according to his custom, Professor Higgins was puzzled to place the stranger. He was an undersized fellow, clad in noisy tweeds, very mahogany brogues, and a red-and-blue striped shirt, with collar to match, and the emblems of two fraternal orders glittered on his lapel. At the time, he was smoking cigarettes by the chain method, depositing the stubs in a bowl, wherein two anæmic goldfish writhed sluggishly.

Having gathered what little he could as to the habits, profession, ailments and financial rating of his prospect—which was just nothing at all—the professor threw aside the portières aud entered briskly, rubbing his hands and conveying so far as possible the attitude of a physician to whom time is money.

"Good morning—good morning! You wish to see me professionally?"

The man in the baggy tweeds looked up languidly.

"Yeah, if you're the same guy I seen on Doron's Circuit a coupla times, makin' bums think they was throwin' a house party on their private yachts, and kiddin' goofy girls into believin' they could sing like nightingales," he drawled. "You was in some kinda uniform on the stage—a big red-and-gold turban and a swell bath robe."

Professor Euclid Higgins scowled slightly.

"From time to time, strictly for educational purposes, I do present public illustrations of the singular power I am gifted with. And I have booked with Doran's, as well as appearing in all the principal institutes, halls and opera houses of this country, Europe, South America and Asia——"

His caller waved a languid hand.

"Sure! I know. I come to see you about some dope."

Professor Higgins' brows arched far up into his bald forehead. His nerves were none too good; the police were always bothering him and accusing him of something his scholarly instincts would never have sanctioned.

"'Dope?'" he repeated. "I hope, my young friend, that you have not been misinformed as to my character. I have no traffic whatever with drugs of any sort. Don't believe in them, in fact! Nothing matters but the mind, which controls the body. *Mens sana in corpore sano*——"

Again the visitor interrupted him:

"You don't get me. I want some advice—help. My name is 'Chick' Hopper —manager for young Glick."

"And who, may I ask, is young Glick?"

A pained look swept the rugged face of Mr. Hopper. He had expected to find in Professor Higgins, an educated man. He began to regret that he had wasted his time seeking advice in this place.

"Joe Glick is the heavyweight contender," he replied.

"A contender for *what?*" Higgins impatiently asked.

Chick Hopper stared at him with lackluster eyes and lighted another cigarette. "Listen! Don't you ever read no newspapers—not even the tabloids? This bird I'm managin' is out to win the heavyweight boxing championship of the world! Got that? And it's him I come to see you about."

"I see," the professor said soothingly. "But, alas! I know nothing whatever about boxing."

Chick Hopper hunched his narrow shoulders.

"Who said you did? Lemme tell you about this Glick. He's only twenty-four, and he stands six foot two in his stockings——"

"Why in his stockings?" Higgins asked, anxious to master all those little, seemingly trifling details a scientific man must possess in order to treat his patient intelligently.

HOPPER did not reply, but fixed his dull and somewhat morose eyes upon the pale-blue ones of the professor.

"Six foot two, and strips to two hundred and ten. Lean as a shad, at that! And can that boy box? I ask you, can Coolidge keep a secret? He's a gymnasium wonder; and in trainin', he uses up sparrin' partners faster 'n I can dig 'em up and pay 'em off. Got a knockout in either mitt, too. That's young Joe Glick, the bird I'm manager of."

Higgins nodded.

"I gather that he is a very promising youth," he commented, seeing that some remark was expected from him.

"*'Promisin'?'*" Chick Hopper cried bitterly. "That's just it. Promises, but don't *pay*. I've done everything for that bimbo! Give up a swell job to handle him. Allowed him a fifty-fifty cut on all he win. Taught him all he knows, which is plenty. And what does he do? Why, so long as he is in a prelim, or up against a unknown, he knocks 'em for a row of silent p'licemen; but soon as he steps into a ring, against anybody with a real rep, some one he's heard or read about that's good, he folds up like an army cot and goes to sleep! Not once since I been handlin' him has he lost an opener, or won a final. A swell limburger he's made of himself—and of me, too. And the

public is wise to him. They give him the raspberry every time he climbs into the ring."

Professor Higgins placed a thin hand to his noble brow and wrapped himself in deep thought. Presently he looked up with the air of one who has made a shrewd diagnosis.

"It seems just possible that your protégé lacks—er—intestinal fortitude," he suggested.

Hopper shook his head disconsolately. "It ain't that, perfessor! It breaks my heart to say it, but that big stiff has got no nerve."

Professor Higgins began to feel that the visit from this curiously uncouth young man was not going to be profitable to him, even to the extent of assuring him of his noon lunch.

"Just what did you have in mind in coming to me? I fail to see—having no knowledge of and little interest in crude sports——"

"This was my dope, professor! I seen your work, and it is smooth. At first, I thought you had your own gang with you, and that this hypnotic stuff was the bunk. But there was so many of 'em I knew you never could afford to feed, let alone pay wages to, all them men, women and children. I went again; and the things you made 'em do give me a fine laugh! You had an old dame jump clean over the back of a chair, and a little weak-lookin' counterjumper tryin' to lick a husky truck driver. The idea didn't come to me then, but later. Seein' my man in the gym one day, boxin' rings around the athletic instructor there, and then droppin' two green Swedes, with a right to the button and a snappy uppercut, it come to me that if you got him up on the stage there, at Doran's, and told him he was made of reënforced concrete and couldn't be hurted, and for him to go over to the Lagrange Street police station and beat up the whole bunch of flatties, why, he'd go, and the chances was he'd clean up! How about it?"

During Chick's long speech, a gleam of understanding had developed in Professor Higgins' eyes; and when the manager had finished, Higgins nodded a vigorous assent.

"I begin to see what you are driving at, young man. It would be possible for me to do far more than you suggest. Since mind dominates matter, which accounts for the adage, 'If you believe it, it's so!'—it would be just as easy for me to go out on the street and pick the first man that happened along, and hypnotize him, and make him perform such feats as you suggest. Certainly, if this protégé of yours is such a splendid physical specimen, as you state, there would be but one danger in hypnotizing him into the belief that he is invincible; he might forget that he was fighting for a prize and go on and murder his opponent, if not, indeed, the umpire, timekeeper, reporters, seconds, ushers, promoter, ticket taker, peanut butchers, audience——"

"Hold on!" begged Hopper. "You'll have him out on the street in a minute, finishing up the mob that always hangs around, waiting to hear the result. My idea is this: If you're as good as you think you are, you oughta be able to hypnotize him just enough, but not too much. Like when a doc gives a guy a shot in the arm. They don't chloroform a patient by feedin' it to him in a dipper, do they?"

"The proper scientific safeguards could, of course, be managed. But, before we go further, suppose you tell me precisely what is in your mind? Just what have you planned for young Mr. Glick to do?"

CHICK shied his cigarette butt right into the fish bowl, and lighted a fresh one. "It's like this. The heavyweight champion meets my man in a ten-round, no-decision bout next Tuesday night at Mechanics' Hall. That's to give the Boston sports a flash at Jack Leary, the champ, see? They wouldn't cross Columbus Avenue on a muddy day to see my man. They know the champ will pull his blows, or else Glick will curl up and lay down. He's a set-up, see? But, at the same time, he can box pretty, and he looks sweet, stripped. Give Leary a chance to strut his stuff. We draw down five hundred smackers for our end, win, lose, or draw. There's no title involved —get me?—only a exhibition bout. Even

should my man, by some crazy fluke, hang a knock-out on Leary, we wouldn't get no more than our five hundred."

Professor Higgins rapidly estimated the maximum figure that he might hope to ask for his services and decided that there wasn't much in it for him.

"I don't see that the affair is likely to be very profitable for you, in any event," he gloomily suggested.

"That's because you're a professor, instead of a box-fight specialist. The idear is, if my man could forget who he was up against and just pile into him, like he was a ordinary gymnasium hanger-on, he'd make a great showing, and might even have the edge. For this Leary is cashing in on his title, and not doing no more training than he has to. He's too fat right now, four days before the fight. Nobody thinks it worth while to train for Glick—nobody but the false alarms he meets in the prelims. Now, say my man goes into the ring all coo-coo, from your hypnotizin' him into thinkin' he's the champion himself, and this Leary is a set-up. All right; he wades in and has the crowd with him from the way he pushes Leary around. Even if he don't score a knock-down, he makes a rep that will be worth important money to us.

"We can ask for his next bout a guarantee that will feed us all winter. All the sports writers will be there, and the broadcasters will carry the bad news all over the world. We're made in one night—in one ten-round go, of just thirty minutes' actual scrappin'. It ain't what we get for this bout, but for the next one. I can put him right onto the boards at the Old Howard, billed as the man who won a newspaper decision over the champ. Got that?"

Professor Higgins nodded dubiously.

"Still, for my services, which in this case are highly important, even indispensable to you——"

Chick waved a liberal hand.

"Don't worry! Your office fees is four bits a head, ain't they? All right. You do a good job on Glick, and I hand you one hundred berries on the spot. And if Glick then outpoints the champion, I'll hand you a hundred more, right after the fight. That's two hundred for two minutes' work. I seen you put them birds on the stage under the infloonce, in less'n two minutes' time."

THE terms seemed reasonable. They were more liberal than any offer Higgins had received since his last vaudeville engagement. If then, this young man, Glick, proved to be a good subject, not only would he get a nice piece of real money, but he foresaw a brand-new field for his scientific attainments; one that he had never thought of before. He turned suddenly to the waiting Hopper.

"Was it your idea that I hypnotize him into believing that this Leary, the champion, is an inferior opponent, one he can easily defeat?"

"Nope! You're all wet, professor. For then my man would just stall. You gotta hypnotize him into thinking he's an awful socker himself, and that he knocks out every bird he meets. See? I got it; make him think he's old Bob Fitzsimmons. There was a sweet socker. All he asked was one crack at any man."

"But isn't there some formality—an introduction of some kind—whereby the men are mentioned by name? And won't Glick wonder why he is called by another name than that he conceives to be his own? Not to mention the effect on the audience."

"We'll make Glick think he's Bob Fitzsimmons, but that Leary don't know this. He's an *unknown;* see? Fightin' under an assumed moniker. It's done every week in the season. He'll be introduced as Joe Glick, which he is, and the crowd knows it; but all the time he'll think he's puttin' something over."

"All right, I accept. And when do you propose to have me hypnotize him? Will you bring him here, to my office?"

"I will not! He won't be hypnotized till just before he goes into the ring. That way, his trainers and sparring partners won't be wise to nothing. Just before he goes into the ring, I'll bring you to his dressin' room and introduce you as a old pal of mine. You say as little as possible, and just agree to all I spiel. And then, having got his eye, you hypnotize him. And he steps into the ring feeling he's the great Fitz himself, and

that no man living can keep his feet when he lands on him. And if we don't give the crowd, not to mention Mister Leary, a run for their jack, then I ain't the best trainer and manager alive to-day."

And so it was agreed. A final thought occurring to him, Professor Higgins asked, as he was ushering his new client out of the door:

"But will your man agree to participate in this bout against the world's champion? I mean, in view of his—er—extremely cautious nature——"

"Oh, that's all right! He never refuses a match. Only, if it's against a top-notcher, he lays down along about the fourth or fifth round. See?"

"I see," admitted Professor Higgins. And he returned to his kitchenette, where, at the time Chick Hopper had called, he had been engaged in frying two cold-storage eggs and toasting a slice of bread.

IN a small office, which led off from the main auditorium of Boston's huge Mechanics' Hall, a nearly naked young man lay stretched upon a bare cot. He presented a magnificent picture of virile manhood, with deep chest, long, muscular limbs, and a face rather more intelligent than is commonly found in his profession.

Closer inspection revealed something lacking—something ominous. His face was pallid and bedewed with a cold moisture. The hands which hung down loosely over the side of the cot and trailed almost to the floor, kept opening and shutting nervously; and in the dark eyes was a look of deep, if unspoken, suffering. Young Glick, to put it bluntly, was scared stiff, as he listened to the vague and muffled turmoil which, outside in the hall itself, marked the midpoint of the semifinal bout, whose conclusion would summon him for the main event.

Two rubbers worked silently and deftly over the young giant, kneading shoulders and thighs, turning his ankles, loosening his knees, already too loose. In one corner brooded his trainer, Chick Hopper, his eyes glancing from time to time toward the door, whenever a step sounded outside. Presently he spoke to the handlers.

"Youse can beat it now; get the pail and sponge and fans and things and be ready, soon as this bout's over. On yer ways!"

The two departed, leaving Glick and his trainer alone. Before a word could pass between them, a discreet knock sounded at the door.

"C'm' in!" Chick sang out.

Immediately there entered a sepulchral figure, an elderly man with a flowing beard, wearing baggy black clothes and a floppy black felt hat. With a lamentable cry, young Glick sat erect on his cot.

"A padre! What's he here for, Chick? You think I'm gonna be killed out there?"

Visions of himself dying on the chill, white canvas, while a clergyman knelt tenderly over him and endeavored to console his last moments, overwhelmed the young contender for heavyweight honors. He swallowed rapidly, his mouth opening and shutting like that of a goldfish.

"Parson me eye!" scoffed Chick. "You oughta hear the old bird cuss once."

A pained expression flashed across Professor Higgins' face, and he seemed about to say something, but changed his mind.

"Meet 'Pop' Higgins, Joe," he introduced, and the young pugilist extended a damp hand and received the large, dry, flabby palm of the professor. "Him and me is old pals, see? Many's the night we've put the chickens to bed, eh, Pop? He's gonna see you do your stuff to-night."

Young Glick, his mind thrust back to his forthcoming martyrdom, groaned. And Higgins, whose piercing regard had studied his prospective patient intently, now stepped forward, brought his face down to within two feet of Glick's, and sought to hold his eyes.

"Look at me!" he commanded sharply.

Glick gazed sulkily back.

"Well, I'm looking, but I don't see much to look at." He turned his regard upon Chick. "If this old gink is a playmate of yours, then you must have changed a whole lot lately."

CHICK did not reply, and the professor suddenly clapped his two palms smartly together.

"Look at me closely!" he demanded.

"Tell me what you see in my eyes? Look sharp enough, and you will behold, as in twin mirrors, little reflections of yourself. A wonderful, marvelous physique you have, young man! None better in the world, I'd say. Why—this is indeed strange. Don't move your eyes. *What is this I see?* You are Bob Fitzsimmons himself!"

"And so is your old man," mumbled young Glick, who felt strangely sleepy.

"It is true! You are! Look at me, Bob Fitzsimmons! You are the man who can hit harder than an army mule can kick. When you smite a man, he becomes a ruin, and the more imposing their bulk, the harder the impact."

"Huh?" This from Glick drowsily. It was difficult now for him to keep his eyes open. How strangely soft that army cot had become.

"He means," explained Chick Hopper, "the bigger they be, the harder they fall."

"Shut up!" hissed the professor from the corner of his mouth. Then, speaking again to Glick: "Open your eyes wide! Look closely at me; I am a man of truth. You are Bob Fitzsimmons—Bob himself. Isn't that so?"

"Sure," agreed Glick, his eyes glassy, and a little color showing in his pale cheeks. "And when I paste 'em, they stay pasted."

Higgins' eyes glittered.

"That's the talk! And now you are going out there, into the ring, to face that —that——"

"False alarm!" suggested Chick.

"To face that false alarm and demonstrate to the multitude assembled, what a real hitter like you, like Bob Fitzsimmons, can do to demolish his pretensions."

Young Glick sat a little straighter on his cot. It seemed that his eyes were glued to those pale-blue and slightly bulging ones of Professor Higgins. He drew a deep breath, flexed his biceps. A ferocious grin overspread his face.

"Old Bob'll show up that ripe cheese," he declared. And, standing up, he playfully squared off and, intending to tap Higgins lightly on his flat chest, he sent him sprawling into the arms of the trainer.

"Attaboy, Bob!" Chick cried, easing the panting old man down onto the cot vacated by Glick. "And, remember, them bozos don't know who you are. They think you're just a set-up. Young 'Joe Glick'—that's the name you're fightin' under to-night, just for a stall. See?"

The young fighter frowned in a puzzled way. "Glick—young Joe Glick? I've heard that name somewheres. And I never heard any good of him, either. And that ain't maybe! All right; let it ride that way. All the better. This Leary will think he can throw a scare into me; but wait till I throw a shift into him, like I did to Jim Corbett once."

Again, a knock at the door. It was a call boy. "Semifinal's over. Ready for the main bout!"

"Lead me to it," snapped Glick.

Chick and the professor exchanged a meaning glance, as they followed him from the little dressing room.

"Is he under, all right?"

"He's ready to ram a stone wall with his head," Higgins boasted.

He found his seat, a good one, about six rows from the ringside; and young Glick and his manager moved on down the aisle, with heads all about them craning to observe the sacrifice about to be offered up to the heavyweight champion.

"That's him!" "The big lemon!" "Watch him lay down in de fift'!" These were some of the expressions that brought the blood to Chick's thin face, but none of which did his charge appear to notice.

They clambered into the ring; and Glick received a mild and perfunctory hand from the packed thousands, mingled with not a few jeers and catcalls. In his corner a stool was already placed; Glick sat dignifiedly down in it, beside a large, new wooden pail, in which floated a very clean carriage sponge. His two handlers were promptly on their jobs.

After a due interval, the champion appeared. As he moved majestically down the aisle, followed by a small army of retainers, cheers commenced; and when he clambered over the ropes, the house rocked. He, too, seated himself. An American flag was draped over his corner of the ring; a frantically colored bath robe covered his massive shoulders. His

eyes turned upon young Glick in a savage glare. It was as if he were enraged at the impudence of this stripling in daring to stand up before him, even in an exhibition bout. But it was all play acting—the revelation of his famous "fighting face," dearly beloved by the fans. He knew that the glare was not needed; for he knew Glick. Already, that young man was as scared as it was possible for anybody to be and not fall off his stool.

He was the more amazed when his opponent of the evening returned his stare by squinting up his eyes and thrusting out his tongue at him. What did this mean? He needn't think that he, Leary, was going to baby him. It was understood, of course, that there was to be no knock-out; he was willing to pull his punches, within reason. But, just for that gesture of insolence, he would jolt him a good one the minute they came together in the center of the ring for the first round.

THE usual formalities now proceeded. The announcer, in badly fitting evening clothes, was hoisted into the ring. He introduced the referee of the evening; then, two stalwart young men in street clothes, ambitious contenders in the middleweight and light-heavy division. Their handlers began to lace the gloves onto the boxers' fists, watched idly by the respective managers, to see that no doorknobs or horseshoes were absent-mindedly left inside. The men were called to the center of the ring, where they shook hands, and listened to the referee, while he told them things they already knew by heart. Back again to their corners; and now, the bath robes stripped off, and the two fighting men stood before the focused eyes of several thousand men and women, some in evening array, others in jumpers and dirty caps. Up in a balcony, overlooking the ring, sat Jack Martin, who was to broadcast the fight to several million absent fans. And, then, the announcer once more:

"Ladees and gent'men! In this corner, Jack Leary, the champeeen heavyweight boxer of the *worrld!* And in this corner, young Joe Glick, of *Bossston!*"

A yell from the house; a quick dive by the white-clad referee, over against the ropes; and then two lithe bodies, seemingly propelled by high explosive from the stools, which were at the same instant whisked from them, were facing each other in the ring.

His mind still dwelling on that infuriating gesture, the outthrust tongue, Leary let fly a crashing right hook for Glick's jaw. But, instead of covering up and cowering from it, as he had expected, Glick neatly ducked and countered with a jarring right flush to the mouth, which loosened two of Leary's teeth and completely ruined his not-too-good disposition. And, to add insult to injury, he followed this up with a hard poke amidships, into the layers of fat that Leary had not thought it worth his time and trouble to get rid of for so contemptible an adversary.

Half of the house was standing up now; a surprised look might be seen on the heads that peered just above the ring flooring, back of the champion's corner. Up in his balcony, the efficient Martin was broadcasting:

"At the sound of the bell, both men leap to the center of the ring and swap punch for punch. The champion falls into a clinch. He is puffing, and crimson flows from a cut on his lips. Glick seems very confident; not at all like his usual cautious self. He looks back over his shoulder and winks at his seconds. The house is frantically yelling for a knockout."

The referee pried them apart. Again Leary started one of his devastating right hooks; and once more Glick neatly ducked it. This time he drove right and left for the body, and brought Leary's hands down to protect his wind. Shifting the attack and boxing beautifully, Glick feinted with his right, and drove a left to the nose, getting away without a return. Leary managed to slip into a series of clinches, as fast as the referee pried them apart; and the round ended with no further damage to either man.

Chick Hopper was nearly insane with excitement. For the first time in his experience with Glick, he beheld his protégé fighting just as confidently and as

cleverly against a champion as he always did against the pork-and-beaners and college gymnasts. And he wasn't even breathing faster than usual, nor through his mouth, either. He leaned comfortably back, speaking from the corner of his lips.

"Thinks he's a champion, does he? Good thing he don't know he's up against old Bob Fitz, or he'd jump outa the ring!"

Over in the other corner, a more serious dialogue was in progress.

"Whassa matter with that big bum?" panted Leary. "He ain't acting natural to-night! They musta give him a shot of hooch, or something."

"Nev' you mind, Jack," soothed his manager, while the handlers kneaded that fat paunch. "He'll blow up in a round or two. He never showed no class yet, any time I ever see him. You ain't connected yet. He can't take it; never could. Yer eye is a little off to-night. Wait till ya cop him just oncet!"

BUT the second round, and the third, gave no signs of quailing on the part of the rejuvenated Glick. To be sure, not yet had Leary managed to land a square punch. He was in terrible condition; justified, to be sure, by the fact that he was to meet a man who never in his career had put up a decent scrap against any second-rater. But Leary wished that he had done a little more road work; taken off a few pounds from his waistline. He suffered cruelly; not from Glick's slashing attack, but from his own short breath. Also, the temper of the audience was beginning to shift. They were cheering young Glick now; and here and there, when Leary missed a wild haymaker, a derisive yell mounted from top gallery, or even from the sacred ringside seats.

Well down front, Professor Euclid Higgins was almost as goofy as the other fans. Seeing for the first time a lively ring set-to, and knowing, as he did, that each blow that thudded against bare flesh was in reality directed from his own brain, and that it was he, rather than the hypnotized Glick who was demolishing a great popular idol, he found himself uttering uncouth cries and slapping perfect strangers on the back and in general demeaning himself unlike a gentleman devoted to austere scientific research.

The fourth round, and Jack Martin, broadcasting from his balcony:

"The champion is not fighting at all like himself. He seems dazed and uncertain and makes little attempt to protect himself. Also, for the first time in any fight, it is he who seeks to save himself by clinching. Ah! This time, as they are pried apart, young Glick reaches him with a sweeping right that fairly lifts him from his feet. He is down—no; he goes clean out of the ring! He has fallen into the lap of my good friend, Jim Grady, of the *Republican*. Too bad, Jim! The editor will buy you a new typewriter to-morrow. He is pushed back into the ring by the sports writers, who want to get him off their chests. He is angry now; lowers his head like a bull and rushes Glick to the ropes. But Glick uppercuts to his chin and lifts him from the canvas. Leary's face is unrecognizable; one eye is entirely shut—the right. Glick works on the other. The gang is clean crazy and yelling for a knock-out! If the round lasts thirty seconds longer, there will be one, too. Ah!—the bell. End of the fourth round."

The several million who, open-mouthed and goggle-eyed, hung on the words of Jack Martin, as he accurately and unerringly detailed the course of the succeeding rounds, waited for the news of Leary's defeat. Even those who were present and able to use their own eyes, felt that this was imminent; all but the sports reporters and those experts who, from long experience and from personal knowledge of the contenders, knew better. Leary was sore pressed; he was cut to ribbons already, a pitiful wreck to behold. And so far there was not a mark on young Glick, save the smears of crimson that flowed from his opponent. But Leary was tough. No man can get to be world's heavyweight champion and be anything else but. Also, he was young; not as young as Glick, but right in his prime. And he had not dissipated to any serious extent. It was only that he was out of condition, due to the fact that neither he,

nor his handler, nor manager had dreamed that it would be worth while to do any serious training for this bout.

So, bad as things looked for him, and fatal indeed as it would be were his other eye to be shut tight, he yet looked a whole lot worse than he was. He could absorb a tremendous amount of punishment and come back for more. Taking advice from his second, he now began to ease up, to get back his wind, or, if possible, his second wind. To let Glick wear himself out, and then, in the last frame or two, get in the one good wallop which was all he asked for. And with this plan in view, he began to box, to feint, sidestep, wait his chance, instead of wearing himself out by throwing all he had into wild swings that met only stale air.

IT wasn't possible for him to avoid all of Glick's blows; he was nothing like the good boxer the younger man was. But he managed to "tin-can" and stall enough to take the danger from them, so that they merely hurt, without doing him any particular harm. He rolled his head to Glick's hooks; took what he could on elbows, gloves, shoulders; clinched whenever it was possible. All the time, he was alert for a good opening.

It came in the ninth, when all but a handful of those present were shouting for Glick, as the coming world's champion. The young fellow got a little careless, a trifle overconfident. Not once, yet, had he received a real good wallop. Also, in the mood he was in to-night, he was perfectly willing to take chances. He was boxing with a boldness and aggressiveness he had never displayed before. To knock out your opponent, you must fight an offensive battle; and to do this, you must occasionally leave yourself open. Besides, he had a great contempt for Leary by now. Didn't think he had a punch in his fat carcass.

So it was that, in the mere flash of time that his left jaw was exposed after a lead, Leary, putting his very shoe strings into it, leaned into him and landed full on the button. Young Glick's head twisted about so sharply and cruelly that it seemed as if he was suddenly anxious to have a look at the back of his own neck. His hands dropped listlessly and dangled at his sides. The flesh on the inner side of his thighs began to quiver like a leaf in a gale. A great and awed silence swept over the house. And then, as Leary, with an evil smile upon his inhumanly smashed lips, set himself for the finishing blow, again the bell announced the end of the round. And so tired was the champion, that, as he turned obediently toward his corner, his legs gave way, and he sat down flat on the canvas. Both men were virtually carried to their corners.

In Leary's corner his manager briefly grunted:

"Well, kid, ya got his number!"

And Leary grunted:

"Surest thing ya know!"

That was all. But a more detailed dialogue was being carried on where young Glick slumped. He cast a terrified eye up at his manager and asked:

"Zat Jack Leary sittin' over there?"

"Who'd ya think it was—Lillian Gish?"

"What round is this, Chick?"

"Next round's the tenth an' last, bo! Only one more to go. You got him dead! Just look at that face! *Oi!*"

Glick looked, and his teeth chattered.

"He'll murder me," he groaned.

Chick peered curiously down at him.

"Murder *you?* An' you widout a mark on yer pan, an' him like a boarding-house hamburg! Snap outa it!"

"I'm as good as killed, Chick!" whispered Glick. "Here's the tent' round, and I never even remember the bell ringin' for the first. I been out on me feet for nine rounds, and only just this minute come to. And that last one most unhinged me jaw. I bet I lose all my teeth. I had enough!"

The bell for the tenth and final round interrupted the discussion. Glick had no choice but to get up; and, once the chair was whisked from him, Chick did not hesitate to place the sole of his shoe against the seat of his tights and shoot him out, flying into the center of the ring. To the gathered thousands, he was thirsting to get at Leary.

For an instant the champion himself was deceived. But his ring generalship

told him that Glick had shot his bolt. When the young man led, he was wondering whether the other would beat him to the punch. When he unleashed an uppercut, it was with the horrible thought that it might be avoided, leaving him wide open for a crushing blow to the solar plexus. And so, he began to pull his leads; to box cautiously, and with no real steam in his punches. Leary was too tired to hurt him any; but when he landed a glancing blow at Glick's chin, he dropped, as if hit with a meat ax. Lying on the canvas, he half raised his head and, his eyes turned imploringly toward Chick Hopper, he feebly motioned.

"T'row in the sponge!"

His lips formed the words. But the angry manager cursed him and ordered him to get up. He did so and tried to work into a clinch. Leary feebly pummeled him about the head and shoulders, and Glick dropped again. This time, Leary fell on top of him, from sheer exhaustion. Amid an explosion of shrieks, yells, demands for knock-outs and whistles, over which rose the trained, steady voice of Jack Martin, telling the listening-in world, Glick once more was hit, or pushed, or tripped, or something. Anyhow, he fell; and this time he did not move. Over him the referee began his monotonous, though unheard count.

Chick Hopper jumped up and down, shrieking abuse. Leary stood back, wabbling on his feet, wishing it was all over before he, too, should fall down.

"——Seven—Eight—Nine!" chanted the referee.

And once more, and for the last time, came the healing bell. Glick was saved from a knock-out! He scrambled to his feet like one saved from drowning; and the mutilated, panting, grinning Leary threw both arms about him and mumbled:

"Goo' kid! Ya gimme a great fight."

And then young Joe Glick fainted.

CLOSE to Chick Hopper's heels trotted Professor Euclid Higgins. He followed him to the office, where Hopper received his five hundred dollars and the congratulations of the officials and newspaper men. He followed him out onto the street, with the now revived and sobered Glick. And, as he was unable to shake him, Chick led the way into a near-beer place on Dartmouth Street, where, leaving Glick busy over a large schooner, he joined the professor at a little table apart.

"What's on yer mind?" he asked impatiently.

The professor spread his hands ingratiatingly.

"That other hundred," he breathed.

"Banana oil!" growled Chick. "Yer medicine didn't last! I'll admit it was all to the good while it worked; but that last round, the tenth, he come out of it! And what then? Did exactly what he always does—laid down on me. Where do you get off to think there's any more comin' to ya?"

"It's this way," Higgins explained amiably. "I know when he came out of it, as you crudely phrase it. It was when Mr. Leary hit him so hard on his chin. That blow acted on his cerebral centers, his ganglia, and he resumed his own personality. But what of it? The audience knows nothing of that! They think he fought a wonderful battle, and that he just fought himself completely out, and in the last round was too exhausted to stand up. Even the newspaper reporters think the same. You'll read some great eulogies in their reports! I overheard them talking about it; I sat only a few rows back, you know. But if you hold out on me, here's what I'll do: I'll go to the newspaper men and give them the whole story. How will you like that?"

Chick Hopper was intelligent enough to admit that he wouldn't like it one little bit, and that nobody could make him like it.

"Another point," the old man continued. "Next time we'll guard against any such misadventure. I'll sit right with you, alongside the ring, and if he shows signs of emerging from his trance state, I'll put him back again. Same as an anæsthetist does—just keeps his patient under, you know. You keep me good-natured, and we'll be millionaires! Do I get my hundred?"

He got it.

A Chat With You

SOME great man—we forget his name, but he is so successful and employs labor on such a large scale that they call him the Henry Ford of England—remarked recently that he did not want to employ college men in his business. He thought that college men were not fitted by their education to be good business men.

This is important if true, especially to a people like ourselves who take greater pains and make more sacrifices in the cause of higher education than any folk ever did before.

The great majority of young Americans who are college bred hope to succeed in business, and if this verdict is to be taken as authoritative, why should some good youngster spend laborious days stoking furnaces, shoveling snow or waiting on table to work his way through a course which will be a hindrance rather than a help?

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OF course the colleges over there are rather different from ours. Probably the great Englishman, if quoted correctly, would have been found to have mentioned "university men."

Now an English "university man" until recently has run to a type. He was well bred, he knew how to dress, he had a good manner of speech, he had learned to write verses in Latin, and could quote Latin authors on suitable occasions. At his best he went in for politics and made learned speeches in "the House." He might settle down on a country estate. He might go in for the law and become an eminent barrister. He might try literature and become a poet like Byron or Keats, but very rarely, if ever, a great novelist like Dickens or Thackeray. We can well understand that such a type might not prove the hardiest in the rough and tumble of business or industrial life.

THE idea of college life on being transported to this side of the Atlantic suffered a sea change. Most of the old New Englanders in the country about Harvard and Yale groomed their most promising sons for the ministry—or, perhaps, to become college professors in their turn. Up to about thirty years ago, the college man, even in this country, belonged to a certain set class, and in business there was a prejudice against him. There is still another variant of the college man flourishing here. He is the gilded youth who frequents night clubs and drives fast cars. But he will fade and perish. We have so many colleges in this country that it is not easy to count them. The list we have at hand places the number at 530. And for the most part they are devoted to idealism, hard work, and the thought of making good and effective citizens out of the boys who attend them.

* * * *

ATHLETICS versus scholarship is the present American problem. At first glance it seems outrageous that having a winning football team will do more for an institution of learning than the best courses in the arts or sciences. But there are two sides to it. Character counts for quite as much as learning, and for a great many vigorous folk character is built up through the practice of organized athletics. The football coach may, without realizing it, be a most potent missionary in the cause of what they called once "muscular Christianity." Self-denial, courage, concentration, and discipline are great assets for any man. Many a fellow who never even made the scrub team has gained more out of his athletic efforts in the way of character building than the champion athlete of his class. You may say that only eleven men play in the game. But behind those eleven men are

generally eleven times eleven who get some sense of discipline, manliness and idealism out of it.

* * * *

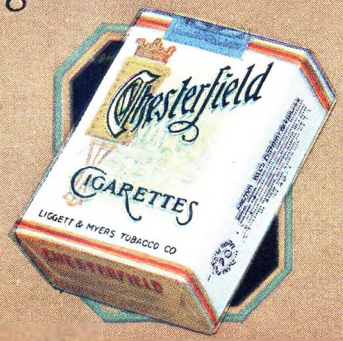
DURING the coming year we are going to run what we regard as one of the best tales of college and college athletics that has been written in ten years. Between now and the time it starts we hope to run many stories and novels which will give something of the bracing atmosphere that the right man gets at the right college.

As for college men in business—it must be remembered that most of our really prominent and soundly established business men belong to a generation for whom fewer colleges were provided. In their time the college graduate was a rare bird. Now there are college graduates in almost every business office and mercantile establishment.

HARVARD now runs what might be called a business school. Yale has a course for raising successful dramatists. Almost every college through the West offers some special technical course. The old Latin and Greek are falling into the discard. It is too bad in a way; but there is no use mourning over the past. They had their charm, their beauty, their sound cultural value, but there are so many things to learn nowadays that no one has time to learn them all.

Should one have a chance to go to college he may be sure if he goes to it in the right spirit he will not be a loser. But if a man has not that chance—and our warmest sympathies are with him—it is well to remember that any man who can read and write can make himself well educated. Any reading you do, provided you feel that you are getting anything out of it, in the understanding of life and character, is helping you.

Rings of Contentment



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